The Destructive Agrarian Reform Policies of the World Bank

Table of Contents

The Destructive Agrarian Reform Policies of the World Bank

Edited by:
Evanize Sydow and Maria Luisa Mendonça

Translated by:
Peter Rosset and María Elena Martínez

Graphic Design:
Zenaide Busanello

Administrative Assistance:
Graça Silva and Marta Soares

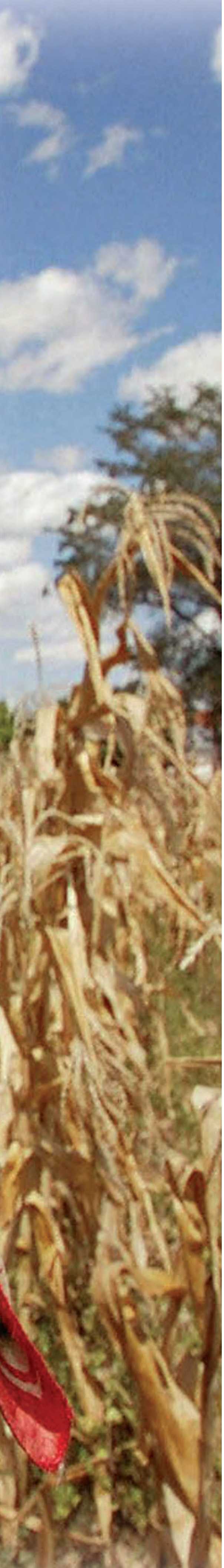
Cover Photo:
João Zinclar

A project of the Land Research and Action Network (LRAN):
- Focus on the Global South (India and Thailand)
- Food First (Guatemala and Mexico)
- National Land Committee (South Africa and Zimbabwe)
- Social Network for Justice and Human Rights (Brazil and Colombia)

Research Support:
Ford Foundation, Mott Foundation, Kaplan Foundation

Publication Support:
Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED)

To order copies, please contact:
Social Network for Justice and Human Rights
Rua Batista Cepelos 28, conj. 4
São Paulo, SP, Brazil
Zip Code: 04109-120
Tel: 011-55-11-32711237
Fax: 011-55-11-32714878
Email: rede@social.org.br
www.social.org.br



INTRODUCTION

During the past decades, many people believed in the idea that the rural areas did not have an important role in economic development. The process of migration from the countryside to the cities, especially in southern countries, was based in the image of the urban areas as the main places to find economic opportunities.

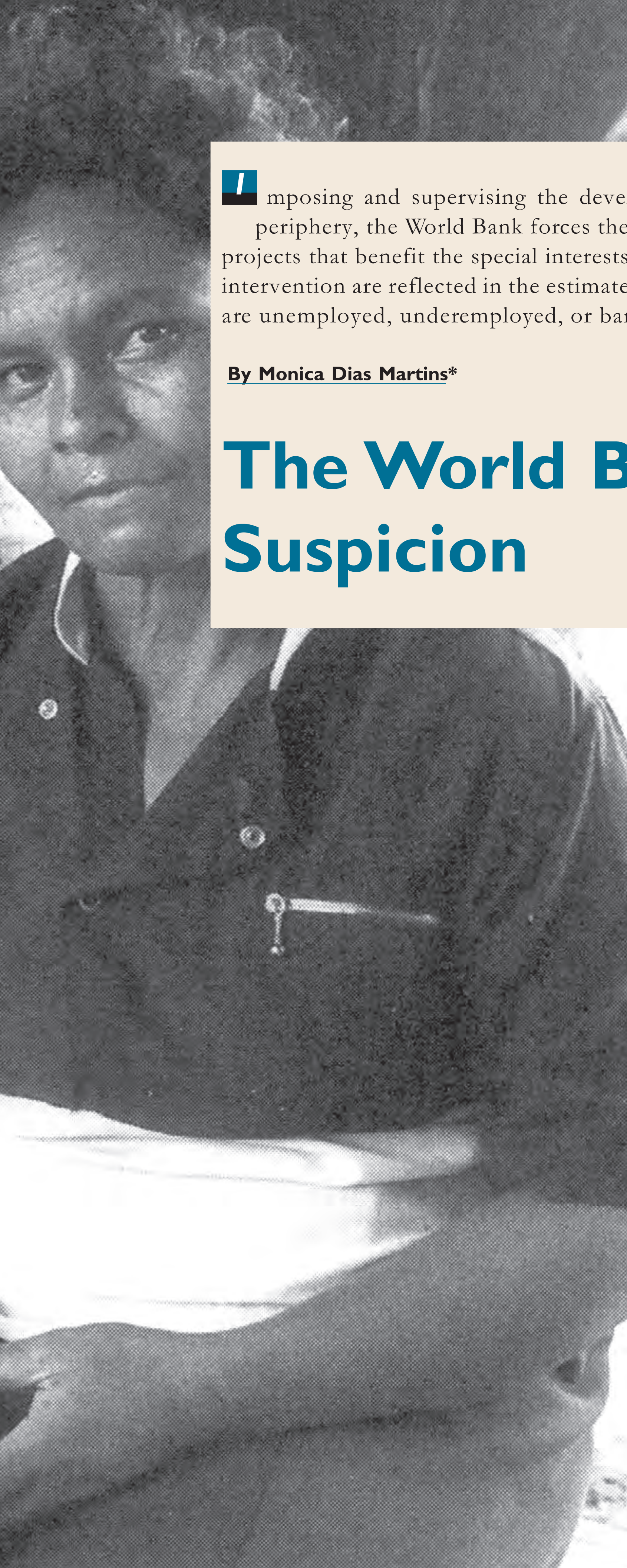
In fact, the rural areas are very rich and concentrate the majority of natural resources, such as water, farm land, minerals, and biodiversity. It's not a coincidence that international financial institutions, like the World Bank, focus their projects on these regions.

The World Bank has a clear policy regarding the so-called "land markets". Its strategy includes the following programs: land surveys and mapping, land titling with alienable titles, facilitation of land markets, credit based on the "willing-seller / willing-buyer" formula, "partnerships" between rural workers and landowners, and privatization of all land and natural resources.

The Bank ideology defends the idea of keeping "small governments". Its policies benefit large landowners and corporations, increasing land concentration. According to these policies, small farmers should become more "efficient" by incorporating themselves into the agrobusiness sector.

The World Bank has been implementing these projects all over the world, always following the same formula, and generating similar effects. In order to deal with this problem, several community-based organizations and grassroots movements created an international network to monitor and denounce the negative impacts of World Bank policies. The goal of the Land Research and Action Network is to create alternative proposals and to promote the policies proposed by the Via Campesina–a network of peasants and small farmers in 60 countries.

These organizations believe that a financial institution like the World Bank should not have such a strong influence in determining policies for rural areas, including mechanisms for the appropriation of land and natural resources. Each country should determine its own public policy, according to the historic and current demands of each society. In this context, the rural grassroots organizations should play a central role in implementing policies that guarantee a democratic distribution of land and the preservation of natural resources.


Paul Van Wouwe

Imposing and supervising the development policies of the countries of the periphery, the World Bank forces them to commit their budget expenditures to projects that benefit the special interests of large corporations. The results of this intervention are reflected in the estimated 4.8 billion people around the world who are unemployed, underemployed, or barley getting by in the informal sector.

By Monica Dias Martins*

The World Bank Under Suspicion

For more than half a century the World Bank has actively promoted the expansion of capitalism with ideas, and above all, with loans. The capitalist economic system is being universalized under the logic of accumulation, commodification, the maximization of profit, and competition, penetrating multiple aspects of human life and nature.

The World Bank has defined the concept of *Development* and the strategies to achieve it. Its macroeconomic policies, imposed as conditions attached to its loans, are dictated by the interests of the market economy. They promote economic concentration, inequality, injustice, instability and competition. The Bank's directives, implemented by governments

* Monica Dias Martins is Professor at the State University of Ceará, Brazil, and researcher of the Social Network for Justice and Human Rights, also in Brazil, and the Land Research Action Network (LRAN). This text summarizes her presentation at the World Tensions Symposium held in Fortaleza, Brazil, in 2003.

who must assume the full risks, benefit multinational corporations more than working people and their communities.

Inappropriately called a multilateral institution, the Word Bank is a powerful instrument for the promotion of the ideology of *modernization* of the third World. The loans that the Bank makes increase the external debt of *client* countries, which reduces their ability to make productive public sector investments and leads to cutbacks in social services as funds are redirected toward servicing the debt. As a result, unemployment, poverty, hunger and violence all grow.

The influence of the World Bank goes well beyond its financial (some $30 billion per year for projects), and human resources (8,000 employees), and its purview (4.8 billion people in 100 countries). The Bank exercises political leadership among other international agencies, and influences governments, intellectuals, the media, businessmen, and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Today protests against the World Bank are intensifying and diversifying. A former director of the Bank recently admitted that the countries that most reduced poverty had ignored the Bank's neoliberal policy measures called the "Washington Consensus." In the USA the organizers of the "50 years is Enough" campaign have carried out boycotts and pressured for institutional change in the Bank. Every year there are massive protests alongside the Bank's annual meetings, and well-founded critiques of the Bank are increasingly finding echo in the news media. Opposition led by Via Campesina (the global alliance of peasant and farmer organizations in more than 60 countries) to the Bank's so-called "market-led land reforms," is becoming generalized.

The Bank as an Institution

Structure

The World Bank Group, based in Washington, DC, is composed of five institutions under a single presidency: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) (founded in 1946), The International Finance Corporation or IFC (1956), the International Development Association or IDA (1960), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency or MIGA (1988), and the International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes, or ICSID.

The creation of the latter two entities makes the *mission* of the World Bank Group very clear; attract and, above all, provide guarantees against catastrophic losses or conflicts for private foreign investment. In the field of international relations, the Bank acts as the arbitrator of disputes between foreign capital and host countries.

The IFC works exclusively with the business sector, and has a structure, staff and norms that are separate and different from the IBRD and the IDA, which together make up what is commonly referred to as the "World Bank." With 198 member countries and with activities in some 100 developing countries (4.8 billion people), the Bank restricts its loans to countries that are members of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The annual meetings of the World Bank and the IMF are held jointly, revealing the consonance of thought and action between these two financial institutions.

In formal terms the maximum authority in the World Bank is the Council of Governors, which is made up of the Finance Ministers of the member countries. In practice, however, decisions over budgets, new loans, operating costs, and assistance strategies are made by the 8 countries (USA, Japan, France, England, Germany, China, Russia and Saudi Arabia) who have the permanent seats on the 24 member Board of Executive Directors. The remaining countries, grouped into 16 blocks, elect representatives for two year terms.

Voting is proportional to the monetary contribution of each country (in quotas required for membership), in marked contrast to the "one nation, one vote" principal that rules the United Nations (UN) system. Since the principal stock holder, at 17.87%, is the government of the United States, this gives the USA the final say on the most important issues, those that require 85% for approval, the ability to veto any decision, and the right to designate the President of the Bank who traditionally has been an American with a background on Wall Street. The Bank President maintains direct communication with the U.S. Congress and the Secretaries of the Treasury, State and Commerce Departments, the President of the Federal Reserve Board, and the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM).

Currently the World Bank is led by James Wolfensohn, a former Wall Street investment banker, who is serving his second term. Nevertheless, the power that the USA exercises in the Bank is more due to its overall economic, political and military power than by its number of votes, although it is the latter that gives the USA the veneer of the legality of the decision-making process at the Bank.

In a text posted recently on the Internet, called "What we do," the Bank proclaims itself to be the number one source of development assistance. According to the Bank, they use their financial resources, highly qualified staff and extensive knowledge base to assist each developing country to follow a path of stable growth, which is sustainable and equitable, and thus permits them to combat poverty.

Financial Resources

The funds used by the Bank to fund individual and sectoral projects in both the public and private sectors, largely come from international capital markets, and are obtained by selling bonds. In theory anybody can acquire World Bank bonds. The central banks of the member states also contribute by paying quotas, in amounts that vary according to the economic status of each country, as measured by GDP. During the 70s and 80s, almost half of the money raised by the World Bank came from petroleum exporting nations like Iran, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

Nevertheless, the USA maintains control over the policies and the activities of the World Bank in other countries. Although they may participate financially, other countries have little real say in the decisions about project execution and supervision.

According to the Bank's statutes, loans are independent of the political regime of each country. But in practice there are sanctions for socialist and nationalist governments, though not against countries that violate human rights. Cuba has been absent from the World Bank since the year after the revolution that overthrew dictator Fulgencio Batista. Brazil was embargoed between 1958 and 1964, Chile during the Allende administration, and Poland, Czechoslovakia, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique and Uganda during the Cold War period.

It is no coincidence that the best clients of the World Bank are the countries with the worst income distribution. Although the Bank speaks glowingly of "poverty alleviation" in it documents, there is no sign of this if one looks over the list of countries. What leaps out is the obvious preference of the Bank for governments that offer better conditions for foreign investors—like abundant, cheap and *disciplined* labor—and who have a good credit history (that is, they pay the interest on their foreign debt), and offer tax breaks, 'flexible' labor laws, few unions, and weak protection for the environment and domestic industry.

World Bank loans are generally linked to specific projects of diverse types. These range from energy (i.e. petroleum and natural gas) to mineral exploration, transportation, telecommunications, irrigation, agriculture, rural development, health, education, municipal services, to small businesses and tourism. For every dollar that enters a country, there is a required counterpart amount in local currency from the national government. This can be so much in terms of the national budget that the end result is that the national government spends its limited budget resources following World Bank formulas. The Bank has a special bulletin which is sent to large corporations, listing all upcoming Bank projects, so they can get their bids for contracts in on time.

The project funds that typically pass directly into the coffers of the foreign corporations who win the contracts to provide services, generates a multi-billion dollar market which is critical to maintaining world capitalism. This systematic passing of resources to multinational corporations is detrimental to debtor countries, who then find themselves importing products that could have been produced by their own domestic industry.

Brazil is a case in point. During the 1970s, national industry supplied the equipment needed to build and maintain hydroelectric dams. Twenty years later more than 80% was imported, as a result of projects financed by World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank loans.

It is imperative, for its very survival, that the World Bank continually expand its lending, to guarantee at any cost that countries keep paying the interest of their debts, to avoid catastrophic loss of confidence in international financial markets and in the member countries. The USA has shown clearly what its interest is in supporting international agencies—"without them we would be facing revolution"—said an American ex-President of the Bank.

Recruitment and Training

Since the Reagan administration, the management of the World Bank has been in the hands of a generation of "Chicago School" economists, with their neoliberal strategies, their quantitative models, their project cycles, and their market terminology (*product, client*). According to this ideology, the commonplace failures of projects funded by the Bank are not the consequence of structural adjustment, but rather are the fault of the recipient countries, because of their clientelism, cronyism, corruption, and influence peddling.

In 2000 the World Bank had 8,000 employees of 140 nationalities, most located at the headquarters in Washington and the rest in 67 local offices. The Bank staff enjoys prestige in academic and technical circles, in the public and private sectors. Their performance is judged by criteria of speed and efficiency, since the number of projects processed annually has grown from 20 in the 1950s to more than 300 today. The short time lines permitted for project design and bureaucratic procedures only allow for simple technocratic solutions to the complex problems of poor countries.

With a façade of neutrality, seriousness and objectivity, the Bank gives off the aura that its projects are subject to rigorous selection, show great productivity, and are carefully supervised. The project cycle, a bureaucratic routine created in the 80s and still in place, has six stages: project identification, preparation, initial approval, negotiation, supervision, and final evaluation. Bank staff typically follows these steps by rote.

In reality, this appearance of serious, uniform action is for show. What it hides are fierce disputes between Bank staff and local government entities over who will control the projects, and serious differences concerning the relative roles of the State and the market in achieving development. These differences have been on-going throughout the Bank's 50 years of existence. They also include differences in how poverty itself is conceived—for some it is a simple matter of a few quantitative economic indicators, while for others, poverty is both qualitative and multidimensional.

The Power of its Ideas

The central nucleus of World Bank thought consists of three goals and/or assumptions inspired by neoliberalism. They influence the guidelines, orientation, procedures and norms of everything the Bank does. These are:

1) The downgrading and minimization of cultural identity, values, customs and traditions;

2) The dismantling and delegitimation of national societies and policies, and of the idea of the sovereignty of the State;

3) Notions of market fundamentalism, namely that the Market is the vessel that carries within it socio-political rationality, and it is the principal agent of social welfare.

The Bank produces and disseminates ideas that become *consensus*, like the idea that *underdeveloped* regions require external *assistance*. In each country it is the Bank that determines the agenda of priorities to be addressed, the problems that must be overcome, their possible solutions, and the parameters by which the economy will be judged. The Bank's proposals are based on a toolkit of recipes that are virtually identical for all countries. They are always based on the private appropriation of natural resources, communal property and public resources, whether they are forests, rivers, oceans, land or minerals. Another key element is the emphasis on enhancing productivity through the intensive use of labor-saving technologies. According to the Bank, the poor people are an obstacle to development: they neither benefit particularly from its outcomes nor do they contribute much to obtaining it.

A case in point is Colombia. In 1950, the World Bank Chief of Mission for the country survey team, Lauchlin Currie, recommended providing incentives for family farmers to abandon rural areas, so these resources could be devoted to large-scale extensive cattle production to supply the growing U.S. market for animal protein. The principal brake on economic growth in Colombia, he implied, was the excessive number of *campesinos* (peasants), and there were only two ways to resolve this situation: either attract them to the cities, or expel them from the countryside via 'shock therapy.' He went so far as to say that while an economic policy could be designed to trigger the exodus of farmers from the countryside, a war could achieve the same purpose. It was ideas like this that guided subsequent government policies, according to economist Héctor Mondragon in his agrarian study of contemporary Colombia. He concludes that it is not so much that there are so many displaced people in Colombia because there is war, but rather that there is war precisely to displace people.

Beginning during the mid-1980s, the World Bank began to focus on interfering in local economies to facilitate so-called *globalization*. The various versions of this concept all share the premise that we are experiencing rapid changes in relationships between countries, driven by technology, the market, multinational corporations, and international agencies. The archetype of such World Bank interference is the "Structural Adjustment Program" (SAP), characterized by the imposition of deregulation, flexibilization, privatization, and a minimalist role for the State. The outcome is invariably greater dependence and growing poverty.

It is also the inverse of the path to development taken earlier by countries like England, the United States, France, Germany and Japan, which included the protection of national industry and agriculture, was largely based on the utilization of domestic capital and technologies, and strengthened the earnings of their populations and their internal markets.

Despite its formal status as a specialized unit of the UN system, the World Bank behaves independently of the UN. Since their inception, the ambition of both institutions has been to assume the leading role in formulating global economic policy. But the World Bank was able to achieve greater expansion of its ideas, activities, credit operations and personnel, thanks to generous financing by the economic superpowers, economic intimidation, political pressure tactics, and the use of financial reprisals. Thus the Bank was able to seize the role as the main arbiter of development policies.

The regional development banks for Latin America, Asia and Africa all operate under World Bank guidelines. The influence of the Bank also extends to the bilateral aid programs of Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Canada, as well as private sector banks and investment funds.

The relationship that has developed between powerful Bank bureaucrats and government officials, businessmen, and more recently, NGOs, makes it possible for the Bank to have an unprecedented level of influence on the directions of economic and social policy. Project negotiations directly affect the internal and external decision-making of nations. The World Bank in effect determines the priorities reflected in public expenditures, and in this way, governments that have been democratically elected stop attending to the vital problems being faced by their citizens.

The World Bank in the Looking Glass

The past few years have seen growing and diversifying protests of the legitimacy, credibility and competence of the World Bank. The Bank has suffered criticism and pressure from its ex-employees, and from governments, intellectuals, journalists, social movements, human rights organizations, and NGOs.

For example, former Bank Vice President and Nobel laureate in economics, Joseph Stiglitz, said the structural adjustment imposed as conditionality for loans has impeded economic growth in recipient countries, driving them deeper into poverty. Economist Ravi Kanbur, who was in charge of the team that wrote the Bank's annual reports on development, said that inequality between countries is on the rise. A U.S. Congressional committee, lead by Rep. Allan Metzer, even proposed drastically cutting the funding and activities of the Bank.

During the 3rd World Social Forum, Jean Ziegler, Special Rapporteur for the UN Human Rights Commission, declared that the Bank has been destroying whatever small progress had been achieved by Third World countries. In fact, in the majority of the sessions at the Forum, the favorite target was the unilateralism of the development model being imposed by the international financial agencies.

The opposition to the Bank has been organized by networks like "50 Years is Enough," which brings together dozens of organization and carries out mobilizations, boycotts and educational campaigns. Lately the Bank's normally tranquil annual meetings have been marked by street protests in various cities around the world, which have even been covered by mainstream TV news. In some newspapers, like the prestigious *Le Monde Diplomatique*, it is now commonplace to find stories and opinion pieces critiquing Bank programs and their negative impacts.

Via Campesina, a global alliance of farmer and peasant organizations in more than 60 countries, has been organizing resistance to the Bank's "land market" policies. Direct action and mass protests by peasant movements in South Africa, Brazil, Colombia, India, Mexico and Thailand reveal the growing opposition to the "market assisted land reforms" imposed by the Bank.

João ZInclar


THE SPORT

Maria Luisa Mendonça e Luciano Wolff*

The "Traps" Inherent in Land Market Policies

Maria Luisa Mendonça

So-called "market assisted land reform"—a phrase that has been strongly criticized by social movements because it doesn't do justice to "land reform"—is based on promoting the sale of land by large landowners to landless or near landless families. This policy is being pushed or implemented by the Bank in some 30 developing countries, ostensibly to "alleviate rural poverty." Nevertheless, the findings of various researchers and the concrete experiences of countries like Colombia, Brazil, South Africa, Guatemala and Thailand, reveal many problems associated with so-called "land market" policies, including a tendency toward greater poverty.

This Bank program runs counter the age old struggles, demands and proposals of rural social movements for comprehensive and broad genuine agrarian reforms. In these Bank projects, many rural workers, hoping to realize their dream of someday owning their on piece of land, are induced with promises of a better life to take out large bank loans with market-rate interest to purchase land. But instead of achieving that better life, they soon find themselves enmeshed in a nightmare of debt and

*(*Armadilas do Mercado de Terras*, article by Maria Luisa Mendonça and Luciano Wolff, published in Jornal do Brasil.)

frequently end up losing title to their new land and being expelled all over again.

These programs end up generating greater land concentration, and benefit large landowners who are able to sell their worst plots of land at heavily inflated prices, receiving full payment up front. Furthermore, experience has shown that "market assisted land reform" is an invitation to corruption and clientelism, as control over the land sale and transfer process is placed squarely in the hands of rural elites.

In Brazil, for example, projects like the *Cédula da Terra* ('A ticket to land'), Land Bank, Land Credit and Combating Poverty programs, all have the Bank seal of approval and financial support. These projects run counter to the Brazilian legal tenet by which expropriation of idle land (with financial compensation) should be the principle instrument used to obtain land. The Brazilian constitution establishes that private farm land must fulfill a 'social function,' which means that it should be used to produce food and other goods, and that all relevant environmental and labor laws must be respected. If any of these criteria are not met on a particular parcel, then the government should "desapropriate" (confiscate the land with financial compensation), and use it for land reform and for settling landless families.

By adopting the World Bank model the Brazilian State is failing to comply with a constitutional obligation. Instead of penalizing those who have landholdings that far exceed what they can actually use productively, the World Bank programs reward them, as they are now the ones who can decide to sell or not any given plot of land. In addition, this expansion of land markets has in many cases led landlords to jack up land prices, thus further benefiting them.

In dozens of countries, the Bank's structural adjustment policies have led to the privatization of lands once held by indigenous and minority peoples (such as the descendents of African slaves in some parts of the Americas), and the privatization of water and forests, leading to growing social inequality. Land market policies are now being inserted into this context.

The incredible similarity of the Bank policies and their impacts being imposed across a wide range of diverse countries, is what has generated an international movement of opposition to "market assisted land reform." Many organizations—like Via Campesina, FIAN, and the Land Research Action Network (LRAN), have come together to synthesize these experiences and disseminate information about both these World Bank policies and about alternatives put forth by grassroots organizations.

These organizations demand an immediate suspension of land market programs and call for the democratization of access to land via expropriation, with broad participation by grassroots rural social movements in policy formulation and implementation. Social movements want to guarantee the right to land for rural peoples through genuine agrarian reform, accompanied by complementary agricultural policies, which together would guarantee the food sovereignty of their nations.

Dirce Ostroski

Brazil

Population: 169.8 million people (2000)
Surface area: 8,514,204 km2
Type of government: presidential republic

Brazil produces some 90 million tons of grain every year. According to the 1996 Agricultural Census, there are 25 million hectares of idle lands (up to four years without being farmed), which represents about 60% of all farmland.

Brazil has one of the most perverse and concentrated structures of landholding in the world, with a GINI coefficient of almost 0.9. This level of the index, which is close to absolute concentration is the result of a model of agriculture that excludes the poor majority, and which was particularly exacerbated in the Green Revolution years in the 1960s and 70s.

According the 1996 Census, Brazil had some 4.8 million farms, which occupied 353.6 million hectares. Of this total, *minifundios* (micro-size farms) and properties of less than 100 hectares accounted for 89.1% of the farms, but had only 20% of the farmland.

At the other extreme, *latifundios* (mega-farms) of more than 1,000 hectares accounted for just 1% of all farms, but held 45% of farmland. Of these super-sized estates, more than 35,000 were characterized as unproductive, and occupied some 166 million hectares.

Between 1970 and 1996 the proportion of farms with less than 100 hectares hardly changed – from 90.8% to 89.3% — yet the area they held dropped by 20%. Meanwhile the latifundios grew from 0.7% to 1% of all farms, and the area they held grew from 39.5% to 45% of all farmland.

Neoliberalism in the Countryside

In 1998, at the beginning of his second term in office, the government of former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso inaugurated a "new agrarian policy" called the New Rural World. The three premises of this new policy marked a clear break from his first term in office. The first difference was the reduction of agrarian policy to a simple formula of compensation. Following the logic of the international financial agencies, agrarian reform was transformed into an instrument of rural poverty alleviation. The democratization of access to land became a mere mechanism of alleviation, a palliative. It was not seen as a way to redistribute assets, nor as a way to innovate new models of rural development (not even when the prevalence of extreme poverty is seen as an obstacle to the current development model).

The second key element was the decentralization of all actions related to the administration of land. This is a very fundamental aspect of the current policy package, and represents a process of "defederalization" because it delegates authority that formerly was exclusively the domain of the federal government. All of the programs, projects and proposed policies for the rural sector took as their reference point this need to decentralize, establishing a supposed relationship between decentralization, democracy and efficiency.

This decentralization, however, did not signify democratization nor greater participation by affected people and families. Rather it represented a delegation of authority to state and municipal governments, which are closer to and more susceptible to the political influence of the rural oligarchy who exercise political power over vast sectors of the State. This decentralization, therefore, instead of being a solution (or more efficient and agile) it is in fact a way of impeding agrarian reform.

World Bank-supported programs and projects like the *Cédula da Terra* ("Ticket to Land"), Land Bank, and Land Credit, proved to be mechanisms that permitted the consolidation of this "defederalization or decentralization, in fact leading to the reduction and eventual destruction of agrarian reform. They allow the transfer of responsibility not so much – as they were supposed to – to state and municipal governments, but in reality to the market, and thus right into the hands of the large landlords. As a result, the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) lost its reason for being, justifying budget slashing and strengthening the model of the reduction of the State and the privatization of its responsibilities.

The third key element in the New Rural World was the commodification of the historic demands by the landless. This commodification took diverse forms, though the imposition of the "market-led land reform" model was the most explicit reference in this process.

All of these characteristics are in agreement with the guidelines and policies established by the World Bank for "poverty alleviation" programs. In fact the whole direction of economic development in Brazil followed these formulas.

World Bank Policies

The *Cédula da Terra* program came about as sort of 'sharecropping' arrangement between the Bank and the Brazilian government via Loan Agreement 4147-BR. Initially conceived as a pilot project, the *Cédula da Terra* was announced officially in 1996, and implemented the following year in five states in the Northeast of Brazil: Ceará, Maranhão, Pernambuco, Bahia and the northern part of Minas Gerais. These states were chosen because of the enormous problems of extreme poverty that they present.

The *Cédula da Terra* project consisted basically of the creation of a line of credit for purchasing land by the landless or near landless. The landless had to form associations and legally incorporate, and the associations would purchase land directly from the landlords. The associations had to apply for credit from the local bank, indicating the land they wished to buy. Once the bank and the technical unit of the government approved their proposal, the bank would pay the landlord directly.

Although this was a pilot project, in 1999 it essentially went national with the Land Bank, created by the government in the same mold. Despite having promised financial support for this new program, the World Bank decided to finance a different project, the Land Credit program (a third project created in 2001). This switch reflected the pressure and criticism received from social movements, and national and international NGOs. In the end, however, the Land Credit program had the same characteristics and objectives as the *Cédula da Terra* and the Land Bank, in reality being nothing than a name change by the government in order to keep receiving World Bank resources.

All of these programs are conceived and implemented based on the needs of the market, especially with regard to land acquisition. That means that only land that is for sale can be acquired. Beyond the fact that many areas of Brazil have at best incipient land markets, the small amounts budgeted for land purchases inevitably led to buying the cheapest and poorest quality land. Rather than the price of land being driven down in the bargaining process, the reality is that the small amount of land on offer and the lack of funds forced the purchase of the cheapest plots, far from markets and with low soil fertility.

The few resources available for land purchasing limited the implementation of these programs to less dynamic regions with less valuable land, and with serious production constraints. These constraints limited the productivity of the new farms, and made it very hard for the "beneficiaries" to pay off the debts acquired by purchasing the land.

The "beneficiary" families had little or no influence in key decisions, like the selection of plots to be bought, or in the bargaining process. In general, these negotiations over price were handled by local government officials, who made all the important decisions.

The Position of Social Movements

Grassroots movements in Brazil heavily criticized the World Bank proposal of "market-led agrarian reform." Their critiques were based on their very different viewpoints, and included questions about the real capacity of the market to democratize access to land and about the true objectives of these policies.

According to these critiques, the *Cédula da Terra* program was designed to move the land issue out of the terrain of politics and into the terrain of the market. The buying and selling mechanism is supposed to remove the conflictive nature from the struggle for land, and politically isolate the movements that are fighting for a genuine agrarian reform.

According to the World Bank, this project would permit the "pacification" of the countryside. Instead of getting involved in conflicts (land occupations an demands for land reform), landless families should bargain, peacefully and directly, with the landlords. Of course the landlords loved this program because they were paid in cash (instead of 20 year discounted bonds under the old land reform) for their least productive lands.

Added to this, the *Cédula da Terra*, Land Bank and Land Credit programs all promoted the on-going process of decentralization, helping the federal government in its attempt to transfer the costs of agrarian reform to state and municipal budgets. According to this logic, the *Cédula da Terra* project was implemented by the states and the costs were passed on to the beneficiary families, thus marking a great contribution to the federal budget by the Ministry of Agrarian Development. The reduction in costs has permitted the dismantling of INCRA, which has few functions in the land market context.

The resources of *Cédula da Terra* were in fact an instrument designed to cut off the movements that struggle for land from their social bases. The availability of credits to buy land—together with rhetoric about "peaceful" land reform, without the need for land occupations—was supposed to demobilize those people who dreamed of a patch of land to call their own. These goals were carried over into the Land Bank and Land Credit programs, always with support from the World Bank.

Today, the administration of president Lula is willing to continue implementing a market-based land policy with support from the World Bank. At the same time, the Via Campesina in Brazil has announced its strong opposition to those policies.

Text based on NETO, Manuel Domingos – *The "new" Brazilian rural world*

SAUER, Sérgio – *World Bak land policies in Brazil: a study on the "Cédula" project*

Claudio Ronchini

"Our struggle for a piece of land is a struggle to build peace"

COLOMBIA

Population: ***42.2 million people (2000)***
Surface area: ***1,141,748 km2***
Type of government: ***presidential republic***

Colombia suffered an accelerated process of concentration of land into the hand of large landlords. At the same time the area actually farmed fell drastically. According to a study by the Controller's Office of the Colombian Government, the Western region of the country has the highest degree of land concentration into large estates, with the Cauca Valley state experiencing the most intense process of concentration between 1985 and 1996, followed by Antioquía, Sucre and César.

The rural population grew from 6 million people in 1938 to 11.6 million in 1996. Over this period, the economically active population in agricultural activities grew from 1.9 to 2.7

million. The number of autonomous rural workers grew from 600,000 in 1938 to 700,000 in 1964 and 800,000 in 1993.

The Colombian peasantry is faced with, beyond the "via latifundiaria" (large estate model of land tenure), transnational capital and the accompanying model of economic globalization. This model requires the "cleansing" of "inefficient" producers from rural areas, and this cleansing has been carried out by war. As was said earlier, it is not so much that there are so many displaced people in Colombia because there is war, but rather that there is war precisely to displace people.

Historical Overview

Since the beginning of the 20th century there is a rich history of peasant organizations, as well of the struggles waged by indigenous peoples and by Afro-Colombians. In 1926 the peasant movement achieved a major victory with the passing of Law number 74, which recognizes the social function of landholdings, and authorizes the State to expropriate idle farmland and also creates other pro-peasant policies. In the period from 1934 to 1936 the popular movements reached their apogee, with important gains. Law number 200, passed in 1936, as a tentative first attempt at an agrarian reform, though based only simple schemes of parceling out plots. This period also saw the creation of the Land Mortgage Bank.

However, in 1944 the landlords managed to pass Law number 100, which delayed until 1956 the application of those parts of Law number 200 that favored the rights of sharecroppers and tenants and that would have used eminent domain to pass land being sharecropped over to those who till it. By delaying implementation, the landlords made violence inevitable.

At that time the peasantry was organized in the first national body, the National Peasant and Indigenous Peoples' Federation, founded on October 12, 1942. In 1947 it was to become the combative Peasant and Indigenous Confederation.

Beginning in 1946 there was a growing incidence of violence in Colombia. It was largely directed at the Confederation and eventually led to the assassination of the majority of its leaders. The violence liquidated the organization of peasants and indigenous people, and passed through its most cruel phase with the murder 200,000 peasants and the displacement of another 2 million from their land. This land was then used by the landlords to establish large-scale plantations of crops like cotton and sugarcane. This extreme repression of legal civic organizations naturally opened political space for the growth of guerilla movements in Colombia. The insurgents, as the guerillas are known, were born from the struggle for land. They consist of various organizations, though the best known is the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

It would take until 1958 for peace agreements to be reached with the various guerilla organizations, which once again opened a path toward policies of agrarian reform and a new consolidation of the peasantry as a social class. But these policies failed. The nascent agrarian reform process was interrupted in 1962 by a political pact between landowner associations and mainstream political parties. The official death of the reform process came with Law number 4 in 1973, which liquated the agrarian reform. Since that time, the Colombian Land Reform Institute (INCORA) has been reduced to applying small fines to landowners, while implementing a variety of measures to impede the peasant struggle.

The Influence of the World Bank

Incidents of peasants occupying lands nominally belonging to large landlords peaked at 600 in 1961, and dropped to just 6 between 1978 and 1981. Meanwhile, the guerilla movement reappeared and grew in leaps and bounds. USD $27 million in World Bank credit was destined for the agricultural frontier, which consists of areas of peasant colonization. These are zones of proliferation of other "alternatives" to land reform: guerilla armies and narcotics plantations.

The current crisis in Colombia is derived from both a weak presence of the State and from the constant maneuvers of the landowning class to expand their holdings at the expense of rural workers, eliminating them as competitors in the market.

Following World Bank guidelines, the government of President César Gaviria proposed a "subsidized land market," based on the buying and selling of land. The original proposal came from the Bank and was created under Lay 170 in 1994. In June 1996, a "seed money" loan of US $1.82 million was granted, to finance pilot experiences and the creation of a technical unit to prepare a series of projects to support this version of "market-assisted land reform."

The program was announced with the stated goal of guaranteeing access to land and secure tenure to peasants, by eliminating state bureaucracy and intervention in the market. The program is currently in a state of crisis, due to elevated interest rates and subsequent failure of beneficiaries to keep up with their loan payments, and constant cutbacks in INCORA's budget for investing in land acquisition, which had originally been promised by the government as a their counterpart to the World Bank financing.

In 1997 the landlords offered 1,141,303 hectares of land for sale via INCORA, who was only able to actually subsidize the purchase 42,527 hectares, which is just 3.7% of the total, and benefited just 3,113 of the 38,451 families who signed up to get land. From that point on the program has been declining, with 1,767 families benefiting in 1998, 845 in 1999, and just 650 in 2000 and 2001. Over its entire lifespan, it has subsidized land purchases for 13,000 families.

In 1998 the proposal to redirect the funds earmarked for subsidizing land purchases by the poor, toward purchases by "producers with the capacity to invest" was but one small element in a larger move to reconcentrate land in Colombia. From that point on, the government of then President Andres Pastrana tried to replace the subsidized land market project with a program he called "strategic alliances," to promote partnerships between large and small landowners and businessmen. This fed into a World Bank program called "production associations," and rather than strengthen the peasant economy it was designed to subordinate peasants to, and put their land at the service of, large corporations.

On January 22, 2002, the Bank approved a loan of US $32 million to develop the production associations scheme to better link rural communities with the private sector and supposedly to dynamize the internal market, targeted at the land that had been purchased in the now failed subsidized land market project.

The new project emphasized African Oil Palm plantations. Three of the priority zones for the new program are the principal producers of oil palm. From an economic perspective, the program would function as a sort of subsidy to the large plantation owners to tide them over periods of low prices, and to assist them to expand their area by taking over the land of nearby smallholders. Here we see the World Bank acting directly contrary to land reform.

These "alliances" are a legal 'out' so that new "feudal lords" don't have to meet their obligations to displaced families. Tuning the land-poor peasants who are his workers into "partners," the plantation owner rents their lands, and uses the peasant as worker without paying any overtime or benefits. The idea is to have land and labor permanently available without having any traditional kind of "labor" relationship between the plantation owners and the peasants who work for them. This increases the supply of labor, which benefits the transnationals that process and market the palm oil.

We can also see that the Bank works contrary to true agrarian reform, in that all five priority zones are areas where processes of subordination of the peasantry are already underway, by means of violence at the hands of the army, and economic dependence. The Bank program reinforces these processes.

The Social Movements' Proposal

The Agrarian Coordination, which is made up of Colombia Peasant Action (ACC), the Unitary National Agricultural Labor Federation (FENSUAGRO), the Colombian National Indigenous Peoples' Organization (OINC), among others, called from the very beginning for a different set of laws. They argued that the governmental project, rather than countering the tendency for land prices to rise out of reach of the poor, was actually consolidating this trend, leaving both INCORA and the peasantry at the mercy of the landlords.

In 1999 the Agrarian Coordination became the National Peasant Coordination (CNC), with 11 member organizations. They have put forth a concrete agrarian proposal adapted to Colombian reality. On September 13, 2000, they carried out coordinated mass mobilizations in 13 regions of the country.

The CNC grew out of regional mobilizations of peasants, landless people and of local civic organizations that were demanding real solutions to the agrarian crisis. They created the CNC because they could never get an adequate response from pre-existing national organizations, which had been severely weakened by violence and the death or exile of most of their leadership. A key step was the founding of Coffee Unity (UC), which grouped together peasant and smallholder coffee farmers in the struggle to have their unpayable debts cancelled.

Out of the struggle to defend national farm production came the National Association for the Agricultural Salvation of Colombia (ANSAC), which led a national general strike in rural areas from July 31 to August 4, 2000, mobilizing 100,000 people in 27 separate street blockades. ANSAC held their first national congress in 2001, having incorporated affiliates in 17 states.

To transform current conditions, the social movements are calling for a comprehensive program of agrarian reform and the reconstruction of national agriculture. Among the specific actions they demand are subsidized interest rates for farm loans, changing trade policy to protect the domestic farm economy, and a strengthening of public sector services that assist farmers in the adoption of appropriate technologies.

They call for a solution based on inalienable "Peasant Reserve Areas," where land tenure arrangements guarantee long-term access to land for small farmers and their communities, and permit them to plan their own future development initiatives. If any such proposal were to be successful, they must be premised on the recognition that family farmers are a strategic economic sector, and they must be seen as true actors in development.

Text based on MONDRAGÓN, Hector – *Colombia: land market or land reform?*

Claudio Ronchini

GUATEMALA

Population: 11.4 million people (2000)
Surface area: 108,889 km2
Type of government: presidential republic

The rural population of Guatemala suffers from one of the most unjust systems of land concentration in the world. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, in 1998 just 0.15% of the landowners had 70% of the arable land, mostly devoted to export cropping, while 96% of the country's farmers occupied just 20% of the farmland. 90% of the inhabitants of rural areas live in poverty, and more than 500,000 are below subsistence levels. At the same time, Guatemala has one of the world's most stable proportions of the national population located in the countryside, hovering at about 69%, and more than 50% of the national workforce is employed in agriculture and agriculturally-related jobs.

Over time the degree of land concentration has intensified. Between 1964 and 1979, the number of farms of less than 3.5 hectares doubled, while the average size of farms of less than 7 hectares fell from 2.4 to 1.8 hectares from 1950 to 1979. According the 1979 Agricultural Census, 88% of all farms were less than the 7 hectares deemed the minimum to maintain a family, and this 88% of all farms possessed just 6% of all arable land. In contrast, the 2% of all farms that were classified as *haciendas* (large estates) had fully 65% of arable land.

The National Coordination of Indigenous People and Peasants (CONIC) estimates that of 10.8 million hectares of surface area in the country, only 2.8 million are being productively cultivated, with another 2.4 million hectares that are being used in ways that are unproductive or are underutilized. Studies indicate that some 5.5 million hectares would have to be distributed—more than half the national territory—if each landless or near-landless family were to have access to the 7 hectares needed for subsistence.

Historical Overview

The hacienda system in Guatemala has its roots in the Spanish Conquest, when the land was seized from indigenous peoples and given as compensation to the new Spanish colonists. After independence in 1821, land ownership remained highly skewed, and the Church and indigenous communities lost their rights to land ownership.

In 1890 coffee made up 96% of all Guatemalan exports. The peasant sector had been left behind, restricted to the most infertile soils, and food imports began. Peasants began their annual migrations down from the mountains to the coast in search of seasonal jobs.

The agrarian law of 1894 allowed the sale of state lands to individuals, in other words, land was to be a commodity and not a public good. In 1901 the United Fruit Co.—known today as Chiquita—began its activities in Guatemala. Between 1924 and 1930, the government rented 188,682 hectares of land on the fertile Pacific plains to this foreign company. The company paid only a small tax on its exports and earned its profits tax free, and it was also made exempt from existing labor laws.

In 1945, Juan José Arévalo won the presidency, and decreed a 'land to the tiller' reform under which titles were to given to sharecroppers, tenants and squatters who had tilled the same piece of land for at least ten years. Elected President in 1951, Jacobo Arbenz promised to transform Guatemala into a modern capitalist nation via industrialization and land reform.

On June 17, 1952, the Congress of Guatemala approved the Agrarian Reform Law. Its principle objectives were to eliminate all forms of feudalism and labor servitude, distribute land to the landless and near landless, and provide smallholders with credit and technical assistance.

Opposition to agrarian reform was rapid and decisive. The rural elites, the Catholic Church, certain sectors of the middle class, expropriated landowners and foreign corporations, like United Fruit Co. all came out against land reform. Since the subsequent coup in 1954 not one piece of land has been expropriated in Guatemala, reinforcing an unjust system of land tenure.

Land Markets

In 1980 the US Agency for International Development (USAID) noted the intensifying pressure for land and recommended land reform via the market. From 1984 to 1990 USAID created and supported the Penny Foundation (Fundación del Centavo) program, which purchased 28 haciendas which were then sub-divided into 1,400 collectively titled parcels, and provided beneficiary families with production and marketing guidelines. The mechanism was to sell the land but create a credit bank so farmers in poor communities could buy it. In other words, it was actually a "land market" system rather than a market-led land reform.

In 1994 a new government agency was created, to be administered by the National Institute for Agrarian Transformation (INTA), which would intervene in the land market, giving assistance to renters, smallholders and the landless who wished to buy land. This agency, called FONTIERRAS, has two programs. One provides public grants for land acquisition and promotes markets for buying and selling land; and another gives subsidized credit and technical assistance to new farmers to help them initiate productive farming businesses.

However, the implementation of this program has been slow. By October of 2000, fewer than 4,000 families had benefited from it. The World Bank, which finances this program, declared its lack of interest in continuing to do so. According to the United Nations, the basic obstacles that FONTIERRAS would have to overcome in order to carry out a significant redistribution of land include insufficient staff and resources. Beyond this, various issues related to market-style land reforms should be highlighted. The most cited pillar of this type of reform is the so-called "willing seller/willing buyer" principle. The truth is that given the nature of land concentration in Guatemala, it is almost impossible for peasants to participate in land markets.

The World Bank points out that landowners are reluctant to participate in this scheme because they fear it will encourage demands for land and the incidence of spontaneous land occupations. Furthermore, the majority of the landless and near landless do not have the resources or ability to negotiate effectively in the land market. Overall, the implementation of FONTIERRAS, which had been part of the 1996 Peace Accords, has really only focused on the negotiated sale of some unutilized public lands.

Land speculation and associated corruption are rampant in Guatemala. According to some estimates, from 50 to 90% of properties do not have up-to-date titles, while others suggest that the amount of land registered with titles—real or fraudulent—is double the actual surface are of the country. This ambiguity in the land registry system has also been cited as an obstacle to reforms based on land markets.

Currently Guatemala is the only Central American country that lacks a national land cadastre and registry. There is a lack of technical capacity to carry out a national cadastre, and current efforts are notable for the lack of community participation. The international agencies failed to talk to each other about coordinating their efforts. Currently, their available resources are on the order of USD $62.5 million.

Alternative Proposals for Rural Development

A broad group of social movements, research institutes, religious and human rights organizations have launched a proposal titled: "Blazing the Trail: Proposed Platform for Rural Development." Among the organizations elaborating this documents were CONIC, the

Guatemalan Association for the Advancement of the Social Sciences (AVANCSO), the Human Rights Legal Center (CDHL) and the Pastoral Land Commission (PTI). Together they formed the Agrarian Platform.

According to this proposal, the fundamental first principle of rural development is equitable access to land, backed by investment in appropriate infrastructure and services to facilitate sustainable livelihoods, and access to land should not be limited by the laws of the market. They propose the dismantling of the agroexport development model, the democratization of access to land, the transfer of titles to peasant and indigenous communities, and the diversification of the economy.

CONIC has some 80,000 members, about 95%of whom are indigenous people, spread out over in 14 of the 22 departments of Guatemala. Their principle objectives are to fight for the right to land and for better access to public services for poorer farmers. Beyond that they have about half a million associated peasants in 20 of the 22 departments, covering five regions of the country.

For the peasant organizations, FONTIERRAS doesn't work for a variety of reasons, including the underlying conditions of extreme land concentration, the lack of resources to fund the program, and the dominant model of agricultural production. And for those few who actually receive land this way, there are no programs to help them get their products to the market, they are unable to pay the debts they acquired in purchasing the land, and sooner or later their new land is repossessed.

A study carried out by CNOC and CONGCOOP proposes a greater degree of state intervention in the recovery of lands seized illegally during the military dictatorship, and in the distribution of expropriated land by INTA, which is actually permitted under the constitution (though never done in practice). They suggest landowners be indemnified for their expropriated lands.

The study found that the principle factors impeding access to land are:

Some 95% of all properties are not registered.

The colonial land registry was never modernized.

There is little or no credit available to small farmers; 95% of all credit goes to urban areas, and even in FONTIERRAS the amount budgeted for credit is minimal.

There is little or no technical assistance for small farmers, since the Ministry of Agriculture dismantled the extension service and FONTIERRAS offers assistance only to the few families who are its beneficiaries.

Text based on TANAKA, Laura Saldivar e WITTMAN, Hannah – *Peace agreement and "Fontierras" in Guatemala*

Indranil Mukherjee/AFP

INDIA

Population: 1,000 million people (2000)
Surface area: 3,287,782 km2
Type of government: parliamentary republic

India is faced with challenging problems of land concentration and lack of land rights, tenure security and access for the poor. While the contribution of agriculture to economy has fallen over the years, some 58% of the population still depends on the land to make a living. Of this total, 63% own plots of less than one hectare, while just 2% own all of the farms that are larger than 10 hectares. The landless and near landless (those with less than 0.2 hectares) make up 43% of peasant families. Most studies show that inequality is on the rise in India. The number of landless workers has grown, and the proportion of land monopolized today by the wealthiest 10% of rural families is larger than it was in 1951.

Historical Overview

During the two centuries of British colonization, the land issue was like a lens that revealed the growing loss of India's economic independence and the subversion of its social processes. During colonialism, India's traditional land ownership and land use patterns were changed to ease acquisition of land at low prices by British entrepreneurs for mines, plantations, and other purposes. The introduction of the institution of private property delegitimized community ownership systems of tribal societies. Moreover, the introduction of the land tax under the Permanent Settlement Act 1793, assured the permanence of semi-feudal society in rural areas through independence in 1948.

At the beginning of the period of independence, ownership and control over land were highly concentrated in the hands of a small number of landlords and their intermediaries, whose principal goal was the extraction of the maximum amount of rent possible, whether in the form of money or harvest shares. This reality seemed not to worry the governments of the 1970s and 80s. It wasn't until the 90s that the agrarian issue reared its head again, though dressed up differently and hiding its true intentions.

The Agrarian Model of the World Bank

The current agrarian reform proposal in India is based on the "free-market" ideology, and is being pushed by various international financial institutions, like the World Bank. The emphasis reflects the macroeconomic objectives of these institutions.

These institutions say the reforms are needed to resolve the basic problems faced by poor people in rural areas: access to land, and security of tenure. They propose structural reforms to property rights to facilitate functioning land markets as a joint strategy to stimulate economic growth and alleviate rural poverty.

The package on offer includes comprehensive reforms of land tenure, including titling, cadastral surveys and settlement operations, land registries, improvements in land revenue systems, land legislation, land administration, land sale-purchase transactions, and removal of restrictions on land leasing.

In 1975, a Land Reform Policy Paper brought out by the World Bank listed land registration and titling as the main instruments for increasing tenure security, the main facilitating mechanisms for the establishment of flourishing land markets, and the best tools to enable the use of land as collateral for credit. Today these ingredients constitute the mainstay of Bank-led land reforms around the world.

The foundation of the Bank measures is the "well-functioning land market," in which land will gradually pass from "less efficient" farmers to "more efficient" producers. As a private transaction, the new owner swill supposedly use the land better, or to use World Bank terminology, "generate maximum profits."

But even as the international financial institutions announce greater access to land by the poor via credits to purchase land, the same institutions push macroeconomic policies that undercut the viability of family farming: trade liberalization, cutbacks of subsidies to food producers, the privatization of credit and banking, undue promotion of export cropping, and financing for research into inappropriate technologies, like genetic engineering.

All of these policies affect small farmers, pushing many into bankruptcy and mass distress sales of land, swelling the ranks of the landless, further concentrating land ownership, and driving environmental degradation and rural-urban migration. For many observers, the clearest result of these policies is the deteriorating access to land by the poor, as they are forced to sell what they already have, or lose it to the bank when they can't pay off their loans.

The commercialization of agriculture took off in India in the 1960s with the Green Revolution, when the World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) boosted agricultural productivity through the import of fertilizers, seeds, pesticides and farm machinery. World Bank credit subsidized these imports, while the Bank also exerted pressure on the government to create favorable conditions for foreign investment in India's fertilizer industry, and pushed import liberalization and the elimination of most domestic controls.

In 1969, the Terai Seed Corporation was started with a USD $13 million World Bank loan. This was followed by two National Seeds Project loans totaling USD $41 million between 1974 and 1978. In 1988, the World Bank gave India's seed sector a fourth loan of USD $150 million loan to privatize the seed industry and open India to multinational seed corporations. In any country, agriculture is the sector that receives the greatest investment from the Bank. In India, since the 1950s, 130 Bank projects have received a total of USD $10.2 billion.

Markets for Water and Forests

In an agricultural country like India, where two-thirds of agricultural production is dependant on irrigation and where irrigation accounts for 83% of water consumption, irrigation schemes that can enhance agricultural productivity assume special importance. Thus the international financial institutions have now begun financing and promoting the restructuring of the hydrological sector. Highlighting the need for a "total revolution in irrigated agriculture," the government of India and the World Bank have identified the tasks at hand as:

Modernization of irrigation agencies in order to make them more autonomous and accountable.

Improvements in irrigation systems by organizing farmers to take up operation and management responsibilities, based on the formation of water user associations at the local and regional levels.

Reforms in irrigation financing in order to make state irrigation departments financially self-sufficient, rationalizing water charges and improving collection rates.

Institution of a system of water rights.

The overall goal is to facilitate the creation of markets for water. The propaganda of modernization is being used by the World Bank to institute user-fees for water and to privatize water services.

The Bank and other international agencies are also pushing forestry projects. After the failure of social forestry projects and faced by the ongoing deterioration in the country's forest resources, in 1988 the Government of India introduced a new forest policy: that forests be managed first as an ecological necessity, second as a source of goods for local populations, and only third as a source of wood for industries and other non-local consumers. This policy was pioneering to the extent that it recognized the people living in and around the forest as an essential requirement in the governance of forests, considered them partners of the Forestry Department, and appreciated their demand as the first charge on the forest produce. Yet today we find the Bank pushing large-scale monocultures of species like Eucalyptus – a perennial World Bank favorite – which cause land degradation and the lowering of water tables.

Traditional Peoples and Women

The concept of land as a commodity comes into conflict with traditional concepts of common property and with societies, such as those of the tribals (as indigenous peoples are known in India), who generally do not have a documented system of land rights. In an ironic twist of fate, tribals happen to live in resource rich regions. Consequently, the government and the private sector have a keen interest in gaining access and control over their land and mineral resources. An estimated 2.13 million people have been displaced by large projects since Indian independence. The majority of these have been tribals, who constitute 7% of India's population.

The conditions under which women participate in farming have also changed, and generally not for the better. Traditionally, rural women have been responsible for half of the world's food production. They remain the main producers of the world's staple crops - rice, wheat, and maize - which provide up to 90% of the rural poor's food intake. Women's specialized knowledge about genetic resources for food and agriculture makes them essential custodians of agro-biodiversity.

Nevertheless, the gender debate remains an issue of marginal concern. There has been a neglect of women's land-related concerns by both governmental and non-governmental institutions and this also mirrors a gap in academic scholarship, where the relationship between women and property has remained relatively unattended.

Today it is crucially important in India to bring forward all of the issues related to land, especially as land reform has all but disappeared from the popular imagination. It must be brought back and placed squarely at the center of the national agenda, according to Indian social movements. For them, agrarian reform is crucial to national sovereignty itself.

Text based on PIMPLE, Minar – *Land reform in India: issues and challenges*

Maria Luisa Mendonça

Mexico

Population: **98.9 million people (2000)**
Surface area: **1,972,547 km2**
Type of government: **presidential republic**

In 1991, President Carlos Salinas announced that he would amend Article 27 of the 1917 revolutionary constitution of Mexico. Article 27 implemented agrarian reform: it guaranteed the right to land for all peasants, decreed the expropriation of large estates and the redistribution of land not as individual plots, but as communally held *ejidos*.[1] The modification of article 27 had major effects on *ejido* and other communal land in that it implied the

[1] The ejido is an exclusive product of the Mexican agrarian reform. "The ejido has shaped much of the economic, social, and political order of Mexico's rural sector. In this regard it is both an entity of production and a form of social organization. It has played a dual economic role as producer of affordable basic goods for the urban population and as a refuge for Mexico's poor and unemployed. At the same time, it has often been locus of collective political action." (Baños, 1998: 32) "Whether for good or ill, the reproduction of campesino households cannot be sustained solely by the land; the resources that have flowed from the government to the ejido (whatever their political cost) are indispensable." (López and Moguel, 1998: 222).

possibility of dividing the *ejido* into small private properties, and declared the end of further land redistribution.

Historical Overview

The struggle for land has always been a central goal of social movements throughout Mexican history. The key demands of the 1910 revolution were that land, forest and water resources be expropriated from the large landowners, to provide landless peasants with land to establish *ejido*s and agrarian colonies. The post revolutionary government conceived the creation of *ejido*s as a form of organization for production, as a body for the political representation of peasants, and as an instrument of political control.

Between 1915 and 1934, six presidential administrations redistributed 10 million hectares, while President Cardenas in just 6 years (1934-1940) gave away almost 19 million hectares to 729,000 *ejidatarios*.

Beginning in the Cardenas administration, a new Agrarian Code established the legal means by which landless hacienda workers (*peones*) could become landowners. Under Cardenas' rapid land distribution, the *ejido* finally became a permanent form of land tenure in the countryside.

Between 1940 and 1958 there was a period known as the *contrareforma* (counter-reform) that attempted to dismantle the agrarian legacy of Cardenas. Agrarian policies were modified so that the best lands were allocated to medium and large farmers, and the ceiling size for small farms was increased to 100 hectares of fertile land, or its equivalent in areas of poor quality land.

Since 1970, agricultural self-sufficiency based on traditional peasant production practices (use of native seeds, biological pest control, organic fertilizers, animal traction, and intercropping) has been steadily degraded by a truncated process of technological modernization initiated by the government organizations for research and extension in agriculture.

Under Presidents López Portillo (1976-1982) and De la Madrid (1982-1988), the government once again made changes similar to the *contrareforma* of the 40s and 50s, as it sought to replace agrarian reform with policies designed to increase productivity. Small farmers were set aside while large-scale agriculture and livestock operators received most of the subsidies, investment and financial assistance.

After the 1980s there was no longer any significant money made available for subsidies for the rural sector. Mexico began to invest in other parts of its economy in order to be globally competitive. The economy was transformed by structural adjustments that were accompanied by an emphasis on promoting foreign investment in agriculture. The Mexican government did not pursue a policy of food sovereignty, rather they saw small scale grain production as unprofitable and something that would not attract investment. As a reflection of this, from 1988 on, the source of credit to agriculture shifted from state development banks like *Banrural* to commercial banks.

After more than six decades of Mexico's agrarian reform, its principal results were that small farmers intensified their production and got access to markets, so they could maintain their incomes while cultivating fewer hectares; it kept people in rural areas who otherwise might have joined the masses of the unemployed in the cities; it deterred rural unrest while the economy developed; and it allowed its beneficiaries to become the major producers of staple foods in the country. However it failed in that some marginal lands that should have been conserved, restored, or preserved were put at risk; and the slow provision of titles and late and inadequate input supply, credit, and technical assistance left out many beneficiaries and thus the reform fell well short of its economic production potential. In addition, some large landlords were untouched by land reform because of political connections or subterfuge, giving an undercurrent of unfairness to the process; land delivery was used as a form of political patronage, often functioning to keep peasants politically repressed and "in their place; and many peasants never received land at all.

Neoliberalism in the Countryside

The elimination of subsidies and the privatization or complete disappearance of many public services and agencies that attended to the rural sector, affected access to credit, insurance, markets, modernizations, seeds, water, technical assistance and basic infrastructure, while greatly increasing the cost of inputs and remaining services.

The abandonment of the peasant sector by the rural financial system and the closing down of the National Crop and Livestock Insurance Agency were part of the dismantling of the rural sector. The total amount of credit available to agriculture was cut back drastically, and most of what was left was redirected to large farmers. The weakening and retreat of public sector institutions was not followed by the opening of private bank branches in rural communities. In addition, the public and private sectors both failed miserably by not providing any source of long-term investment capital in "competitive technologies."

In 1992, the amendment to Article 27 was approved by 388 votes in favor and 45 against. The stated objectives of the reform of the constitution were to slow down the growing phenomenon of *minifundio* (proliferation of very small farms) in the countryside, promoting investment to increase production, and was supposed to be consistent with Salina's promise to generate more employment and to create labor organizations for agricultural workers.

This amendment came as part of a package of neoliberal reforms that included the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico, and the United States; the privatization of state enterprises; the deregulation of agricultural markets; and the privatization of irrigation water management.

Critics of the reform of Article 27 argue that the main consequences have been the breakdown of the rural social contract, the privatization of the *ejido*, the destruction of indigenous agrarian communities, the creation of new ways to concentrate land holdings, and the expulsion of millions of rural families from the countryside to the cities.

The most common forms of exchange of land in Mexico's countryside used to be leasing, renting, mortgaging, borrowing, and other form of land division such as sharecropping. According to various researchers, after the reform of Article 27 and with the subsequent creation of the Program to Certify Agrarian Rights and Land Titles (PROCEDE0, the land market has grown specifically in the categories of buying and selling, and renting land, among members of rural communities and with outsiders. They note that population increase and age distribution are related to the politization of land transactions, and to the increase of *minifundio*. The end of land redistribution closed off an essential way to access land, which is now only available by inheritance, purchase, renting, or borrowing. In the case of the poor, it is now only possible through inheritance. Where land markets now prevail, a local or foreign minority elite controls the best *ejido* land or privatizes communal land, while a growing number of *campesinos* are losing their access to land.

With the reform, the *ejido* sector suffered a swift decline in the technification of production – except with respect to the use of improved seed – as in the case of sorghum. The few new technological investments are destined to the large producers. As for the rural poor, "…the much touted globalization of the market has not obliterated rural culture, but it has had an impact. Mexico's rural poor have been left behind technologically, and their traditional agricultural practices, which sufficed in the past, have now been distorted and discredited by the new orthodoxy, resulting in an inevitable deterioration of the environment and a decline in the quality of rural life," said one critic.

In 1995, 73% of Mexico's population lived in urban areas. In recent decades as much as 60% of urban growth has occurred by means of the illegal alienation of *ejido* land. In 1995 the governmental program "100 Cities" announced the urbanization of 120 thousand hectares of *ejido* land for the expansion of the main cities. The *ejido* form of ownership affects far more than rural Mexico, and given that half of Mexico's communal land surrounds the nation's fastest growing cities, the reform allows communal landholders to associate themselves with private investors or to sell their land to builders for housing development, sometimes becoming the victims of urban growth that deprives the community of its land and identity.

Popular Mobilization

The introduction of free market policies and the withdrawal of lending from the rural sector provoked general discontent among farmers. In July of 1990, the *Movimiento de los 400 Pueblos* [the Movement of 400 Peoples] marched in Poza Rica, Veracruz, demanding the distribution of 80,000 hectares of land, credit and technical assistance; and in September 1990 some 10,000 peasants from the Northeast, the Bajio and the South marched to Mexico City demanding, among other things, the modification of agrarian policy. The main complaint from the countryside was that the proposal to amend article 27 came from the top. Behind the amendment were interests of the World Bank, the United States government, conservative Mexican business consortia, and the neoliberal technocracy in the Trade Ministry.

After the Mexican revolution, social movements were led by the poor *campesinos* of the *ejido* sector. At the beginning the main demand was for land, but at various moment production issues took the front seat. In the 1960s the student movement and the rise of liberation theology clearly influenced the peasant movements. Under President López Portillo (1976-1982), repression of land struggles became more common, movements began to see the need for unity at the regional and national level, and production-related demands seemed to offer a more viable basis for peasant mobilization.

In 1991, preceding the amendment of Article 27, intense discussions took place within the government between those in favor of privatization and those who were pro-ejido. Meanwhile in the peasant movement there were three main positions: one in favor of the modification, with minor changes to the official proposal, one strongly against the amendment, and an intermediary position.

The main peasant alternative to the

amendment of Article 27 was the continuance of the social contract of 1917, and its renovation through a clear policy to stimulate agriculture, and to support rural production and food self-sufficiency, with guarantees to ensure peasant involvement in administrative and decision-making mechanisms, as well as strengthening and preserving the autonomy of peasant organizations.

The future of rural Mexico hangs in the balance today, more than ten years after the modification of Article 27 and after ten years of NAFTA. Over that time medium and small Mexican farmers have not been able to compete with subsidized producers in the United States, and Mexican Peasant organizations have organized themselves in a broader movement call *El Campo No Aguanta Más* ["The Countryside Can't Take Any More of This!"), which brings together a dozen national farmer and peasant organizations.

The peasant organizations are calling for an immediate moratorium on the agricultural chapter of NAFTA, the implementation of new social programs, a true financial reform in the rural sector, empowering of the Congress to make modifications in the rural sector budget, secure access to safe and healthy food of good quality for all Mexicans – produced by Mexican farmers, and the full recognition of the culture and rights of indigenous peoples.

Text based on TANAKA, Laura Saldívar – *Mexico´s land reform: from ejido to privatization*

Georges Gobet/AFP

South Africa

Population: 40.4 million people (2000)
Surface area: 1,223,201 km2
Type of government: presidential republic

The persistent concentration of land along racial lines in South Africa will either be resolved through a funda mental restructuring of the government's land reform program, or it will be resolved by a fundamental restructuring of property relations by the people themselves. Which direction the country follows depends to a large degree on the urgent and immediate responsiveness of the government to the needs and demands of the country's 19 million mostly poor, black and landless rural people.

While in 1995 only 48% of population of South Africa lived in rural areas, fully 70% of the poor were found in the countryside. South Africa is one the countries with the worst social indicators, and 95% of the poor are black. Therefore, poverty is linked to rural areas and to racial issues.

The per capita income of a black person in South Africa is USD $271, while it is $3,207 for a white person. The average monthly wage for black people is USD $28 and $505 for white people. The legacy of Apartheid has left 87% of land ownership in the hands of just 60,00 white farmers, while literally millions of black people try to survive under over-populated conditions on the 13% of land. Some 7 million black people are workers or sharecroppers on white-owned farms.

Historical Overview

Relocation and segregation of blacks from whites started as early as 1658, when the Khoi were informed that they could no longer dwell to the west of the Salt and Liesbeck rivers, and in the 1800s, when the first reserves were proclaimed by the British and the Boer governments.

The Native Land Act was passed in 1913, which set aside only 10% of the land for black people. The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act was enacted in 1959 to establish the Bantustans and make the reserves the political homeland of black South Africans. In the early 1960s, relocation camps were established. This was an attempt to remove displaced labor tenants, unwanted farm workers and unemployed urban people.

The Land Acts and other related land laws, settlement planning, forced removals and the Bantustan system, contributed to overcrowding in the former homelands. It is estimated that more than 3.5 million Africans were forcibly removed and relocated to the homelands and black townships between 1960 and 1980. The land dispossession of the black population in South Africa was driven by the need to reduce competition for white farmers and to create a pool of cheap labor to work on farming estates, mines and industry.

Even after Apartheid, the new Constitution of South Africa committed the country to a very conservative macroeconomic policy, giving priority to industrial expansion, exports and foreign investments.

The World Bank Model

Guiding by the World Bank, the new government began the implementation of a complex packet of agrarian reform measures. The land policy had three components: land restitution, land redistribution, and tenure reform. But the entire model is market-led. This market-based approach utilizes the forces of the market to redistribute land and is largely based on willing-buyer, willing-seller principles. The model is based on the principle of "efficiency" to assure and raise productivity, and a keystone is its ability to maintain "investor confidence."

Generally five economic criteria are used to judge the efficacy of World Bank policies and decisions regarding resource allocation. Four of the criteria relate to efficiency of the economic system, while the fifth one is for equity considerations. Thus, land can either be redistributed for purposes of efficiency or equity. These two terms, efficiency and equity are opposing economic terms which are often confused in many writings. Both of these cannot always be achieved at the same time in a given land redistribution.

As of the end of 2001, less than 2% of land had changed hands from white to black farmers through the land reform program. Of the 68,878 land restitution claims received, only 12,678 had been settled, benefiting less than 40,000 predominantly urban households, more than 40% of which received monetary compensation instead of land restoration. While monetary compensation is one form of redress, it cannot be considered agrarian reform because it does not involve the transfer of land rights.

Faced with this evident failure, the World Bank launched another program in 2001, which requires beneficiaries to make a minimum USD $500 contribution, clearly targeting "efficient" producers, which means the beneficiaries were to be the landowning black middle class, rather than the poor. The majority of the poor cannot make the minimum contribution, and thus do not qualify for land.

The current policy limits development in several ways: it seeks to concentrate resources in the hands of a small number of black commercial producers who are unlikely to spend much of their disposable income in the rural economy, while confining the poor majority to ongoing dependency on rural farm wages and paternalistic social relations; it limits the socially transformative impact of land reform to a small number of relative elites; and it delays the potential impact of asset redistribution on the ability of the poor to take economic risks and diversify their livelihood sources.

The State has revealed a real lack of political will, sticking to a narrowly legal discourse, without giving recognition to the importance of democratization of the economy, or the social function of land. Little attention is paid to the impacts of these policies on poverty and economic development.

The Landless Peoples Movement

In South Africa today the government seems to have given up on the poor, choosing instead to focus on creating an "efficient" black middle class. The government is concentrating its resources in the hands of a few black producers, provoking tense relations with the mass of poor laborers. Thus it is not surprising that landless black people have organized the Landless Peoples Movement (LPM), calling for an immediate people's land reform.

The movement grows out of the struggle against racism. It represents the voice of the masses who have mobilized to get access to land. It is a new movement, founded in 2001, which rejects the land market model. They have carried out land occupations, marches and sit-ins at government offices, calling for an end to forced removals of farm workers from large estates. The want to carry out a large campaign of occupations, and they are emphatic in saying that to solve the problem of landless people in South Africa one must tackle racism head on.

Popular participation, especially of young people and women, can be transforming for a movement. Combined with education, it can transform people's consciousness, and lead to recovery of self-esteem, helping oppressed people take charge of their lives.

Access to land strengthens the participation of the rural people in the labor market, beyond just generating employment. Agrarian reform is a key step toward creating more equitable paths to economic growth, which transfer income and power to the excluded.

Text based on THWALA, Wellington D. – *The South African experience on land reform*

Arquivo: Focus On The Global South

THAILAND

Population: 61.4 million people (2000)
Surface area: 513,115 km2
Type of government: parliamentary monarchy

Access to land is fundamental to the livelihoods of poor communities in rural areas. Land continues to serve as a means of providing subsistence needs as well as of income generation. Holding land enables family labor to be put to productive use, and provides a safety net for family members who work in temporary or insecure employment elsewhere. This was particularly evident in Thailand during the economic collapse in 1997, when the sudden jump in urban unemployment was mitigated by the absorption of labor in the rural areas.

Agriculture is still an important sector of the Thai economy, employing around 54% of the workforce (out of a total workforce of 33.4

million people). The poorest sectors of Thai society are the landless and near landless in rural areas. In 1995 the income of the population working in agriculture was estimated to be about 15 times lower than the income of the population outside the agricultural sector. In 1999 the national average household income was about USD $318 per month, whereas the average income for farming households was no higher than USD $24 per month. Land also provides important social functions such as identification with family roots, cultural and community identity.

The Land Institute Foundation, an independent Thai research organization, has estimated that over 30% of the 5.5 million households in the agricultural sector have insufficient land to derive a livelihood (in the Northern Region, this is considered to be less than 1.6 hectares).

The number of landless families has grown during recent decades, not only because of population growth, but also due to a range of other factors. These include the somewhat artificial classification of 50% of the country as national state forests in the 1960s, including areas that were already used for agriculture prior to classification. Large areas of agricultural land have also been taken or kept out of production. This was particularly evident during the high economic growth years of the late 80s and early 90s, when investors began to acquire land on a massive scale, speculating on rising land prices. The Land Institute Foundation estimated in 2000 that the annual economic cost to the Thai economy of underutilized land (including urban areas) to the country was approximately USD $3 billion.

Much of this land was used as collateral to borrow huge sums that were never repaid. Figures from the Bank of Thailand reveal that the total value of non-performing loans could be as high as USD $68 billion over the period of 1997 to 2000. The majority of these loans were in the real estate sector. As a reaction to the unfolding economic crisis in 1997, the Thai government was compelled to bail out the creditors holding bad debt (especially that owed in foreign currency) under the conditions of emergency IMF loans. Thus the costs of imprudent private lending were transferred onto taxpayers throughout the country.

World Bank Policies

The World Bank's discussions of land policy invariably begin with the importance of access to land as a primary means of alleviating poverty. The Bank's analysis of how to promote the access of the poor to land is more controversial. Following its economic approach in other sectors, the Bank's interest in land titling stems from its objective of creating functioning land markets.

Although the Bank says that the importance of such markets "has long been realized by researchers and policy makers alike," there is a growing opposition to the Bank's land commodification policies from local community organizations and civil society representatives.

Local communities face a number of risks where free markets in land are promoted through national policy interventions. Transactions of land need not be harmful to local interests or prejudicial to poorer sections of society, however it is important to realize where the risks lie.

Firstly, the playing field is far from level. Established actors in the market have greater access to information about financial opportunities, some have greater liquidity (have more cash available for investment), and are more powerful than others. This is particularly so where there is high economic inequality on a regional or sectoral basis. For example, the purchasing power of investors in the capital cities far exceeds that of smallholder farmers in the rural areas. This imbalance can provide a lucrative opportunity for metropolitan traders, which incidentally pushes up the price of land, out of reach for the landless, the poor and future generations of smallholder farmers. The interests of investors and farmers in holding land tend to differ substantially, and the acquisition of land by the former purely as an investment for future use can severely disrupt local development patterns, as has been the case in northern Thailand.

Secondly, contrary to Adam Smith's basic precept, the collective outcome of market transactions is not necessarily socially desirable, and State control for the public interest can be justified.

Finally, the commodification of land has an impact not only on the local economy, but also on the cultural and social relations surrounding land. As pointed out above, in many rural societies, the local value of land includes not only use value, but also a range of other values, according to different contexts. These may emphasize the heritage value of land (as a link with family ancestors or descendants), the community importance of a particular area, local ecological knowledge, and in some areas, may include obligations within an ongoing relationship with spirits associated with the place. These values cannot easily be associated with an equivalent economic value, despite efforts by environmental economists, and therefore risk being lost under a centralized market. If this kind of cultural transformation is what is intended, it would seem inappropriate for it to be undertaken without engaging in a widespread consultation or public debate, let alone for the process to be hurried along, following the international agenda of a financial agency.

Land Titling

The Land Titling Program originated in the early 1980s in negotiations on a structural adjustment loan between the government of Thailand and the agricultural department of the World Bank. Overall, USD $183.1 million was loaned by the World Bank to cover the three initial phases of the project. To date, 8.7 million land titles have been issued. This is a substantial number, but less than the number of titles targeted by the program. However, this figure can be misleading and should not be taken as evidence that 8.7 million farmers have "benefited" from the program. Notably, the program did not set targets for the number of beneficiaries. Each region has been covered largely according to schedule. Delays were reported to have occurred as a result of the difficulties of tracing absentee landlords, as well as the imprecision of boundaries of national forest reserve areas.

Although the World Bank is congratulatory about a change in the land law to permit faster titling, the authorities in fact provided an ideal opportunity for investors and corrupt state officials to abuse the system, particularly during the high economic growth period.

The Land Titling Program, while aimed at increasing land tenure security for existing landholders, did not attempt to address two critical issues of importance to low income farming groups in Thailand. The first was the issue of forest tenure. The Thai Land Titling Program dealt exclusively with "non-forest lands". This is because all lands denominated as forest are considered as state property whether or not communities have been living and farming in those areas for several generations. The state was ostensibly reluctant to offer secure rights for fear of legalizing forest destruction. Consequently, some of the poorest farming groups in the country, including Thai farmers and ethnic minority groups who occupy forests, especially in the highland areas, have been left in a precarious legal position.[2] They continue to be threatened with eviction or forced restriction of their agricultural practices, and harassed by officials. This prolongs the opportunity for politicians to cast ethnic minorities as scapegoats for all types of national problems. The Land Titling Program did not seize the chance to 'regularize' the land rights of this large group of people, many of whom have occupied their village lands for hundreds of years.

[2] An estimated 10 million people live and work in Thai national parks and other protected forest areas. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Parliament has debated a proposed Community Forest Law, which would recognize the role of forest communities in the sustainable management of forests.

The World Bank recognizes that local land markets often exist in an autonomous manner – that is, even where there is no national land registry or even any need for formal titles. This was the situation in Sritia, Raidong and other Thai villages that have joined the community land reform movement. These are communities that have occupied land, and where land transactions occur without formal titles, but require the authorization of the full community, based on networks of social obligations. Of course transactions without formal titles can be considered "less economically efficient," than those that occur in formal land markets. On the other hand, community-mediated transactions have been much more successful than formal land markets at keeping land ownership in the community, and land in the hands of small farmers.

The basis of World Bank intervention in land policy of Thailand was supposedly to guarantee secure access to land, especially for the poor. However, according to an internal evaluation from the Bank, land tenure in Thailand prior to the initiation of the program was already "relatively secure and fair," based on solid traditions, and offered little justification for placing a high priority on a project to regularize land titles.

On-going monitoring and evaluation of impacts on the poor should be part of any process designed to "alleviate poverty." But in the case of the villagers of Baan Hong, for example, the Land Titling Program left them worse off than before. Nevertheless, the Bank keeps on touting the virtues of land markets. If the Bank truly dreams of a "world free of poverty," then they should wake up to participatory forms of guaranteeing access to land for poorer sectors of society. In this perspective, land would not be understood as just a commodity, but rather as a way of life for peasants, with attendant social, cultural and environmental values.

Understandably, villagers have not been very impressed by the various processes which were intended to secure their land rights over the past decades. It has taken a substantial amount of research on the part of non-governmental groups and lawyers to identify the current official owners of specific plots of land. Many deeds have passed through several hands in the early 1990s, increasing in value upon every transfer. In some cases, it seems that the transfers have been deliberately obscured, with properties returning to their original owners after seven or eight transactions (though now registered in the name of a company rather than an individual).

In frustration at the lack of action by local officials to recover the land, local people began to organize themselves and take the matter into their own hands. In 1997, villagers in WiangNongLong and Baan Hong Districts took the decision to occupy lands that had been left abandoned for several years. Neighboring communities, similarly desperate for land for subsistence, also organized land occupations throughout the province and elsewhere. Today, a total of 3,798 families have joined the land occupation movement putting over 2,150 hectares of abandoned land to agricultural use in 23 areas of Lamphun, Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces.

As there is no provision under the Thai Land Code for common property, the villagers decided to create their own community tenure regime. Contributions were made by each family to pay for a survey map identifying the boundaries of the entire area and the dimensions of each individual plot. The villagers have printed up their own 'titles,' which indicate the location of the individual landholding, the neighboring plot holders, the rights of the titleholder, and have four signatories. Villagers explain that the main motivation behind their 'community title' is to ensure long term access.

Text based on LEONARD, Rebeca and ASYUTTHAYA, Kingkorn Narintarakul Na – *Land Titling Program in Thailand*

Maria Luisa Mendonça

Odd Andersen/AFP

Zimbabwe

Population: 11.7 million people (2000)
Surface area: 390,759 km2
Type of government: presidential republic

In 1989 just 4,319 mostly white, but also black, commercial farmers were using 29% of the area of Zimbabwe. At the same time, some 52,000 poor families had been settled on about 2.8 million hectares of land acquired by the State for resettlement. By 2000 the number of beneficiary families had grown to 75,000, and the amount of land to 3.5 million hectares.

This acquisition of land was not a uniform process over time. In fact it was highly variable and more recently has been decelerating. Zimbabwe is a country of stark inequality. The structure of land tenure reflects racial divisions, with 6,000 white landowners holding 42% of the land in the country.

Historical Overview

The European colonization of Zimbabwe began late, in 1890, stimulated by the discovery of gold in nearby Rand, South Africa (now called Johannesburg). The British South Africa Company obtained a concession from the British Crown to explore for minerals in the region. However, the gold they found in Zimbabwe was sparse and difficult to extract profitably. Because it proved impossible to profit from gold exploration, the Company sought another way to make money, by sponsoring white farmer settlements. To make this work they had to drive Africans off most of the farmland, and turn them into forced labor for the settler estates.

The first African rebellion took place soon thereafter, in 1896. The Chimurenga rebels wanted to expel the whites from their territory, but they were defeated by European arms. In 1923, the colonists voted for separation from South Africa, and the territory became a new colony called Rhodesia, in homage to Cecil Rhodes, the first colonizer of the region. This was to be its name until 1980, when it became Zimbabwe.

The Land Appointment Act of 1930 divided up land along racial lines, both in terms of quantity and quality. 51% of the land was reserved for white settlers, with the bulk of it on the arable central highlands. The African population (the vast majority) was allocated 30% of the land, which was designated as African Reserve Areas (now known as communal areas). The remaining 20% of the land was either owned by commercial companies or by the colonial government (Crown Land).

From 1930 to 1980—the year in which Zimbabwe became independent—the area held by whites dropped from 51% to 41%, while the land available to Africans grew from 30% to 40%. However, due to the different population sizes (there are very few whites relative to Africans), the population densities in the African areas remain extremely high through the present day.

In 1951 the Native Land Husbandry Act was passed. Central to this legislation (and also common to many other British colonies in Africa at the time) was the limiting of livestock numbers and the introduction of soil and water conservation methods and technology.

Data from the 1960s should the high degree of segregation which the African population suffered. The whites had much more land, in the more fertile regions, and received state support for their agricultural development. The land belonging to black people remained abandoned by the state, receiving no support.

The great majority of the population of Zimbabwe is concentrated in the black areas, which have the least fertile soils. As these soils degrade rapidly, the residents of these zones soon have no choice but to become laborers on white estates.

In the mid-1970s the second Chimurenga rebellion erupted, lead by the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). Both liberation movements were committed to carrying out radical land redistribution if and when they took power. The principal motive for the rebellion was to repossess lost lands—in other words, it was a struggle on the land and for land. Above all, it remained clear that the root of the land problem in Zimbabwe could be found in racial segregation.

The Agrarian Reform Program

The Land Reform and Resettlement Programme of the Zimbabwean government has had two phases: the first phase from 1980 to 1996, and the second commencing with the listing of 1,471 farms for compulsory acquisition in 1997.

From 1980-1996, land was purchased by the state from white sellers and redistributed to black beneficiaries to form settlements. The state could only buy land from those people who were willing to sell. There was pressure against this type of land reform that came from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as from the white Commercial Farmers Union (CFU), which encouraged white farmers to refuse to sell land to the government. As a result of these pressures, the government began cutting back on the funds allocated for the settlements.

The World Bank insisted on a market-based land reform, yet during the Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) period of 1991 to 1995, failed to mobilize the resources needed to support such an approach. The ESAP period thus saw an even slower pace of reform, generating land conflicts as well. The majority of the commercial farmers benefited from the new agroexport orientation. This created more demand for land and fuelled conflicts between black and white commercial farmers who were both competing for the same scarce resources. The ESAP also served to internationalize interests in Zimbabwe's land, introducing further conflict.

At this point the State started to adopt a more radical posture, using the police to repress spontaneous land occupations. At the same time, state commitment to full market compensation began to evaporate, placing the obligation for historical redress on the former colonial power, Great Britain.

The Amendment of 2000 to the Land Acquisition Act stipulated various factors to be taken into account in future indemnification. It freed the Zimbabwe government from the obligation to pay compensation for land expropriated for settlement, only requiring indemnification for improvements on the land. But this new process had minimal success, as it was soon tied up in judicial challenges by the landlords.

The result was the continuation of an intense process of land occupations throughout the country, which had begun in August 1997. The explicit objective of these actions was to redistribute land held by white estates to the landless and to veterans of the liberation war. These occupations came in waves, with just a few in 1997, but by 2000 they numbered more than a thousand.

The scale and the character of the occupations became the focus of a huge media and propaganda war in Zimbabwe, across southern Africa, and throughout the world. As a result it is now almost impossible to accurately judge the scale of the present phenomenon, with estimates of the number of estates being occupied ranging from 900 to 1,500.

Text based on LEBERT, Tom – *Land reform and land occupation in Zimbabwe*

Maria Luisa Mendonça

Positions of Via Campesina

Via Campesina is an international movement that groups together organizations of family farmers, peasants, farm workers, rural women, indigenous people, and afro-descendent people in the Americas, (North, South, Central and Caribbean) Asia, Europe and Africa.

Food Sovereignty

One the principal positions of Via Campesina is the defense of *Food Sovereignty*. We can define food sovereignty as the right of all peoples to define their own food and agricultures policies. This includes:

Giving priority to production of healthy, safe and nutritious food — that is culturally appropriate – for the domestic market. This production should come from diversified family farms that conserve biodiversity, take care of the soil, maintain cultural values, and exercise good stewardship of natural resources.

Farmers must receive fair prices, which means that domestic markets must be protected against the effects of cheap, dumped imports. Supply management system are needed in those countries that over-produce and dump their surplus abroad at cheap prices, driving farmers out of business in the countries where these products are dumped. Real, genuine agrarian reform must be carried out to create a sustainable small farmer production model. All direct and indirect export subsidies must be eliminated.

Food sovereignty requires equitable access to land and public sector credit so that farmers can produce, as well as fair prices for the products they sell. Via Campesina does not oppose trade, especially of products that can only be grown in certain climates – as long as the conditions enumerated above are respected.

The domestic food and farm policy of nations cannot be defined and imposed by financial institutions like the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO), which represent the interests of multinational corporations. It must be the society and governments in each country that determine national policies, whether for agriculture or anything else, and not the agents of the market. These decisions must respect human rights and international treaties and conventions, and be subject to independent international jurisdiction in case of disputes. In a true democracy, the active participation of farmer and peasant movements in the formulation of food and farm policies is indispensable, just as are transparency, freedom of expression and the right to organize.

In today's world, issues that affect everyday life, especially but not only of farmers, and our health, the economy, and the environment, are being discussed and negotiated at international forums and summits. These issues include the regulation and use of biodiversity, the use and conservation of genetic resources, the liberation of genetically-engineered organisms, and the economics of farming. The international bodies that are responsible for these topics confront a great dilemma, between choosing a path that helps us to construct a respectful relationship between nature and society, or the path of free trade marked by the imposition of international finance capital and the abandonment of food sovereignty.

For Via Campesina, conserving biodiversity begins with respect for the diversity of human cultures, accepting that we are different, and that each person and each people has the right and the freedom to think, to be and to decide for themselves. Seen this way, biodiversity is not just flora and fauna, soil life, water and ecosystems, but carries with it cultural traditions, production systems, human and economic relationships, even forms of government. In essence, freedom and equality.

Diversity is our way of life. Plant diversity provides us with food, medicine and fiber, while human diversity gives us a variety of lifestyles, religions, ideologies and cultural richness. If this tells us anything it is that we should avoid at all costs rigid formulas that impose a single recipe, a single way of life, or a single model of development.

Via Campesina opposes privatization and patents on life, which restrict the ability of peasants and indigenous people to make a living. Our genes belong to life itself. Peasant communities have protected and conserved genetic resources and their accompanying knowledge from generation to generation, with profound respect for nature. For millennia is has been peasant communities that selected, crossed and improved crop genetic resources, domesticating and improving every important species. Peasants, women and men, small farmers, together with fisherfolk and artisans, indigenous peoples and descended-communities, are the ones who conserve, take care of, and improve the agricultural biodiversity which is what makes agriculture itself possible.

Agrarian Reform

In every country which has not yet had a thorough agrarian reform, inequality remains a principal obstacle to development, with a small of number of large landowners concentrating the majority of farmland in their hands. This is the underlying cause of high levels of poverty, enormous social inequalities, terrible living conditions, chronic underdevelopment, economic dependence, political domination and the absence of hope for the poor majorities.

Things have only gotten worse in the last decade, as the majority of our governments have acceded to neoliberal policies. These policy prescriptions, supported by the World Bank, subordinate farm economies to the interests of the largest landowners, the wealthy and foreign capital. These are the policies that open markets to multinational corporations, raise interest rates and dismantle public sector institutions that provide services to farmers (research, extension, price supports, credit, marketing and crop insurance).

The result has been ever more landless families, and the desperation of small and medium sized farmers who now find it impossible to make a living from farming. In the past few years we have seen an accelerated destruction of family farms, provoking a new rural exodus, especially of young people.

Faced with the historical legacy of exploitation of peripheral, rural-based economies, of deepening social and regional inequalities driven by the neoliberal model, the tightening squeeze on family farmers, in both the Third and First Worlds, farmer organizations defend, more than ever, the need for broad based policies of agrarian reform. These are the instruments that can eliminate poverty and social inequality, and promote the true development of our societies.

Agrarian reform cannot be seen as a simple process of distributing land. Rather it must be accompanied by profound changes in the economic, social and political model of development.

Access to land for the poor must be understood as a guarantee that their culture is valued, that communities have the right to autonomy, and that we have a new vision of how to conserve natural resources, for the good of humanity and for future generations. The land is given to us by nature and must be at the service of all. Land is not, and should never be, a mere commodity.

It is the responsibility of governments to enact policies that stimulate family farm economies and farmer cooperatives, via prices, credit, and crop insurance. Monopolies over the processing of farm products must be broken up, democratizing control over and access to agroindustrial processes. Agrarian reform must be seen within a larger policy of food sovereignty, and must be accompanied by universal access to formal education – at all levels – for peasant families. Knowledge is a common heritage of humanity, and must be placed at the disposition of the entire population, especially working people.

Principles and Commitments of Farmers and Peasants

1. All families that want to live and work on the land have the right to love and conserve the land and nature for the benefit of all.
2. Preserve forests and reforest degraded areas.
3. Conserve water, springs, rivers, aquifers and lakes, and struggle against the privatization of water.
4. Avoid predatory monoculture and the use of farm chemicals and toxics. Adequately treat wastes and fight against contamination of the environment.
5. Fight against overly large landholdings and reject the land reform policies implemented by the World Bank and the transnational corporations.
6. Struggle against the companies that monopolize technology, that exploit us, and the international agencies (like the IMF, WTO and G-7) that only articulate the interests of large capital.
7. We can always further perfect our knowledge of nature and agriculture, and transmit that knowledge to young people, motivating them to remain in rural areas.
8. Practice solidarity and express indignation against all forms of injustice, aggression, and exploitation of any person, community or of nature, anywhere in the world.
9. Fight for and defend equality among men and women. Fight all kinds racial and sexual discrimination. Create real opportunities so that nobody is ever discriminated against or excluded because of their gender or race.
10. Beautify our rural communities, caring for and planting trees, flowers, medicinal plants and vegetables.
11. Never sell the land we have won. The land is a greater good that guarantees the survival of future generations.
12. Speak out against the payment of the foreign debt, so that critical resources can de redirected to cover the unpayable debts that family farmers and peasants have with the banking sector.

Bibliography

LEBERT, Tom – *Land reform and land occupation in Zimbabwe*

LEONARD, Rebeca and ASYUTTHAYA, Kingkorn Narintarakul Na – *Land Titling Program in Thailand*

MONDRAGÓN, Hector – *Colombia: land market or land reform?*

NETO, Manuel Domingos – *The "new" Brazilian rural world*

PIMPLE, Minar – *Land reform in India: issues and challenges*

SAUER, Sérgio – *World Bak land policies in Brazil: a study on the "Cédula" project*

TANAKA, Laura Saldivar e WITTMAN, Hannah – *Peace agreement and "Fontierras" in Guatemala*

TANAKA, Laura Saldívar – *Mexico´s land reform: from ejido to privatization*

THWALA, Wellington D. – *The South African experience on land reform*


Rescatemos nuestras semillas,
¡Son patrimonio de la humanidad!
Organizan: Vía Campesina-CLOC Chile
Participan: CET SUR
GRAIN
CEDEM
Red de Plantas Medicinales del Cono Sur
Programa CBDC
... y todas/os los que quieran!!
Campaña mundial de defensa y protección de la semilla
ANAMURI
2002