

'LAND GRABS: A GROWING SCANDAL' PRESENTATION

Age range: 11-18

Time: 10-15 minutes

Outline

The presentation provides an overview of 'land grabs'. It explores why land is important and how 'land grabs' are affecting people's capacity to produce enough food.

Extension activities: encourages learners to gain a deeper understanding of what makes a land deal a land grab and how they affect local communities.

This is all available at www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/land_grabs

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Find out:
 - What a 'land grab' is
 - Why they are a growing problem
 - Where they are happening
- Begin to understand the impact of land grabs on small scale farmers and why they are making more people go hungry.
- Consider what they may be able to do to help.

Resources

- PowerPoint Presentation
- Internet access for showing 'Glen, Gary, Ross' clip.

Curricular links

Geography

Keywords

Land grabs

Presentation Script

Slide 1

We are going to explore 'land grabs'.

Slide 2

Through this session we will consider the following key questions:

- What is a 'land grab'?
- Why are land grabs making more people hungry?
- What can we do to help?

Slide 3

Imagine waking up one day to be told you're about to be evicted from your home. Being told that you no longer have the right to remain on land that you've lived on for your whole life. And then, if you refuse to leave, being forcibly removed.

Watch "A short film to help Oxfam's campaign about land grabs". Made by a group of Oxfam supporters, this video introduces land grabs. How would you feel if you were the people in the film having your land taken away?

Slide 4

Thankfully, this scary situation is one that most of us will never have to face. However, it is happening in many developing countries, it's a scandal that's on the increase. It's what's known as a land grab— a land deal behind closed doors that often results in farmers being forced from their homes and in families left hungry.

Slide 5

So, why is land so important?

Secure access to and control over land is a very effective and reliable way for households and communities to feed themselves and to raise money to send their children to school, buy medicine and build better houses. Small-scale farmers are very productive, they currently support over 2 billion people globally.

Here you can see Mrs Enelesi Sailesi tending her sweet potato field in Mulanje, Malawi. She works hard and is proud of what she grows. With Oxfam's support and training she has learned more about cultivation and farming techniques, which has enabled her to produce more crops from the same size area.

Equal access to land is key for small-scale farmers. And equality is good for everyone— countries with a more equal distribution of land grow faster than countries with less equal land distribution.

Slide 6

Land is important for small-scale food producers because it provides:

- A productive asset – creating food security, livelihood security, development opportunities.
- A safety net – in times of crisis and unemployment access to land means social security.
- Secondary uses – from medicinal plants (as shown in the picture) to building materials.
- Connection to community and identity – space for social, cultural and religious events.

Land is vital to families and communities but competition for land is increasing. Large-scale land deals recklessly put these different purposes of land at risk: once land is lost it is hard to regain.

Buying and selling land is a normal activity so what makes a 'land grab' different?

Slide 7

Not all large-scale land acquisitions are, by definition, 'land-grabs'. The definition agreed by the International Land Coalition (ILC) focuses on bad practices by the people (companies and governments) buying or leasing the land.

'Land grabs' are land acquisitions that do at least one of the following:

1. Violate human rights, especially those of women.
2. Flout the principle of free, prior and informed consent of land users.
3. Ignore the impacts on social, economic and gender relations, and on environment.
4. Avoid transparent contracts.
5. Ignore democratic planning, independent oversight and meaningful participation of land users in negotiations.

[OPTIONAL] But there are clear reasons for alarm at the trend of large-scale land acquisitions, even if they do not strictly fit the definition of a land grab. This is not only because of concerns about reducing the availability of land when natural resources are becoming increasingly scarce. There are few if any documented examples of large-scale land acquisitions that have resulted in positive impacts for local communities.

Slide 8

Land grabs are not a new problem, but the scale of them is a growing scandal. So, why are more land grabs happening now?

- Investment in land is seen as a safe bet in unsure financial times.

Globally, up to 203 million hectares of land have been acquired in large scale land deals (or are under negotiation) since 2001. Foreign investors are buying an area the size of London in developing countries every 6 days. In many cases, land obtained was classed as 'unused', 'degraded' or 'undeveloped' while it was actually being used by people in poverty to grow food.

This is a growing problem, and we must act now to stop it.

Slide 9

75 per cent of the land acquired (some 83 million hectares – the area of Namibia), is in Africa.

Slide 10

These large scale purchases of land have many difficult impacts on the communities who lose their land including:

- Confusion and uncertainty about their rights.
- Some violent evictions.
- Loss of assets including land, houses and crops.
- Loss of livelihoods and opportunities– fewer meals, less nutritious food, dropping out of school.
- Divided communities and increased strain on neighbouring communities and infrastructure.

Families are often forcibly kicked off their land. Promises of compensation are often broken, never made, or deeply unfair. Even after the contract is signed, there is no guarantee a land deal will go ahead in accordance with it.

It's not necessarily a problem when companies invest in land in poor countries for commercial use. But when families are being kicked off the land they depend on without being consulted or adequately compensated and less food is grown as a result, that's a very big problem indeed.

Slide 11

Tackling land grabs is a big task. Together, we can take action to ensure that communities already affected are fairly compensated, and that the rules are changed to stop it happening to communities in the future.

A freeze in large-scale land purchases could spur desperately needed improvements in order to make the process fairer.

More detail if needed:

Oxfam is calling on the World Bank for a six-month freeze in investments involving large land deals in order to provide time and space for vital progress in four key areas: land rights and good governance; transparency; free, prior and informed consent; and food security.

Land grabs happen the world over, and it's important that we raise awareness of this issue. Land grabs are a murky world and are often shrouded in mystery- it's time to out them as an issue by staging public land grabs!

Further information about the images used

You do not necessarily need to know the further information about the photos, but it may be useful if you get any specific questions about the photographs.

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Finding space to grow food in poor countries has always been an issue, but now the situation is getting out of control. Land used by poor families to grow crops is being sold to wealthy companies or foreign governments looking for cheap agricultural space. These families are often evicted without their consent, with little or no warning and no compensation.

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Malawi. Mrs Enelesi Sailesi tends her sweet potato field. With Oxfam support and training she has learned more about cultivation and farming techniques which has enabled them to produce more crops from the same size area they used to.

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Mexico. Gloria Sixtos Villegas collecting medicinal herbs - "As a member of the women's group, I became interested in herbal medicines and their potential – for healing and for making money. I grow herbs and other plants on a small plot at home... I have learned how to prepare the tinctures that will be used in ointments and potions."

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Bristol. A 'land grab' at a local event.

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