

THE OAKLAND INSTITUTE

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



The Oakland Institute

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

2018 saw growing threats and injustices around the world – continuing wars in Yemen and Syria, rising Islamophobia, the worsening of the climate crisis, children dying in US detention centers, and so much more. In our work with communities worldwide, we are seeing similar worrying trends: record numbers of land rights defenders are being assassinated for their activism while deforestation and industrial agriculture continues to expand unabated; Jair Bolsonaro has launched a crusade against the Indigenous in Brazil; the democratic space in Tanzania has shrunk while the Indigenous Maasai await their land rights, and more.

In the face of these threats, at the Institute we always come back to the four principles that we hold core to our work: courage, rigor, agility, and accountability.

In the face of injustice, we must have the courage to stand up for what's right and speak truth to power – even when it's hard, dangerous, or unpopular. Our research must be air tight to best support affected communities when elevating their struggles. And we must be agile – responding to the most pressing needs of our partners – and directly accountable to these frontline communities.

At the Oakland Institute, we are able work with courage, rigor, agility, and accountability because of our financial independence – we do not accept any government or corporate funding. Instead, we rely on a community of private funders and individual donors who believe in our purpose and support our work.

In the coming pages you'll read about the successes we secured in 2018: land rights defenders freed, ongoing campaigns to hold powerful institutions accountable, court victories, and more.

While these victories tell us that our work is paying off, the real sign of success is the growing number of new requests we receive from communities seeking international solidarity for their struggles, from Africa to Central America to the Middle East.

“The indigenous communities in [REDACTED] are now living in fear of losing their land and have lost hope of getting justice in [REDACTED] as the Government has demonstrated that it can't respect court rulings. The communities are now appealing to The Oakland Institute to come to their aid in helping them seek justice to respect the land rights of the Indigenous Communities in [REDACTED].”

– An unsolicited request for support that we received in September 2018.

Thank you to all our supporters for your trust, your commitment to justice, and for being part of the struggle with us.

Onwards,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anuska Mittal". The signature is fluid and cursive.





Who We Are

The Oakland Institute is an independent policy think tank bringing fresh ideas and bold action to the most pressing social, economic, and environmental issues of our time. We do this by combining meticulous research with creative communications strategies and advocacy campaigns to bring change around the world. Our work often starts at the invitation of local communities to assist their struggles. We are proud to work strategically and collaboratively with these partners!

What We Do

Hold Powerful Actors Accountable

Our work holds governments, corporations, and international institutions accountable for their actions and policies. This includes publishing reports based on our research and analysis, organizing advocacy campaigns, testifying at hearings, and much more.

Dismantle False Solutions

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

Strengthen Land Rights and Livelihoods

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

Support Sustainable Farmer-led Food Systems

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

Stand by our Partners in the Face of Criminalization

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

Elevate People's Voices

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





2018 Highlights

Unprecedented Changes in Ethiopia

2018 brought significant change to Ethiopia. Included in the tens of thousands of released political prisoners were Okello Akway Ochalla and Pastor Omot Agwa, two Indigenous land rights defenders for whose freedom the Institute campaigned for years. A US Congressional House Resolution authored by the Institute on human rights and good governance in Ethiopia passed unanimously. And a new reform-oriented Prime Minister appointed in the country has brought changes to numerous issues we have advocated for, including rewriting Ethiopia's draconian anti-terrorism law.

Shattering the Silence in Tanzania

Our report, *Losing the Serengeti: The Maasai Land that was to Run Forever*, ended the silence on the horrific abuses faced by the Maasai of Loliondo, Tanzania – all for standing up for their land rights. After it received massive media coverage on six continents, our report garnered international attention and helped secure a victory for the Maasai in the East African Court of Justice.

Mobilizing Civil Society in Papua New Guinea

Building upon years of research and advocacy in Papua New Guinea, our latest report mobilized civil society organizations around the devastation caused by foreign logging and palm oil companies and the lack of development outcomes resulting from these projects. As a result, the OECD sent international auditors to help the government crackdown on tax evasion by the logging industry.

Holding the World Bank Accountable

Through the 280-member strong multi-continental *Our Land Our Business* campaign, we continue to campaign against the World Bank's ranking programs, used to promote resource extraction and industrial agriculture at the expense of the people and the planet. This past year, we produced four reports on the Bank's bad business in India and Indonesia, its failing agricultural business ranking program, and its deceitful land indicator, which is paving the way for the privatization of the commons.

Dismantling False Climate Solutions in Uganda


Our campaign against false climate solutions led the Swedish Energy Agency to suspend its purchase of carbon credits from Green Resources, a Norwegian company whose carbon offset program in Uganda has led to displacement, food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, and more. Our work continues to counter such false solutions to the climate crisis.

Supporting Land Rights Defenders

From Tanzania to Sri Lanka, Ethiopia to Cameroon – our Legal Defense Fund continues to support land rights defenders who are criminalized and face persecution for standing up for their communities and the environment.

A Flood of Appeals from Around the World

The success of the Institute's work has brought a flood of new appeals from communities seeking international solidarity in their struggles for their land rights. We undertook new field research in Central America and Sub-Saharan Africa, built relationships with communities in the Middle East, and have brought on two new staff members to build our capacity to respond to these requests.



Unprecedented Changes in Ethiopia

Okello Akway Ochalla (center) with human rights lawyer Ameha Mekonnen and members of the Zone 9 Bloggers

For the past decade, the Institute has exposed the true cost of Ethiopia's so-called development schemes: forced evictions, arbitrary arrests, and the devastation of Indigenous lives, land, and livelihoods.

In recent years, as outrage over this failed development paradigm swelled, so did state repression. When Ethiopians took to the streets in the millions, the government cracked down, enacting martial law, killing thousands, and arresting tens of thousands for speaking out against its policies and development plans.

This critical situation led us to significantly expand our advocacy and campaigning work.

While continuing to expose the toll of dams and large-scale plantations on people and the environment, we challenged the country's draconian anti-terrorism law and authored a House Resolution on human rights and governance in Ethiopia for the US Congress. After Indigenous Anuak land rights defenders Okello Akway Ochalla and Pastor Omot Agwa were arrested under fabricated terrorism charges, we launched multi-year campaigns for their freedom.

In 2018, this dogged determination paid off.

In February, Mr. Okello was released after enduring nearly four years of imprisonment and torture. Two months later, all charges against Pastor Omot were dropped, the House Resolution we authored passed unanimously in Congress, and Ethiopia appointed a new reform-oriented Prime Minister who has brought sweeping changes to the country, including rewriting the country's anti-terrorism law.

While the changes that have come to Ethiopia over the past year are immense, our work is not over. We continue with our advocacy calling for development in the country that is inclusive and benefits all.



“Land is a vital resource and determinant of life for the Indigenous in Ethiopia. Despite this, for years the government evicted the poor and Indigenous from their land for the advantage of rich investors. The Oakland Institute was the only organization to monitor and expose these abuses, working to protect land rights defenders when they were imprisoned, and bringing this repression and exploitation to the attention of the international community. As a practicing human rights lawyer, I have witnessed the commitment and professionalism of the Oakland Institute to promote and protect land rights in Ethiopia.”

– Ameha Mekonnen, Human Rights Lawyer, Ethiopia

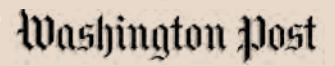




Is Tourism Displacing Tanzania's Maasai?



Maasai herders driven off land to make way for luxury safaris, report says



Tanzania's Maasai Evicted in Favor of Tourism, Group Says

The New York Times

Tanzania's Maasai Evicted in Favor of Tourism, Group Says



Le Monde.fr

En Tanzanie, les Masai sont rejetés hors de leurs terres au nom de la protection de la nature

Shattering the Silence in Tanzania

"If we can break the ground to lower a body, why can't we break it for cultivation?"

For years, the Maasai of Loliondo, Tanzania have lived under intimidation, harassment, and violence – simply for standing up for their rights to live in dignity on their land. Their homes have been burned. They have been beaten and arrested. They suffer from hunger and starvation – all for the benefit of foreign safari companies and game parks.

In May, the Oakland Institute shattered the silence on this horrific situation, creating a groundswell of international attention and support for the Maasai. In the first ten days after publication, our report, *Losing the Serengeti: The Maasai Land that was to Run Forever*, was covered by over 70 news outlets on six continents, including *The Guardian*, *New York Times*, *Le Monde*, *Washington Post*, *TIME Magazine*, and more, bringing the voices and struggles of the Maasai to millions.



While this media attention provoked defensive responses from the Tanzanian government, it also helped secure an interim victory at the East African Court of Justice. In September, the regional court made a game-changing decision, forbidding the Tanzanian government from evicting, threatening, beating, and confiscating cattle from the Maasai. A few months later, the President announced a halt to the planned evictions of hundreds of pastoralist villages in Tanzania.

These are huge wins. But our work is not over. We continue to monitor the situation and are working with the offices of several UN officials to ensure the safety and rights of the Maasai.

"This Serengeti report is an admirable feat of journalism – as confirmed by the large and impressive list of newspapers that have reported on the OI investigation...If the Oakland Institute was a newspaper or magazine, this level of reporting would be worthy of any number of prestigious journalistic awards."

– Gar Smith, A Project Censored award-winning journalist and winner of the World Affairs Council's Thomas More Storke International Journalism Award



Mobilizing Civil Society in Papua New Guinea



Our work with civil society in Papua New Guinea (PNG) to ensure land rights is yielding results.

Five years ago, the Institute exposed an egregious 5.5-million-hectare land grab in the country. Since then, we have revealed widespread tax evasion by foreign logging companies, exposed land grabbing cases that resulted in Supreme Court victories, and brought these vital issues to the PNG Parliament.

This work has led to change. In 2017, as a direct result of our research, the PNG government substantially increased its log export tax, leading to a decrease in timber exports and an increase in public revenue.

This was an important win for Papua New Guineans, but we knew more needed to be done. In September, we released another report, *The Great Timber Heist – Continued: Tax Evasion and Illegal Logging in Papua New Guinea*, that has unified and mobilized civil society organizations to tell their government, “enough is enough.” Development “solutions” that exacerbate the climate crisis and destroy the lives and livelihoods of the Indigenous are false solutions – ruses by those in power to benefit the one percent.

In the wake of this growing outrage, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) agreed to send international auditors to PNG to help the government crackdown on tax evasion. In addition, PNG’s 2019 budget includes additional measures on “resource companies” to address the issues raised in our reports.



Presenting our findings in Port Moresby, PNG, October 2018

“No wonder: Of all these years of operating, I’ve never seen any tangible and fiscal benefits from logging operations in the rural areas where they operate ... Thank you Oakland Institute! I hope our government start[s] regulating and monitoring the logging industry more stringently.”

– A community member in PNG

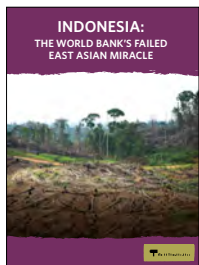


Holding the World Bank Accountable



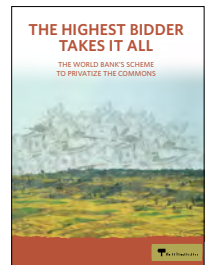
Years ago, we identified the World Bank's business rankings as a key instrument in the push for deregulation that benefits corporations at the expense of people and the planet. Since then, we have tracked the Bank's corporate-friendly wheeling and dealing and fought back at every opportunity.

In early 2018, when the Bank's own chief economist resigned after confessing that the Bank's pro-corporate country ranking programs are politically motivated, we snapped back with policy briefs, press releases, and international campaigning demanding an end to these disastrous programs.



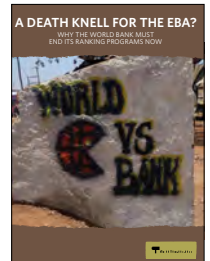
A few months later, when the Bank held its annual meeting in Indonesia, we exposed how Bank-backed policies have fueled corporate abuse and the grabbing of Indigenous land in the country, all for the benefit of palm oil and mining operations.

When the Bank showcased India as a poster child of success, we shone the light on the massive labor, environmental, and human rights abuses that its pro-corporate regulatory changes have enabled.



Most recently, we exposed how the World Bank's new land indicator is paving the way for the privatization of the commons, which led to widespread outrage around the world.

Through the 280-member strong multi-continental *Our Land Our Business* campaign, we continue to move with agility, pressuring the Bank, responding to its actions in real time, building power for the people, and changing the narrative about development around the world.



“I appreciate all the work being done by the Oakland Institute by standing and fight[ing] against these big corporates who are making lives of people to be so miserable. The battles you are undertaking are not so easy to win but with your commitments and dedication you have achieved so much which brings me back to the work we are also doing as La Via Campesina. Together, United Will Never Be Defeated! The struggle continues!”

– Elizabeth Mpofu, La Via Campesina



Supporting Land Rights Defenders

In 2015, with threats against land rights defenders soaring worldwide, the Oakland Institute launched our Legal Defense Fund. Since then, we have supported individuals and organizations in Ethiopia, Madagascar, Cameroon, Papua New Guinea, Palestine, Tanzania, and more. We are proud to be a go-to organization for defenders on the frontlines.

In addition to the release of Okello Akway Ochalla and the success of having charges against Pastor Omot Agwa dropped, we want to highlight two ongoing struggles that we are supporting:



Cameroon

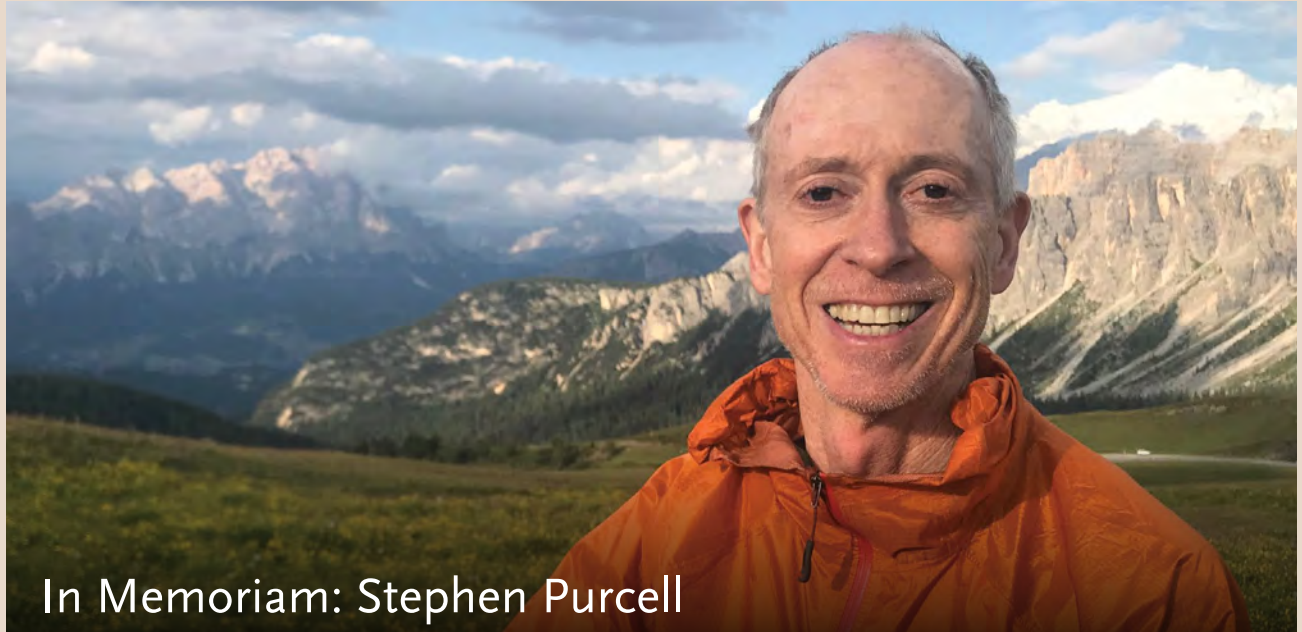
The civil unrest that unfolded in 2018 in English-speaking Cameroon put the lives of our colleagues at Struggle to Economize Future Environment (SEFE) at risk. We first began collaborating with SEFE in 2012 in their fight against US-based Herakles Farms and their palm oil operations in Cameroon. In 2018, along with a group of international NGO supporters, we supported SEFE's Director, Nasako Besingi – who has been criminalized on numerous instances – to relocate out of Cameroon. We continue our communication with Nasako and remain committed to ensure our partner's safety.



Sierra Leone

In 2012, the Institute shone the spotlight on a classic David versus Goliath struggle between smallholder farmers in Sierra Leone and powerful Western business interests seeking to profit off of large-scale rubber and palm oil plantations. Since then, a land conflict has raged between SOCFIN Agricultural Company Sierra Leone Ltd, a subsidiary of the Belgian corporation SOCFIN, and the farmers. In early 2019, violence broke out near the SOCFIN plantations, leading to brutal repression by security forces, the deaths of two people, and arrests of 15 more. We are working with international partners to support the farmers and those affected by this brutal crackdown.





In Memoriam: Stephen Purcell

In March 2019, the Institute lost a beloved member of our community: Steve Purcell.

Steve was many things to many people: a father and husband, a visionary engineer and inventor, a formidable athlete and lover of the outdoors.

To the Institute, he was a cherished advisor, supporter, and a dear friend.

Steve and his wife Carolyn have been integral to the Institute since before it even existed. In the early 2000s, they helped shape the very idea of the Institute over meals with Anuradha, asking hard questions and dreaming about its function and mission in our world. When the Institute was finally born, Steve and Carolyn became our first financial supporters. Carolyn soon joined the Board and today serves as our chairperson. Together with their children, they have attended every single Oakland Institute function and event, offering their unwavering support at every turn.

Throughout this time, Steve was tackling some of Silicon Valley's biggest tech challenges, leading breakthroughs in the world of digital video and media processing. Despite this huge responsibility, he always had time for the Institute, continuing the tradition of asking thought-provoking questions as we grew and evolved. His unshakeable commitment to justice and a better world has shaped who we are as an organization today.

One of Steve's many loves was cycling. For ten summers in a row, he toured the Alps, biking through all 40+ of its highest mountain passes, while also perfecting the art of super lightweight backpacking. In this way, Steve was a model to us all of what it means to live life to its fullest – pushing himself to the furthest possible point and bringing his zest for life to every challenge that faced him.

To say he is missed is a gross understatement. Steve has, and always will be, part of the very fabric that is the Oakland Institute. We will carry his memory, legacy, and tenacity with us forever.



Organizational Overview

Andy Currier, Anuradha Mittal, Elena Teare, Elizabeth Fraser, Takahiro Noguchi, and Frédéric Mousseau

Team

Abner Hauge, Multimedia Strategist

Amy Woloszyn, Designer

Andy Currier (2019), Jr. Research Associate

Anuradha Mittal, Executive Director

Elena Teare (2019), Jr. Research Associate

Elizabeth Fraser, Senior Policy Analyst

Flora Sonkin (2018), Research Associate

Frédéric Mousseau, Policy Director

Heather Harris, Accountant

Janhavi Mittal, Research Associate

Takahiro Noguchi, Creative Technology Director

Contributors

Kristen Lyons, Senior Fellow

Intern Scholars

Hana Bracale

Jessie Green (2019)

Paola Langer

Spencer Andrews

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Anuradha Mittal

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Carol Johnson, Treasurer

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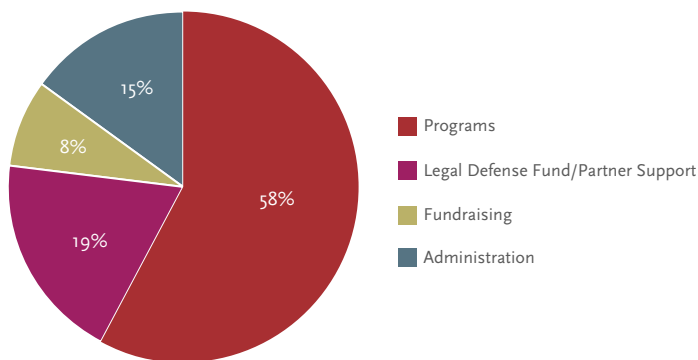
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Advised Fund of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Altman 2011 Charitable Lead Annuity Trust
Anonymous
Clif Bar Family Foundation
Domitila Barrios de Chungara Fund, an advised fund at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Environmental Defenders Fund of RSF Social Finance
Howard G. Buffet Foundation
Presbyterian Hunger Project
Sigrid Rausing Trust
Swift Foundation
The Blackie Foundation Fund of RSF Social Finance
Tikva Grassroots Empowerment Fund
Wei Zhang & Peter Rasmussen of the Don and Lore Rasmussen Fund of the Tides Foundation

Estimated 2018 Expenditures



Financial Statements

As this chart shows, 77 percent of every dollar raised goes directly to our programs and legal defense fund.

For detailed information on the Oakland Institute's finances, please see our annual 990 forms at: www.oaklandinstitute.org/about/annual-reports

Photo credits:

Cover photo: Suri boy with traditional face painting in the Kibish region of the Omo Valley, April 2018 © Kelly Fogel

Elizabeth Fraser presents our research on Ethiopia at the San Francisco Green Film Festival © Tommy Lau

Maasai herders with their cattle inside the Ngorongoro Conservation Area © The Oakland Institute

Protest against illegal logging in Pomio, PNG, 2011 © Paul Hilton /Greenpeace

India's mounting agrarian crisis forces distressed and dispossessed agricultural workers to migrate to cities and take up precarious seasonal work on construction sites © Sapana Jaiswal, People's Archive of Rural India

Tulgit, Ethiopia © The Oakland Institute

A young Hamer boy in his village near Turmi, April 2018 © Kelly Fogel



Support Our Work

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

Please support our work by making a tax-deductible donation. These donations allow us to be bold: we research critical issues, run campaigns, and provide the essential advocacy and support that sparks action and ensures accountability. We ensure our independence by not accepting any government or corporate funding.

With your support, we can continue to win major victories on behalf of pastoralists and fisherfolk, the Indigenous, and smallholder farmers.

To donate, please go to www.oaklandinstitute.org/donate
or send a check payable to **The Oakland Institute** to: **PO Box 18978, Oakland, CA, 94619**

Onwards!

