

## TOPIC: The IFIs – their importance to people’s lives

**Conceptual rating:** [BASIC to INTERMEDIATE level](#)

**Suggested module objectives:**

- 1) establish the political and economic significance of the IFIs in order to demonstrate why it is important for citizens to be involved in national macroeconomic policy debates
- 2) establish the nature of the IFIs’ impact on people and the environment

**Key concepts:**

- 1) identity and mission of the World Bank, IMF, and relevant regional development bank for your country
- 2) history of the IFIs’ involvement in your country

**Cross references:**

- ***Link with Module 12:*** IFI mission and structure. Good for more explanation of how the IFIs work re: decision making, the range of products and services, and other technical, practical aspects of IFI functioning.
- ***Link with Module 1:*** Basics of macroeconomics. Helps provide the policy and theoretical underpinnings for the impact of IFI policies.

**Time required:** 60 – 90 minutes, depending on length of video

**Suggested methodology:** VIDEO. Large group DISCUSSION.

**Relevant readings:**

- Alexander, Nancy “Globalization and International Institutions: The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization”, Citizen’s Network on Essential Services, June 2006.
- Alexander, Nancy and Kessler, Tim, “The Roles of the US Government and World Bank in the Drive to Privatize Basic Services in Developing Countries”, Bank Information Center, IFI Info Brief #4, July 2006.

- Bacheva, Fidanka, et. al. “Boom Time Blues: Big Oil’s Gender Impacts in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Sakhalin”, CEE Bankwatch Network and Gender Action, 2006.
- Bakvis, Peter, et. al, “Fighting for Alternatives: Cases of Successful Trade Union Resistance to the Policies of the IMF and World Bank”, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the Global Union Research Network, 2006.
- Bank Information Center et. al, “The World Bank Group’s Gold Mining Operations: Tarnished Gold: Mining and the Unmet Promise of Development”, September 2006.
- Bank Information Center World Bank Toolkit for Activists, 2007.
- Grusky, Sara and Fiil-Flynn, Maj, “Will the World Bank Back Down? Water Privatization in a Climate of Global Protest”, Public Citizen, April 2004.
- Jones, Rochelle, “Damming Women’s Lives”, Association for Women’s Rights in Development, Issue 302, 2006.
- Sachs, Jeffrey, “How I’d Fix the World Bank”, *Fortune magazine*, 2007.
- Rowden, Rick, “3 New Reports Suggest IMF Policies Undermine Efforts on HIV/AIDS, Health and Education”, July 2007.
- Weisman, Steven, “Three Global Financial Institutions’ Roles Questions”, *New York Times*, May 23, 2007
- Woods, Ngaire, “The Globalizers in Search of a Future: Four Reasons Why the IMF and World Bank Must Change and Four Ways They Can”, Center for Global Development Brief, 2006.

**Preparation and supplies needed:**

- Newsprint pad/flip chart paper and markers to record certain parts of the discussion; equipment to show a video
- Review suggested reading material.
- Select a video to show that describes the operations and impact of one or more of the IFIs, preferably one that explicitly describes gendered differences. One possibility is “World vs. Bank” distributed by Friends of the Earth International.
- Research, if need be, the relationship of the IMF, WB, and appropriate regional development bank to your country. The IFI websites generally provide chronologies of their involvement and key loan documents.
- Write headings in large print on 3 sheets of newsprint/flipchart paper: World Bank, IMF, [name of your regional development bank]. Hang these up so everyone will be able to see them and you will be able to write on them.

- If the group will be interested, collect short descriptions and contact information for groups working on debt and the IFIs in your country to share with participants.

**Suggested content to be covered:**

- Short description of the World Bank, IMF, and relevant regional development bank for your country – (level of detail depends on audience and whether you will offer Module 12 later).
- Short history of the World Bank, IMF, and relevant regional development bank’s involvement in your country.
- Discussion of gendered dimensions to their work – examples of effects of both project and policy-based lending and debt relief. Ideally – select examples that illustrate the range of differential effects and responses by males and females – on health, household formation, laborforce participation, wage and income levels, susceptibility to violence, access to food and basic services like water, etc.

**Description of how to conduct the session:**

1. Welcome by host group(s) and introduction of facilitator(s); provide any needed logistical information; outline goals for session.
2. Depending on size of group, invite participants to introduce themselves, share an expectation or question they bring. (Record expectations or questions on newsprint, if you are doing this step, and refer to them throughout the session.) If this is part of a larger effort and the group already knows each other, shorten or eliminate this step.
3. **Large group DISCUSSION.** As a “warm up”, ask the audience three questions, one at a time. What do you think of when you hear the term “World Bank”? What do you think of when you hear “International Monetary Fund”. What do you think of when you hear (name of regional bank)? After each question, allow a few people to talk and write down the salient points that emerge on newsprint. Use this to gauge the audience’s knowledge and establish a platform for further discussion.
4. **VIDEO.** Segue from the discussion to showing the video, mentioning that the impact of the IFIs is varied. Say that you will use the video to explore their various roles and then talk more later about how the IFIs specifically have been involved in your country.
5. **Large group DISCUSSION.** De-brief the video. Ask questions of emotion – how people felt watching the video – as well as of thought. Answer questions and use the discussion to round out people’s knowledge of the 3 IFIs, and their history of involvement with your country. Be sure to include a discussion of the ways boys and girls, men and women responded to

- different policies, and any differential impacts the policies and projects had on their lives.
6. Close the session by underscoring two points: a) the relevance of the IFIs to the hopes and concerns of the audience; and, b) how important it is that they participate in shaping the economic policy decisions in their country. If there are active groups in your country working on debt and the IFIs, provide information about campaigns and contacts.
  7. If this is part of a larger economic literacy effort, link this session to the next one. Provide logistical details related to the next session, as appropriate. Thank the audience for their participation.

**Ideas for alternative methodologies/modification of the level of discussion:**

- **For an intermediate to advanced audience:** Read instructions for Module 12 and blend the two. If the video would be too elementary, replace it with case studies. Use the suggested reading material to serve as the basis for these case studies, and any material you can acquire related to the IFIs in your country. Break the group into smaller teams and assign them each a different case study which includes a gender analysis. Have them report back to the large group: which IFIs were involved, what role(s) did they play, to describe the project or policies involved and their gendered impact.

**Some useful organizations or websites related to this topic:**

- Action Aid, UK, [www.actionaid.org.uk](http://www.actionaid.org.uk)
- Center of Concern, [www.coc.org](http://www.coc.org) Look at the “Rethinking Bretton Woods” project info.
- Bank Information Center, [www.bicusa.org](http://www.bicusa.org)
- Bretton Woods Project, UK, [www.brettonwoodsproject.org](http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org)
- DAWN, [www.dawnnet.org](http://www.dawnnet.org)
- Focus on the Global South, [www.focusweb.org](http://www.focusweb.org)
- Gender Action, [www.genderaction.org](http://www.genderaction.org)
- IFI Watch Net, [www.if-watch.net](http://www.if-watch.net)
- Jubilee South, [www.jubileesouth.org](http://www.jubileesouth.org)
- Social Watch Network, [www.socialwatch.org](http://www.socialwatch.org)
- Third World Network, [www.twinside.org.sg](http://www.twinside.org.sg)
- The World Bank, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org).