



30
YEARS



ip The
Inspection
Panel

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Inspection Panel Chairperson's Statement

Video

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Events

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Inspection Panel at 30 Years

2023 marked the 30th anniversary of the World Bank Inspection Panel. In 1993, the Bank's Board of Directors established the independent body with the aim of creating a mechanism through which people affected by World Bank operations could voice their concerns and have them addressed.

Inspection Panel Chairperson Ramanie Kunanayagam reflected in [her March 2023 statement](#) the history of the Panel and the impact of its work, highlights the important role the Panel has played in promoting accountability, transparency, and good governance in World Bank operations.

This document compiles the events, videos, reports, articles and podcasts that the Inspection Panel organized and conducted—together with various stakeholders—to commemorate this milestone.



As part of the Panel's commemoration of three decades of independent accountability at the World Bank, it released [a video](#) that showcases its history, impact and core foundation principles since its creation in 1993. The video features voices of many stakeholders who have been involved with or influenced by the Panel's work, including community members, World Bank Board members, civil society activists, academics, and the present and former Panel Members.

In joint partnership with the American University, University of Pretoria and the Inspection Panel, [a flagship commemorative event of Thirty Years of the Inspection Panel](#) was held at the American University, College of Law on April 6, 2023. The morning event was attended by leading figures in accountability, including: World Bank Board Members; representatives of senior management of the World Bank; present and former Panel Members, Chairpersons and Executives Secretaries; academia; and civil society. The afternoon and evening sessions were open to the public with over 120 persons attending the events plus online streaming participation. (Video recordings of the event are available here: [afternoon session](#), [afternoon session I & II](#), and [fireside chat session](#).)

During the afternoon session, the Inspection Panel hosted a panel discussion to introduce its eighth Advisory Report as part of its Emerging Lessons Series, “**Land at the Center of Inclusive and Sustainable Development: Volume 1: Land Administration and Management** and **Volume 2: Resource Property Rights in Forested Areas.**”



On October 31, 2023, the Center for Global Development (CGD) hosted a [panel discussion to *Thirty Years of the Inspection Panel*](#) and its impact over the last three decades, drawing upon the experience and learnings of inspection cases. (Link to the livestreamed video is available [here](#).) Speakers included Panel Chair Ramanie Kunanayagam; Zarau Kibwe, World Bank Alternate Executive Director representing 22 African Countries in its constituency; Gina Barbieri, an expert on accountability systems and practice; and Dyhia Belhabib, Executive Director, Nautical Crime Investigation Services. Karen Mathiesen, a CGD project director, and former senior civil servant in the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of International Affairs, moderated the discussion. As part of the program, Ms. Kunanayagam announced a “soft launch” of the Panel’s ninth Advisory Report, [“Ensuring Development while Securing Livelihoods—Lessons Learned and Considerations from Panel Cases”](#), which was subsequently published on November 29, 2023.



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Publications

The Inspection Panel contributed an essay entitled, [“Glass Half-Full or Glass Half-Empty? Thirty Years of Accountability at the Inspection Panel—The Impact of its Work and What the Data Tells Us”](#) to a compendium of essays called [“The Perspectives Project: Documenting and reimagining IFI Accountability”](#) published by American University, Washington College of Law. **Perspectives** was published to mark the 30th anniversary of the launch of the Inspection Panel and the emergence of accountability mechanisms in development finance.

Glass Half-Full or Glass Half-Empty? *Thirty Years of Accountability at the Inspection Panel—The Impact of its Work and What the Data Tells Us*

Ramanie Kunanayagam et al¹

“A stroke of a genius”², “a bold experiment in transparency and accountability that has worked to the benefit of all concerned”³, “a precedent under international law”⁴, and a “citizen-based accountability mechanism”⁵ are some of the ways in which close observers have described the World Bank Inspection Panel, which celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2023.

The Inspection Panel’s creation in 1993 was a milestone in the field of international development. It was the first independent, citizen-driven accountability mechanism at a multilateral development bank. The Inspection Panel fulfills an access-to-justice role by being accessible to persons who are negatively affected by World Bank-financed projects to request an investigation to be heard and seek recourse for actual or potential environmental and social harm. The Panel brings the voices of communities, often marginalized, to the highest levels of governance of the World Bank and therefore provides a conduit for the poorest to be heard by the Executive Directors of the Bank.⁶

Over the years, the Inspection Panel has inspired the establishment of more than two dozen similar accountability mechanisms at multilateral development organizations and bilateral development agencies globally. Many of its practices – such as transparency, predictability of the process, protection of the confidentiality of requesters taking other precautionary measures to protect Requesters, developing policies and processes against intimidation and reprisals, and sharing lessons from its cases – have become standard among independent accountability mechanisms.

The Inspection Panel has a dual objective, (i) functioning as a redress mechanism for those affected by World Bank-financed operations; and (ii) holding the World Bank accountable to its own policies through its independent, fact-finding compliance investigations. The Panel’s work has brought transparency to the projects it has investigated, and has generated lessons that have helped influence

¹ The authors include current panel member and staff of the World Bank inspection Panel: Ramanie Kunanayagam, – Chairperson, World Bank Inspection Panel; Mark Goldsmith, – Panel Member, World Bank Inspection Panel; Ibrahim James Pam, – Panel Member, World Bank Inspection Panel; Serge Selwan, – Senior Operations Officer and Adviser, World Bank Inspection Panel; Richard Wyness, – Senior Environment Specialist, World Bank Inspection Panel; Ayako Kubodera, – Investigation Officer, World Bank Inspection Panel; Camila Jorge de Amarel, – Investigation Officer, World Bank Inspection Panel; Rupes Dalai – Research Analyst, World Bank Inspection Panel.

² Werner Kiene, “An Introduction from the Panel Chair,” in *Accountability at the World Bank. The Inspection Panel at 15 years*, Inspection Panel (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2009), p. ix-civ.

³ James Wolfensohn, “Foreword,” in *The World Bank Inspection Panel: The First Four Years (1994-1998)*, ed. Alvaro Umaña (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1998), p. vii-viii.

⁴ Susan Park, *The Good Hegemon - US Power, Accountability as Justice, and the Multilateral Development Banks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

⁵ *Accountability at the World Bank. The Inspection Panel at 15 years*, Inspection Panel (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2009), p. 3 (quoting David Hunter).

⁶ Since September 2020, the Inspection Panel has been housed within the World Bank Accountability Mechanism which was created in September 2020.

Panel Members conducted interviews and podcasts with different academic and development institutions on the Inspection Panel, its case work, and Advisory Reports.

Devex: [World Bank project complaints plagued by fear of reprisal](#) (May 15, 2023)

Panel Chairperson Ramanie Kunanayagam was interviewed by Shabtai Gold in the Devex article on the role of the Inspection Panel as a pioneer of the accountability mechanism in the multilateral development banks, and the impact of the Panel's cases.

The Global Development Primer podcast: [The Last Line of Defence: The World Bank's Inspection Panel](#) (January 24, 2023)

In the episode of the Global Development Primer, hosted by Dr. Bob Huish of Dalhousie University, Panel Chairperson Ramanie Kunanayagam shared the Panel's mandate, functions, history and its cases.

Global Development Review podcast: [The World Bank Inspection Panel and its 30 years: Critical reflections and Learning](#) (November 20, 2023)

Panel Chairperson Ramanie Kunanayagam discussed with Jaffer Latief Najar (Discussant and Founder of Global Development Review) to share her insights on the issues of accountability of the World Bank funded development projects, the role of Inspection Panel and its 30 years of learning, and critical reflections to the way forward.

The Looking Glass—SAIS Review of International Affairs podcast: [The World Bank and your Livelihood](#) (December 2023)

During the episode, hosted by Kosi Ogbuli, President of the SAIS Student Government Association, Panel Chairperson Ramanie Kunanayagam and Dr. Dyhia Belhabib, an environmental scientist and researcher on illegal fishing, conservation, artisanal fishing, and food security, discussed livelihood issues. Dr. Belhabib assisted the Inspection Panel in its investigation of the West Africa Coastal Areas Resilience Investment Project in Togo.

In Pursuit of Development podcast: [Accountability in Action: The World Bank's Inspection Panel on the Frontlines](#) (December 27, 2023)

Dan Banik, a prominent figure in the field of international development studies, and director of The Oslo SDG Initiative, and Panel Chairperson Ramanie Kunanayagam discussed the evolving role of the World Bank's Inspection Panel as an independent complaints mechanism for people and communities who believe that they have been, or are likely to be, adversely affected by a World Bank-funded project.

Interviews & Podcasts

