

## Panama Land Administration Project: World Bank Approves Action Plan After Reviewing Inspection Panel Findings

---

Press Release No:2011/324/EXT

**WASHINGTON, February 4, 2011** – The World Bank Board of Executive Directors yesterday reviewed the findings of the independent Inspection Panel investigation of the Panama Land Administration Project, and approved the Management's Action Plan contained in the Bank's Management Response to the Panel's findings.

The Panel investigation responded to two requests, related to the legal recognition of lands inhabited by two indigenous groups, the Naso and the Ngäbe. The Panel's investigation focused on whether the Bank's Indigenous Peoples safeguard policy was complied with, in particular with regards to the Project's support for the creation of indigenous territories and adequate consultations with affected communities, and whether the Bank's role to oversee adequate government implementation of project activities were followed.

Approved in January 2001 and closed in June 2010, the project's total investment was US\$58.6 million which was partially financed with an International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) loan of US\$47.9 million. The Project was designed to modernize land administration in Panama by establishing simpler procedures for land titling while improving the capacity of local institutions to map nearly half of the country, to establish an integrated registry and cadastre system to certify ownership and correct titling, and to consolidate protected areas and Indigenous Peoples' territories.

**Roberto Lenton, Chairperson of the Inspection Panel**, underlined *“the critical importance of the issues raised by the Naso and the Ngäbe in their Requests for Inspection, and of the Project objectives to assist them in securing their land rights as Indigenous Peoples.”* He noted that *“on several issues, Management complied with the relevant Bank policy, and commended Management for taking a leadership role in engaging on land rights for Indigenous Peoples. Nonetheless, the Panel also found important instances of non-compliance with Bank policy that partly contributed to the lack of progress in securing land rights of the Naso and Ngäbe.”*

The Panel's investigation highlighting two important lessons with respect to policy compliance, namely the requirement to prepare a stand-alone Indigenous Peoples Development Plan and the need for adequate supervision to react promptly to address emerging problems on the ground. At a systemic level, the Report reconfirmed the crucial importance of full participation and respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, in compliance with Bank policies, in actions that affect them, including the mapping and recognition of their lands.

The Panel noted that once problems were identified by the Bank team, Bank staff engaged intensively and constructively with the affected communities to better understand and help to resolve the problems they had raised. The affected people have indicated to the Panel that while they are awaiting consolidation of territorial rights to their land, they greatly appreciate these actions and efforts by the Bank, and hope that the Bank will remain engaged on these issues in the country.

*“Addressing the unresolved issues related to the Naso territory and the Ngäbe Annex Areas in Bocas del Toro province demands immediate attention by the newly created Land Authority (ANATI) in Panama,”* said **Laura Frigenti, Former World Bank Country Director for Central America**. *“We welcome the Report of the Inspection Panel and hope that the Action Plan approved by the Board today will contribute to the resolution of the pending land rights issues of Indigenous Peoples' in Panama.”*

The Inspection Panel is an independent body established by the Executive Directors of the World Bank to address the concerns of the people who may be affected by Bank projects and to ensure that the Bank adheres to its operational policies and procedures during design, preparation and implementation phases of projects.

For the complete Inspection Panel Investigation Report and the World Bank Management Report and Recommendations in Response to the Inspection Panel Report, please visit the Inspection Panel website: [www.inspectionpanel.org](http://www.inspectionpanel.org)

**Contacts:**

**World Bank:** Stevan Jackson (202) 458-5054 [sjackson@worldbank.org](mailto:sjackson@worldbank.org)

**Inspection Panel:** Luis Schunk, (202) 473-1779 [Lschunk@worldbank.org](mailto:Lschunk@worldbank.org)