

Gender-differentiated impacts of Large-scale Land Acquisitions in Liberia

A Case Study based on the publication of the report titled: "Women: The Least secure Tenure"



Photo: A woman in Vondeh town, River Cess County, plaits traditional fishing baskets

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1. Introduction

In a recent study, Green Advocates and its partners, the Natural Resource Women Platform and the Alliance for Rural Democracy, found that the impact of large scale land acquisitions (LSLAs) has caused women to lose their rights to use, access and own land for housing or farming, forest and forest products as well as other natural resources in their communities. On the other hand, they found that both women and men in areas without LSLAs have access to the forest and its resources and women are especially dependent on the forest for their livelihood: they obtain meat and fish, medication from herbs and plants gathered from the forest, fuel wood and materials for building, furniture and cooking utensils.

The study also found that the government of Liberia has been responding harshly to criticisms of large-scale land development. Women along with other community leaders have faced series of harassments, intimidations, threats, arrests and imprisonments coupled with ridiculous criminal charges and offences ranging from criminal trespass, criminal malevolence, theft of property, obstruction of justice, disorderly conduct, menacing, attempted murder, economic sabotage and terroristic threats.

This case study, therefore, reflects the issues and themes in the gender report recently published by Green Advocates as a contribution toward the publication of the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI)'s report on Large-Scale Land Acquisitions (LSLA) titled: "Gendered Impacts of Large-Scale Land Acquisitions, with a Focus on Women's Land and Forest Rights: A Literature Review". Recently Green Advocates published a book titled: "Women: The Least Secure Tenure".

1.1. Context

Since 2006, post-war economic recovery efforts have seen increased dependence on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), with over US\$16 billion¹ committed to date, mainly for the mineral, oil and agricultural sectors. While this economic boom promotes growth in the struggling economy, it has led to land loss, water scarcity, involuntary resettlement, desecration of shrines and sacred places and loss of livelihood sources, thus heightening community-company tension. The gender report by Green Advocates and its partners shows that although local communities in general are the ones facing these violations, it is the vulnerable members of the communities, specifically women who are the most affected.

1.2. Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to identify issues and themes in the gender report recently published by Green Advocates and produce a gender case study on Liberia consistent with the emerging themes being discussed or examined in the draft Large-Scale Land Acquisitions (LSLA) report by RRI titled: "Gendered Impacts of Large-Scale Land Acquisitions, with a Focus on Women's Land and Forest Rights: A Literature Review". Recently Green Advocates published a book titled: "Women: The Least Secure Tenure".

1.3. Methodology

The case study is entirely based on the findings in Green Advocates' report titled: "Women: The Least Secure Tenure". The analysis of the findings for the case study was based on the

¹ U. S. Department of State, "Investment Climate Statement – Liberia", May 2011, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2011/157311.htm>

Terms of reference (TORs) developed by RRI for its report on Large-Scale Land Acquisitions (LSLA) titled: "Gendered Impacts of Large-Scale Land Acquisitions, with a Focus on Women's Land and Forest Rights: A Literature Review".

Box 1: Story of Mother Anna Tue who was arrested, stripped naked and thrown at the back of a police vehicle

On Friday December 14th 2012, the Butaw community members participated in a meeting presided over by the local Government official, who is the Government appointed Commissioner of the District. The Commissioner had complained that the communities had invited journalists and were providing classified information to those journalists.

During the meeting which was also attended by some of Golden Veroleum's Liberian managers, they asked community members present to sign on to an attendance sheet.

After several people signed on to the attendance sheet, one of the community members inquired about the nature of the meeting. The Commissioner told the communities that the meeting was for the communities to consent to GVL's operation and indicate to GVL their cultural, customary and sacred sites.

The community members then decided that they would not participate in the meeting until their legal advisor and community support organization was invited and present. The community then demanded that their names be removed from the attendance sheet as GVL would use the attendance as an indicator of the community consent.

GVL and the Commissioner refused. As the community members continued to demand that their names be removed, the Commissioner with vehicles supplied by GVL drove to the Greenville, the municipal capital city of Sinoe County and requested that an elite police squad (i.e. the Emergency Response Unit, ERU) be sent to Butaw as local community members were rioting and threatening the peace and stability of Liberia.

The ERU responded by arresting and beating innocent community members. One of the detainees, Mother Anna Tue was at the time more than 50 year old and not in good health. Mother Tue observed the police severely beating on her son. After she approached the scene to find out what was happening, she was arrested, beaten and her clothes completely torn off her. Mother Tue was stripped naked with only her panties on her and thrown behind the police pick up jeeps along with other community members. They were taken directly into prison.

Concerning her customary land, here is what Mother Ana Tue Said:

"My grandfather born me here and I have been here over the years until now. All along, we have been enjoying our native land until Golden Veroleum came. When they came, we did not deny them. We were told that the company needed land for nursery for their oil palm. Later, we got to know that they were here to plant palm on all our lands, and that the land is not for us but for government. Where do they expect us to go stay, in the sky?

We don't agree with their operations any more. They deceived us. I have two rice farms now as we speak and do not depend on Golden Veroleum to live. Let them leave. We do not want them here".

Table 1: Companies covered by case study in Liberia

Company/project name	Investment type	Ownership structure	Location
Sime Darby	Agriculture (Oil Palm)	Private	Grand Cape Mount, Bomi counties
Golden Veroleum	Agriculture (Oil Palm)	Private	Sinoe, Grand Kru counties
ArcelorMittal	Mining (iron ore)	Private	Nimba, Bong and Grand Bassa Counties
Aureus Mining/New Liberty Gold	Mining (Gold)	Private	Grand Cape mount
EJ&J (FCM-B)	Forestry (logging)	Private	River Cess
Mandra LTTC (FCM-C)	Forestry (logging)	Private	
Mandra ICC (FCM-K)	Forestry (logging)	Private	River Cess, Grand Gedeh

2. Community consultation

Key findings:

- 1) *Women have not participated in decision making processes with mining, agriculture and forestry companies during contract negotiations with the government of Liberia;*
- 2) *Women have not been informed on the impacts of large-scale land acquisitions for mining, agriculture and logging activities;*
- 3) *When the companies arrive, only men meet to discuss issues about the community.*

Traditionally women are often left out of decision making process both at the household and community level and, the arrival of the mining, agriculture and forestry companies has only exacerbated the lack of involvement of women in decision making.

Women remain relegated to the background and there is little recognition of women as important and equal stakeholders in decision making over the use, management and control of land and natural resources. Women's decision-making authority is particularly limited because land is still viewed as the domain of men and male decision-making. For example, in Voinjama district women are not allowed to speak or stand in meetings while their husbands are around. Seeing how important the land, forest and other natural resources are to their daily lives, their exclusion from decision making processes on how they are being used and managed greatly undermines their productivity and creativity and definitely will affect the growth and wellbeing of their families.

Except for one reported case in which ArcelorMittal solicited the views of women on what they wanted from a skills training program, the study shows no deliberate effort by male members of the community or representatives of the companies to include women in discussions bordering on the companies' operations, obligations, agreements and responsibilities. This means that the views of women have not been heard or incorporated in community development, social impact assessments and action plans.

2.1 Lack of women participation in decision making over concessions

Nobody discusses any issues about the impact of agriculture, forestry and mining concessions on the community with the women. Rather it is only the men who meet to discuss them.

2.1.1 Agriculture

Madam Rebecca Tweh recalled to the PRA team that in one such discussion over Golden Veroleum in Blebo, Grand Kru County, women were absent because they were not informed about the planned meeting and had left for the farms. Much later when it was realized that no woman attended the meeting, Ma Sebo, who had stayed in town to attend to personal matters was invited to the meeting to represent women. Unfortunately she made no report of the meeting's proceedings when all the women returned home later.

2.1.2 Mining

Women have not also been able to participate in decision making with mining companies about its operations. For example, many women in Gbapa were given no prior notice before their lands were taken over by the company, ArcelorMittal. Ma Sonnie explained that she only saw a survey team and company people on her land. After their survey, people started working on the land. They were not given the chance to be part of the decision making process, and they were compelled to do anything the company said. Subsequent meetings with the company to register their protests or displeasure were all initiated by community members and their families who were affected. In some cases the company spelt out what they were able to offer as compensation but without any negotiation with the people.

In Cape Mount there was a similar occurrence with Aureus Mining. For example, in Daeyeleh, Blain and Monon towns the women also reported that there is no line of communication between them and the company. They complained about inadequate information about the company's operations in their towns. They only know that they cannot undertake any farming activities in the immediate areas of the company project sites. They were also informed that they cannot go fishing in their creeks and streams because the company is using a dangerous chemical. They were told that the fish would make them sick. The women said they still do not understand why their creeks and streams were diverted? Why and how did the chemical get into the river? And why the fish from the river would make them sick?

2.1.3 Forestry

Women are also not being consulted in the forestry sector. Women in communities affected by forestry companies have expressed frustration about the lack of information concerning the various social agreements between the companies and the community members. For example, participants from the Neezuin community pointed out that the Mandra-EJ & J, Mandra- LTTC & ICC social agreements were signed through ignorance because community members had limited knowledge of the contents and impacts of the operation of the various timber companies.

The women also complained that they are not adequately represented on the Community Forestry Development Committee and said it was only a men's organization.

2.1.4 FPIC process in Liberia

Although provided for in the Community Rights Law (CRL), the FPIC process has not been recognized or implemented by the official structures. Its application has not been clearly explained to communities affected by large-scale land acquisition. Neither has

there been frantic effort by the government and the private sector to assist communities in exercising their right to give or withhold consent in the awarding of large-scale concessions over their ancestral lands. Moreover, the FPIC requirement in the Community Rights Law affects on forestry companies. In relation to the forestry sector, the Community Rights Law mandates that “Any decision, agreement, or activity affecting the status or use of community forest resources shall not proceed without the prior, free, informed consent of said community”².

Except for some agricultural companies, such as the oil palm companies, with FPIC commitments, many other concessions have not adhered to FPIC in their operations.

3. Access to land, forests, and other common property resources

Women have been affected by large-scale land acquisition for mining, forestry and agriculture. They have lost hectares of farmlands and mining claims, leading to loss of livelihood sources. They have also lost protein sources as well as safe drinking water due to pollution and forceful eviction.

The gender study by Green Advocates, ARD and the Natural Resource Women Platform shows that women access and gain rights to land through almost the same channels as men do but that women primarily do so through marriage. In the study areas the system of marriage is patrilocal such that women move to their husband’s community after they marry and subsequently access land for farming and housing in their new homes. However, the study found that if the marriage does not work, the women may return to their places of birth and access land for farming there. Although a widow can still access land in her husband’s community, a divorced woman cannot do so. The study also found that daughters may inherit land but this is usually in lesser measure than sons. The right to inherit farmland is usually limited to cropland and sons are more likely to inherit land with “life trees” than daughters. In cases where women plant ‘life trees’ with their husbands they have less decision-making authority and less control over the proceeds than the men. The land rights of women are more vulnerable in situations of land shortage. Women generally have access to and can use forest and forest products so long as they belong to the community. Apart from the few restrictions outlined above women can obtain anything they want from the forests.

3.1 Mining

Women as well as their male counterparts have lost several hectares of their farmlands to the companies and in several cases entire portions of land belonging to individuals/households have been taken leading to a complete loss of livelihoods and important sources of income. A case in point is Sonnie Bontor, a 58 year old farmer whose farm was the first to be destroyed by Arcelor Mittal to build a sedimentary dam for washing iron ore. The total land of 295 acres was taken over and she stated that, “there is nowhere to make farm”.

She and her family are only surviving on the money made from the crops on the land bought by the company. Not only have people lost their land but their cattle and all the animals they hunt from the bush and forest have ran away as a result of the blasting of the ore on the mine. The women in Nimba County have also accused ArcelorMittal of air, water and chemical pollution from the chemicals they use on the mine. The women also reported that the company has relocated the market to a place that is at the far end of the town. Accessibility is now a problem and nobody is there to sell to. For a woman like Madam Bontor who could make as much as 8,000 Liberian Dollars from selling her farm produce each market day, the relocation and loss of land is a death warrant for her family.

² Section 2.2c, Guiding Principles, Community Rights Law, Liberia, October 16, 2009

In Grand Cape Mount County the women also indicated that the activities of the New Liberty Gold Mining has robbed them of meat from the forests and fish and water for washing or drinking because the Marvoh creek/river is not only polluted but also diverted. Their livelihood of fishing as an important means of income generation is now a thing of the past. Kinjor and Larjor are two major communities located in the project areas of the New Liberty Gold Mining (NLGM) Company and are examples of the most affected. They complained about the abortion of fishing, mining, and farming activities and attributed their current hardships in accessing basic needs to the arrival and activities of the company.

In communities such as Jenneh Brown, Jarwajah, Monon Town, Blain, Daeyeleh, and Kinjor the halting of artisanal mining activities by the company is a significant loss of an important income generating activity for at least 20% of women who depend on it for meeting the basic needs of their family.

Furthermore, all the twenty seven (27) sites of cultural heritage identified in the project area of the New Liberty Gold Mining project by the company (as stated in the EIA report release) were completely destroyed. This includes the halting of the traditional bush schooling, the Sande schools.

3.2 Logging

In the logging areas the major concerns expressed by study communities were the loss of their forests and unavailability of farmlands. For example, in Neezuin, River Cess County, the elders and herbalists of the town decried the loss of medicinal plants due to EJ and J's clearing of the forest. The company has placed restrictions on traditional farming, restrictions on traditional and cultural practices undertaken in the forests such as the bush school for girls (Sande), and restrictions on fishing areas among others. The women traditional leaders vehemently vowed to carry the devil³ to the concession to forcibly get them out for the destruction of the Sande.

The Zeemedyenee River has also been polluted where it empties into the Doe River, a wider problem involving both men and women in Neezuin. The project team visited Mandra-EJ&J with some community members and found that Mandra-EJ&J has constructed its Camp or offices on the creek which is used by the company for both bathing and defecation. Community members believe their ancestors reside in the Doe River. According to the elders of Neezuin, no one is permitted to defecate in the creek which empties into the Jo River. In the confluence or where Zeemedyenee meets Jo River, a town hosting the ancestors of Neezuin, is reported to spiritually exist. Thus, no one is allowed to toilet in the creek as doing so would carry the mess or toilet to the ancestors.

Even in areas where the EJ & J concession is dormant or has ceased operations there are still restrictions on where to make traditional farms, where to gather medicinal plants and wild forest fruits and where to conduct traditional fishing activities. All these restrictions directly affect women who benefit from the use of these resources.

Box 2: Chief Justice Orders Release of Pregnant Prisoner on Bail⁴

Liberia: Chief Justice Orders Release of Pregnant Prisoner On Bail

³ The "Devil" is the highest spiritual and cultural representation of some rural people in Liberia. The "Devil" is the last line in cleansing and restoring social and cultural order. No community member defies the "Devil".

⁴ "Liberia: Chief Justice Orders Release of Pregnant Prisoner On Bail", Front Page Africa Newspaper, June 16, 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201506171547.html>

“Greenville — Marie (not real name) was seen sitting with two other female prisoners with a hand under her belly, frowned with lappa dripping her legs. Marie has been in jail at the Greenville Central Prison for weeks now after her arrest in the aftermath of the protest at Golden Veroleum Concession area in Butaw. The Greenville central Prison is one of the prison facilities in Liberia that is very small and cannot hold up to 100 inmates.

There are over six cells in the Greenville prison which sources told FPA has only one room for female inmates and the remaining five for males. During recent a visit by Liberia's Chief Justice at judicial facilities, he toured the prison after a prosecutor in Sinoe County raised qualms that juveniles do not have separate prison facility which has prompted complaint by a party litigant to the court.

At the Prison, Marie told Chief Justice Francis Korkpor that Police officers arrested her along with her husband during the Golden Veroleum Liberia Butaw riot in Sinoe County recently. Speaking in the local Kru dialect as interpreted by a Correction Officer, the Pregnant prisoner was seen in pain as she narrated: "My husband and I came here when the people arrested us after the riot. Right now I am speaking, I feeling pain because the people beat me and I don't even know if the child will live."

She continued "I don't have no one to stand my bond because my husband and I in here so I just want people to help me or else we will stay here till we die or we will find another way". It is not known if Marie is presently in good medical condition following her alleged statement of police brutality meted against her.

Innocent child

After her narration Chief Justice Korkpor ordered the County Attorney Cllr. Charles Gabriel to coordinate with the prison superintendent to allow the pregnant woman be freed on bail. "Looking at her condition it seems like she is going through pain so County, please coordinate with the prison superintendent and court staffs to make sure that she is released, the child she's carrying has done nothing so let her be freed on bail" Chief Justice Korkpor said." It can be recalled in 2013 prison authorities at the Ministry of Justice through the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation disclosed that about seventy inmates at the Greenville Central Prison in Sinoe County broke jail.

The Justice Ministry did not say the cause of the jailbreak, but disclosed that two of the escapees were rearrested and subsequently placed behind bars. Justice Ministry authorities said police and Correction Officers in Greenville and other parts of Sinoe County were persuading the rest of the fifteen inmates.

A team of Senior Correction Officers were dispatched from Monrovia to investigate the incident and establish the cause of the prison break, which was becoming rampant in the prison sector at the time. According to a local group, Perinatal Needs of Pregnant, Incarcerated Women, pregnant prisoners have health-care needs that are minimally met by prison systems.

The group said many incarcerated mothers have high-risk pregnancies due to the economic and social problems that led them to their incarceration namely poverty, lack of education, inadequate health care, and substance abuse. Liberia does not have an established opportunity to replicate model programs that provide these women and their children with support, information, and empowering affirmation that improve parenting outcomes and decrease repetition..."

4. Compensation, displacement, and resettlement

Women affected by large-scale land acquisition have been displaced and involuntarily resettled. Where compensation has been paid for land rights, such compensation has been channeled through their through their husbands, sons, brothers or fathers. Those with deeds received compensation directly.

Key findings:

- 1) *Women have been involuntarily resettled by multinational corporations without compensation;*
- 2) *Promises to resettle farmers whose lands have been taken over have not been honored;*
- 3) *The community market has been relocated to the extreme end of the town and no longer easily accessible*
- 4) *Women compensations for customary land rights were channeled through their husbands, sons, brothers or fathers.*

4.1 Involuntary relocation

In Cape Mount, the study found that Aureus Mining involuntarily resettled community members to the New Kinjor village. But because the new RAP village was still under construction temporary houses had to be built by members of the old towns. According to the community leaders, the relocation of members of old Kinjor was not done at their free will. The women's representative, Elizabeth Fahnbulleh, also attested that their relocation was not unanimously agreed by all.

The study found that many of the women who relocated had to build their own houses by themselves with no plan. Some were however lucky to have their personal belongings transported to the new location but this was done without ensuring that the affected persons actually had a home to send the things to. Madam Fahnbulleh added that though the General Manager of Aureus Mining promised to give each family US\$50 if they moved, they never received the money. Later he explained to them that only those who moved earlier were entitled to this amount.

In Sinoe County, the women complained that the operations of Golden Veroleum company has altered not only their livelihood but their way of life they have grown used to since childhood, passed on to them from their parents and grandparents. They pointed to such facts as the destruction of their farmlands, the destruction of their old towns, the desecration of their sacred sites as factors that have made them strangers to their own villages. This, according to them, is symptomatic of voluntary displacement especially where the women who are the managers of the natural resources may now have to travel long distances to collect these resources to support their families, thus increasing their work loads and serving as impediments to social cohesion and networking. Besides, the women narrated that they were unprepared and provided no notice for the sudden appearance of the company in their community and they were even more affected by the lack of compensation for the destruction of their crops.

4.2 Compensation

In the study, the women indicated that most of their compensations, especially compensations for customary land rights were channeled through their male counterparts, through their husbands, sons, brothers or fathers. Those with deeds received compensation directly.

The participants in Nimba informed the research team that ArcelorMittal promised relocation benefits to them but did not honor its commitments. They indicated that, in some cases, ArcelorMittal bought the crops that were on the deeded lands but raised serious reservations as regards crops found on customary lands.

In areas where there were weak customary tenure, the company leasing the land, found jobs for some of the women and helped them send their children to school. They also promised to give the elderly folks cattle to raise since their farmlands were taken away by the company in order to help improve their living condition. Unfortunately they only picked a few old people and helped them with rice and some other things, leaving many others without real benefits.

In Blebo, Grand Kru, the women were more critical of compensation schemes offered by companies. They appreciate the developmental relevance of these companies in their community in terms of the opportunities they have created for a lot of petty trading but they have insisted that this level of development does not compensate for the negative impacts. The major fear expressed by the women who participated in the study is that the companies will take all their lands and that they will not be able to make farms, plant vegetables and lay baskets to catch fish and crayfish.

5. Food security

Large-scale land acquisitions have threatened food security in the study communities, making community members worse off than they were before the arrival of multinational corporations. On the other hand, the study found that communities unaffected by large-scale land acquisitions are living better on community-based resources including land and forests.

Key findings:

- 1) *Most women living in areas unaffected by large-sale land acquisition are involved in farming and produce a wide range of crops;*
- 2) *Women living in areas affected by LSLAs have lost land rights along with their families and are struggling daily to survive;*
- 3) *In some areas, the rivers have been stopped from flowing and women can no longer get their fresh fish and the water from the river which is polluted; and*
- 4) *There is no forest for hunting anymore because the forests have been cleared*

5.1 Areas unaffected by LSLAs

The study found that most women in areas unaffected by large-scale land acquisitions are involved in farming and produce a wide range of crops such as rice, cocoyam, cassava, bananas, pineapples and vegetables such as garden eggs, onions, peppers, and other vegetables.

The land and the forest remain a huge blessing for the women in Lofa County since almost everything they consume or use is either from the land or forest.

In Lofa County, the study found that men are generally responsible for cultivating life trees but women more often participate in their maintenance although a few of the women may plant their own trees. But more often it is the men who sell the tree

products, while women mainly sell proceeds from the farm such as vegetables and other produce. The study also found that forest products collected by women are mainly for home consumption and use although products such as oil palm, palm kernel oil and Torborgee are sold on the market. Women use the cash obtained from sale of farm produce to pay for children's school fees and meet other household expenses.

5.2 Areas affected by LSLAs

Women in areas affected by LSLAs faced serious challenges in finding bread-and-butter for their families. They have lost their forests and are unable to easily obtain meat and fish, medication from herbs and plants gathered from the forest, fuel wood, and materials for building, furniture and cooking utensils. The study found that before the arrival of LSLAs, women cut wood, make small farms (pepper, cassava and other farming activities) to support their families. But, now, the complaint by most women in the areas affected by LSLAs operation has been that they are not allowed to enter the forests anymore to collect forest resources.

In some communities, the intensification of company operations has affected livelihood sources. For example, the diversion of the community creek by Aureus Mining in Grand Cape Mount County has affected women. Women from towns along the Marvoh Creek are finding it difficult to go about their normal livelihood activities because the company has polluted and diverted the creek.

Many of the women who participated in the study complained that they were once engaged into fish and bush meat trading but are unable to do so now because of the presence of the company, Aureus mining, in the forest. Aureus mining is also using the creeks and streams in the community for gold mining.

The study found that some farmers in Sinoe County suffered setbacks in farming when Golden Veroleum (GVL) damaged five(5) creeks in five (5) communities (i.e. Farley, Tugbeh Town, Sowear Town, Plussonnie and Jaryenneh) during land clearing operations which led to water problem in the affected communities. No mitigation measures for the farmers were implemented by GVL. In one village, the farmer developed his own mitigation technique, a mechanism to collect water with a rusty sheet of metal. The independent Assessment report on the Free, Prior and Informed Consent process prepared by TFT indicated that GVL provided drums and tablets to treat the damaged water before drinking but some of the farmers ran out of sanitizing products. The permit issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) required that GVL observed a minimum 10 meters of forest along water ways in its operational area. Without adequate water for drinking, bathing, cooking, etc. the affected farmers have been unable to engage in productive farming.

In areas of artisanal mining, the study found that women make up 20% of the population involved in artisanal mining. Some of the major activities carried on by women prior to the arrival of Aureus Mining in the artisanal mining fields ranged from the pouring of water for washing of gravel, to preparing of meal for male miners. By doing this, most women were able to actively get involved with the provision of basic needs for them and their children.

6. Labor issues

Female employees have also faced labor rights issues. Some female employees are struggling with working conditions while others are still waiting for the promised jobs. Yet some were unable to keep their jobs due to the Ebola outbreak that forced some companies to shut down.

Key findings

- 1) *Women employees and wives of men who work for the company do not have access to medical services, maternity leave and other employment benefits;*
- 2) *Company workers are not provided safety working gears such as boots and clothing;*
- 3) *In the logging sector, workers are given jobs without signing a contract. This means that in many instances, there are no contractual agreement between workers and the management team;*
- 4) *Harvesting crew is deployed without a patrol vehicle which can address emergency in case of injury. When workers are dropped at the job site during the morning hours, the vehicle only returns during the evening hours. The same applies to women;*
- 5) *Workers are not entitled to housing;*
- 6) *In some instances, workers are dismissed for questioning treatment and are prevented from organizing a union to represent them;*
- 7) *Women have no information with regard to the various social agreements signed between the logging companies and the affected communities.*

6.1 Gendered labor in large-scale

The study found that women are dismissed from work at any time. They have to work for a whole day. If they are absent they don't receive payment for that day. Women contractors on probation who get pregnant are not employed even after delivery of their child.

The study also found that the reproductive and labor rights of women in Sinoe are being violated and that pregnant women working for oil palm companies have to ride trucks or tractors over long distances to go to work, and any single day missed is not paid for. On the other hand, in Compound Community, Snoygbah and Greenville communities of Butaw, Sinoe County, women employees along with their male counter-parts have not been provided transportation to work because their communities have not given land to cultivate oil palm.

Many women have developed backaches as a result of the strenuous work involved in manually filling and transporting 80 polybags of earth daily to nursery sites.

In the logging sector, the women complained that they are taken without signing a contract, giving the workers perpetual temporary status while making it easier for the companies to dispose of workers at will.

The study found that the companies in the logging sector appear not to have taken into account the risks associated with logging. For example the women explained that the harvesting crew is deployed without a patrol vehicle to address emergencies in the case of injury. In addition to that workers are often deployed without safety gear and they are left to purchase their own boots and helmets. Furthermore, no consideration is given to women workers because when workers are dropped at the work site in the morning hours, the vehicle only returns in the evening.

Some women employees, mainly in Butaw, are being dismissed because their husbands are demanding the rights to free, prior and informed consent over lands taken over by the company.

For some, the promised jobs are yet to arrive. In Deayeleh and Blain, it was reported that the communities were very hopeful when Aureus Mining Company first arrived and had high expectations from them to the extent that their women and children even provided some assistance. For example, the women cooked for them and the children brushed the areas to make roads for them for small amounts of cash. These benefits however turned out to be short lived.

Similarly, some of the women participants in the study communities informed the research team that they received training in operating and driving heavy duty machines and tankers. They indicated that while the company is reported to have employed workers from Gbapa, Nimba County, and the other affected communities most of the workers from those towns including some of the women who were trained as truck drivers were downsized. However, the women were assured of being given the chance to work again when more iron ore is being mined.

The study found that some female workers were successful in getting job placements but they unable to keep their jobs due to the Ebola outbreak. For example, Susannah Williams explained that she worked with a construction group called AFCON for one year and four months as a machine mate ore excavator and was paid about seven United States dollars (US\$7.00) per day. She was paid every two weeks and worked from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. unfortunately, the company suddenly left Liberia because of the 2014 Ebola outbreak and she found herself without a job.

Also, Mercy Quiwon had the opportunity to work for AFCON under ArcelorMittal as an Office Assistant to the General Manager where she had applied as a machine assistant. She said that she spent two years on the job but did not undertake any training. She indicated that men and women are paid equally and some women who worked very hard were paid for overtime. She was paid US\$150.00 every two weeks, and a total amount of US\$300.00 per month. With the money earned from the company she was able to buy a piece of land in Sanniquellie and has already laid the foundation for her new home.

In Grand Cape Mount, where Aureus mining operation is located, women complained that it is very difficult to get a job. Youth unemployment is also very high. The women complained that most of the women workforces with the company (in Cape Mount) are strangers, and that those who are owners of the land have not been extended the privilege to work and earn a living. This is something they were looking forward to since most of their livelihood activities have been stopped by the company.

The study found that even in the provision of employment by the companies, women's interests were not wholly taken into consideration. For example, women in Sinoe expressed dissatisfaction with insensitive working conditions resulting to conflict between their reproductive and productive roles. In Grand Kru, Selly G. Jeh reported that she wakes up at 3:00am to prepare her young child for school. Her mother completes the rest of the task and takes him to school. She walks one (1) hour in the dark to catch the transport tractor provided by the company, at German Camp. Other women travel even longer distances to catch the tractor as well. Together, they all walk back home daily to prepare for another day.

Women living without family members have to hire baby-sitters to keep their jobs. This affects the amount of money actually spent on their families. It was reported that each female worker in the agricultural sector (mainly oil palm) makes US\$5.00 daily for the very

labor intensive work of manual filling and transportation of 80 polybags to nursery sites. Again the women contend that this amount of US\$150.00 per month is not commensurate with the job they perform nor does it make room for hiring outsiders to undertake their household chores while they are away.

Furthermore women working for GVL find working hours particularly challenging due to unfair treatment, exploitation and little consideration for their welfare. They have complained that they go to work 3:00 am in the morning on tractors. Other women who participated in the study, complained that whenever they get sick on the job, GVL does not care for them. They also added that women that are pregnant up to their 9th month of delivery are forced to go to work in the tractor.

6.2 Gendered labor in out-grower schemes

The case study did not cover labor rights issues related to out-grower schemes. This is mainly because the private sector and some development partners are still discussing the introduction of out-grower schemes across the country.

Out grower schemes are measured or agreed in several agricultural concessions, mainly oil palm, but the roadmap to establishing the schemes are still being discussed outside public view and, as usual, without deliberate efforts to involve women in the design. The discussions are elite-driven, raising fears among community members that the process will be captured or hijacked by the rich and powerful in society. The rubber-sector out-grower schemes witnessed in 1960s and 1970s were captured by ruling elites. Large-scale rubber plantations such Firestone Rubber plantation planted high yield small-holder rubber farms which were given out to government officials as a form of favor, corruption or buying of influence.

7 Gendered agency and resistance

Liberia has established a gender ministry but the violation of women rights are still prevalent. Women employees are unable to challenge existing working conditions while women human rights defenders have been harassed, intimidated, arrested and detained by government.

Key findings

- 1.) The statutory mandate of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection which advises Government on all matters affecting the development and welfare of women and children has not been enforced;*
- 2.) Women human rights defenders have been harassed, intimidated, arrested and detained for challenging human rights violations including the destruction of farm lands, food crops, cash crops and the pollution of drinking water makes it impossible for women to sustain their lives.*

7.1 Gendered agency⁵

In 2001 the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection was established to serve as a driving force of Government for the realization of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its related instruments including the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on the Rights of

⁵ Ministry of Gender, Liberia, <http://socialprotection.org/institutions/liberia-ministry-gender-children-social-protection-mogcsp>

Children (CRC); the AU Protocols on Women and Children; the UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security, etc. The Ministry advises Government on all matters affecting the development and welfare of women and children.

In 2009, Liberia adopted a gender policy⁶ which recognizes that gender disparities and imbalances are common in every sphere of life in Liberia and that women are disproportionately and unfairly represented, leading to gender inequality and imbalance such as unequal gender relations and power relations, lack of access to basic services, economic disempowerment, low participation in decision making, lack of access to legal and judicial services, etc.

7.2 Gendered resistance

Large-sale land acquisition has a profound impact on the livelihood of local communities, especially women and threatens not only their livelihoods but also their cultural heritage. The destruction of farm lands, food crops, cash crops and the pollution of drinking water makes it impossible for women to sustain their lives. Some women workers employed by concessions are being dismissed for questioning maltreatment at said concessions. This has resulted into serious conflicts, contests, complaints, grievances and protests.

7.2.1 Women Human Rights Defenders

The study found that, in the last seven years, a change of attitudes has occurred with respect to how the government of Liberia has responded to concerns and criticism voiced by some civil society organizations and local communities regarding the impact of large-scale land acquisitions.

The study has observed increasing use of special elite police units by the government of Liberia with logistical and financial support from several Multinational Corporations to silence protests by communities.

This case study documents the stories of three women (in Boxes 1, 2 and 3) who have faced harassment, intimidation, threats, arrests and imprisonment as a result of large scale land development in Liberia: Anna Tue, Beatrice Koon and Memberline Chea.

These women along with other community leaders have faced series of criminal charges and offences ranging from Criminal Trespass, Criminal malevolence, Theft of Property, Obstruction of Justice, Disorderly Conduct, Menacing, Attempted Murder, Murder, Economic Sabotage, Terroristic threats.

Box 3: The story of Beatrice Kun, arrested naked and taken to prison

Between May and early June of 2015, twenty-three (23) community land rights defenders including several women were arrested⁷ and detained after a protest broke out at the main offices of GVL in Butaw district, Sinoe County, concerning their customary land and property right.

⁶ Gender policy, Liberia, 2009,

http://www.africanchildforum.org/clr/policy%20per%20country/liberia/liberia_gender_2009_en.pdf, p.6

⁷ <http://www.thenewdawnliberia.com/news/7602-23-youth-charged-in-sinoe>

According to media report, one of the detainees died in prison⁸ due to beating and ill treatment received from the Liberia National Police (LNP) and was buried without autopsy on the body to determine the cause of death.

Mother Beatrice Kun was among the women arrested and detained for more than twelve months. Here is her story:

“I went to work that day but our supervisor told us to go home for that day because of what was happening. I reached home and entered the bathroom to take my bath. As soon as I came out of the bathroom, while entering my bedroom, the police arrived. The police entered my bedroom room with me while I was naked. The police did not permit me to put on my clothes as I had just come from the bath room.

I had my little rice in my room; the police man told me that I took the rice from the company but I told him that the rice was my last month’s rice the company gave me. He again asked for my Identification Card and I gave it to him. Then he said, ‘This is the old ma who said she will die for her land’. I told him that nobody and I talked about land issue how I will say such a thing.

I was arrested naked and they took me to the prison and took my phone from me. Before they could carry me, one of the police officer hit me from the back on my arm with something in his hand. Everyone on that car that day had some kind of blood on them. When we got to Greenville police station, it was one police girl who gave me under clothes to wear.”

⁸ “Citizens demand autopsy on Thompson’s corpse”, The News Newspaper, July 15, 2015, <http://thenewslib.com/news/highlights/2576-citizens-demand-autopsy-on-thompson-s-corpse>