

Community Mapping: An Alternative Advocacy Tool  
For Ensuring That Land And Natural Resources  
Management Are Right, Pro Poor And Tenure Based  
In Liberia

Alfred Lahai Gbabai Brownell Sr.  
Green Advocates, Monrovia, Liberia

Cartographie participative et macro-zonage : quelles implications sur la tenure  
foncière et forestière des communautés locales et peuples autochtones  
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Congo ( RDC )

# Background

- Liberian local civil society made significant advances towards securing community land rights and resources by supporting the development of a new community rights law
- They worked to enable local communities to be consulted in the development of the law
- During those consultations communities expressed deep discontentment over the way logging concessions, protected areas and community forest areas are being defined and allocated
- They also expressed anger over their lack of participation in the management of those new areas that overlap lands where they have strong claims based upon customary use.
- Green Advocates requested mapping capacity support from the Rights and Resources Group (RRG).

## Background: Objective of Program

- **Training- strengthening capacity for GIS-community mapping to local civil society in a manner that these skills and knowledge can then be transfer not only to local communities but other CSOs**
- **Icon identification, standardizations, integration and capacity for monitoring illegal activities using GIS mapping**
- **Community map production and related equipment procurement-preliminary production of preparatory maps illustrating community areas and their forest related resources in two pilot communities**
- **Local community using maps for advocacy purposes to strengthen community rights-engage with forest and relevant Government Agencies on the extent of communities rights on (a)customary land (b)Timber Sales Areas (c)Forest Management Contract Areas-(d)protected areas(e)Agricultural concessions(f)Mining concessions, etc..**
- **Case study on Customary rights versus statutory law-incentive or disincentives for strengthening community rights in Liberia- a need to analyze evidentially to what extend these various rights regimes serve as an incentive or disincentive for protecting and strengthening community rights over forest lands and related resources-how do we approach these regimes-advantages-disadvantages.**

## Experiences on community mapping in Liberia

- Community mapping can become a sustainable program once local communities have the motivation and then request support to map out their rights, land and resources.
- Community mapping-a tool or a legal document-It is important to manage perception and expectation that may be created by the mapping very early on at the project implementation stage and honestly explain to communities what the outcome of the mapping will be including its implications. For example will the map create any kind of right? Can it in fact create rights? Which rights? Is the map a title deed? What legal authority does the map have if any?
- Look before you leap- your credibility /integrity is on the line-Community mapping is an expensive, time consuming and highly technical venture. Do not undertake a mapping exercise until you are sure you have the resources to do so.- cost of subscription for soft wares, web hosting, technical assistant, etc....

## Experiences on community mapping in Liberia

- There is a myth created by some members of the intellectual community that “Deeded Land” is without boundary disputes because boundaries cease to exist or are automatically eliminated within the system. The actual picture is embarrassing: the boundaries are ever present, and more than witnessed under communal ownership, are the chief agent of division and inequality among community members Green Advocates 2008
- “Observably, local community members, irrespective of the years spent under statutory tenure, are unable to part with customary practices inherited from their ancestors. This, therefore, amounts to a combination of two systems that seem irreconcilably opposed” Green Advocates 2008
- Statutory laws have overshadowed customary laws everywhere there is a clash but it is only a shadow, one day the light will come and it will go away forever. Green Advocates 2008

## Experiences on community mapping in Liberia

- “the celebrated and, most often, preferred deeded system or statutory ownership of land is, in actuality, an interruption of traditional life and a drag on the ability of community members to effectively improve their living conditions.” Green Advocates 2008
- Those with title deeds usually are the ones given the preference and considered the legal owner than those customarily occupying land- Green Advocates 2008
- “Parachuting statutory or deeded ownership of land into communal lands has much to be desired. It is, therefore, strongly advisable that, as a necessary first step, campaigners of this approach equally undertake social audits or the socio-economic impacts of this practice in a community historically noted for communal property ownership. Such an approach would be laudable in arresting the misleading signals and the looming conflicts that greet deeded lands in communal strongholds.” Green Advocates 2008



## **Essential issues to consider when doing community mapping**

Community mapping must be a participatory process involving all members of the community. The elder, the young, Women and men. They all represent the data base of the community resources.



## **Essential issues to consider when doing community mapping**

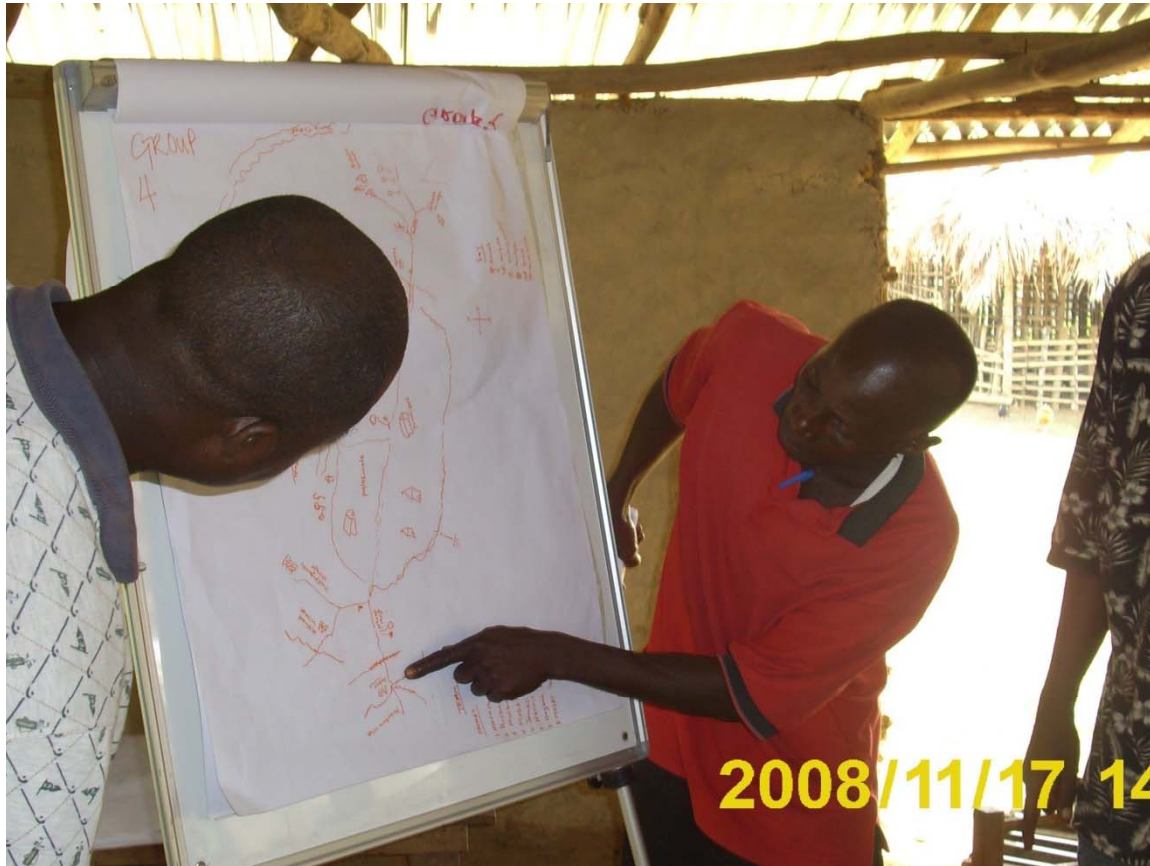
Community members are aware of their land area and resources and can graphically mapped out these resources. Facilitate a forum where they can provide this info.





## **Essential issues to consider when doing community mapping**

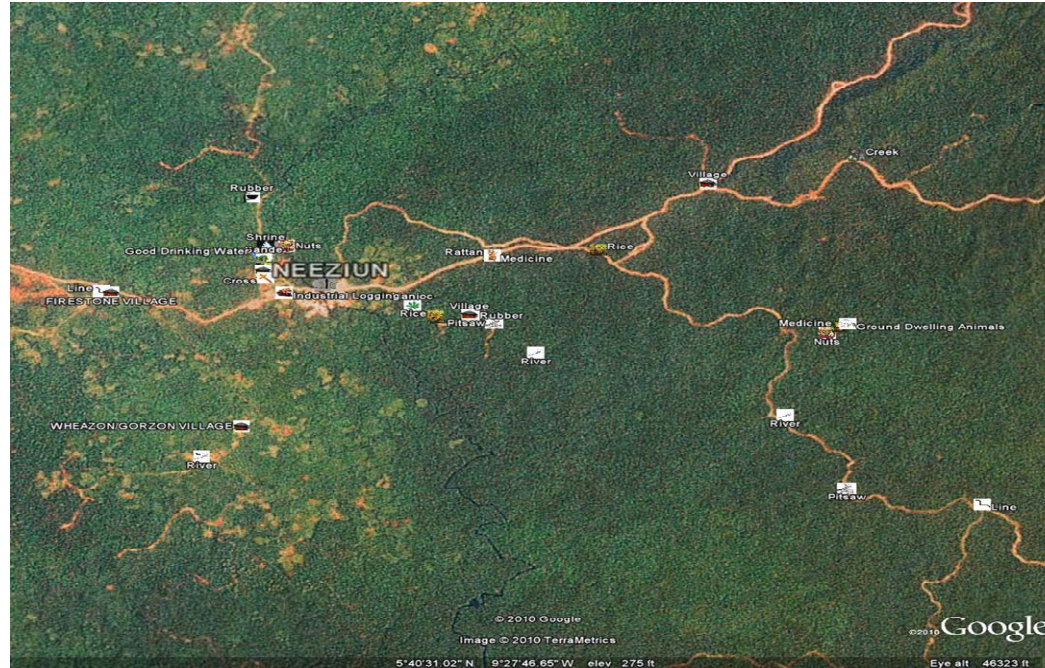
The elders are the walking encyclopedia of the community- do not forget to consult them



## **Essential issues to consider when doing community mapping**

Training and capacity building for staff and local communities-Training must move beyond workshops to Intensive Academic Degree programs

A FINAL MAP OF NEEZIUN AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES



## Essential issues to consider when doing community mapping

You must jointly produce and validate maps with local communities otherwise there will be no local community ownership of the product.



## **Advocacy strategy around community mapping**

Must begin in the community -Facilitate a community consultation to develop the strategy. Community must own the strategy.



## **Advocacy strategy around community mapping**

Consult local authorities with in the mapping communities ,Local leaders, chiefs, elders, etc...



## **Advocacy strategy around community mapping and engagement with government actors and their allies/donors**

Consult at the highest policy level to get political buy in- here Minister of lands and mines in Liberia



## **Advocacy strategy around community mapping and engagement with government actors and their allies/donors**

Facilitate a multi stakeholder dialogue forum with sector agencies and development partners for local community participants to present findings of the mapping exercise



## **Implications for community rights**

Ensuring That Land And Natural Resources Management Are Right based  
In -Welcoming Ceremonies- Obtaining the Prior informed consent of  
communities





## **Implications for community rights**

Pro –poor-community based technology-adding value to a resource-how much do we know about pro poor community level initiatives-Ensuring That Land And Natural Resources Management Are Pro Poor In Liberia



## **Implications for community rights**

Ensuring That Land And Natural Resources Management are Tenure Based In Liberia-Elder Tarr mapping community resources and land area



## **Thanks for your Attention**

**Increased security, protection and  
recognition of tenure rights of local  
communities**