

EXTRACTING PEACE

The management of natural resources as a platform for promoting peace and stability in Liberia

By Zahed Yousuf

ANNEX 2: Details of the research

The findings from this report are based on four separate sets of research, as outlined below.

1. The first **exploratory study** was conducted in 2012. The exploratory study consisted of desk-based research combined with in-country interviews with the following organisations:
 - National members of civil society – the Centre for Transparency and Accountancy in Liberia (CENTAL), Green Advocates, the Agency for Economic Development (AEDE), Heritage Partners, the Press Union, the Land Conflict Resolution Project – Liberia and the Federation of Liberian Youths;
 - Community-based members of civil society – Agriculture Relief Services (ARS), Ears for the Masses (EfM), Voices for the Masses (VfM) and Youth for the Masses (YfM);
 - Participants from Golodee, Malema and Bissaou communities in Bomi County;
 - Government of Liberia officials – the Ministry of Agriculture Assistant Minister, Nimba County Superintendent, the Chief of the Liberian Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (LEITI), and officials from the National Bureau of Concessions (NBC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
 - Multinational palm oil company – Sime Darby;
 - Multinational iron ore company – Arcelor Mittal and BHP Billiton;
 - Project-affected communities – communities in Grand Bassa County and Nimba County (see below for details);
 - International agencies – the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP);
 - Communities affected by the iron ore sector – communities around Saniquille and Yekepa towns in Nimba County. These communities were affected primarily by Arcelor Mittal operations and to a lesser degree by BHP Billiton operations, which are currently in the exploration phase and therefore having less of an impact on the communities. Thus, the observations are based primarily on communities affected by Arcelor Mittal's operations, which began in 2006.
 - Communities affected by the palm oil sector – communities in Grand Bassa County affected by the Sime Darby operations. Due to time constraints, the research team was unable to visit the operations of Golden Veroleum or other palm oil concession areas.
2. This research led to a **national conference** – 'Transforming Natural Resources Governance and Management' – held on 15–16 May 2013. The conference was organised jointly by International Alert, OSIWA and the Purdue Peace Project (PPP).

The aim of this conference was to create a space for dialogue and information exchange between key actor groups involved in natural resource management (NRM). The groups that were present at the conference included affected community members, concessionaires, government and public sector organisations (including African Union).

Overall, the conference brought together groups that do not always have such direct involvement with each other, allowing them to converse about what they consider to be key issues in NRM.

This platform for interaction and information sharing was then recreated in **four regional communities**. The aim of this exercise was to decentralise the dialogue from Monrovia and to include more information from the regional areas that deal directly with NRM issues. The four community consultations were conducted during August 2013 in Zwedru (6 August), Gbarnga (12 August), Tubmanburg (15 August) and Buchanan (23 August). These consultations were funded by OSIWA and overseen by the Rights and Rice Foundation (RRF), in collaboration with the Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Working Group and regional CSOs. The Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU), the New African Research and Development Agency (NARDA) and the Institute for Research and Democratic Development (IREDD) were instrumental in organising the Zwedru consultation. The Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) and the Development Education Network-Liberia (DEN-L) contributed to the Gbarnga consultation. IREDD and RRF implemented the Tubmanburg consultation, while SDI and the Bassa Women Development Association (BAWODA) were key partners for the Buchanan consultation.

3. **Additional interviews** were conducted by members of Alert and PPP from 16–23 August 2013 to allow for more in-depth conversations about topics raised in the community consultations and the original conference. These interviews were conducted with county officials, local CSOs, companies and community members in Tubmanburg and Bomi County as well as with government line offices and organisations in Monrovia. At the culmination of these events, a closing consultation was held in Monrovia with government officials, concessionaire representatives, CSO members and community representatives. The purpose of this closing consultation was to present the themes that emerged in the other community consultations and to highlight themes that had been validated across multiple consultations.
4. In 2014, International Alert with funding from Humanity United implemented an eight-month pilot project, entitled 'Working towards Peaceful Natural Resource Exploitation in Liberia'. The project sought to analyse how communities are negatively affected by natural resource exploitation and to understand how to engage directly with government and economic actors at local level. Alert conducted **two workshops** with community-based organisations (CBOs) from Malema town, Golodee town and Behsao in Bomi County.

Working with and through community structures is critical for instilling a sense of ownership for engagement with stakeholders. With this in mind, four persons from each community were selected by the community as CBO representatives based on discussions regarding the focus of the project. These people are currently participating in ongoing community dialogue on NRM.

Two community facilitators were also appointed in each village (six in total for the three communities) to support the NRM platform committees in their mobilisation and information dissemination. These facilitators were eventually assessed by Alert to confirm that they met the minimum selection criteria and were able to provide representation for the youth, men and women. In total, 30 people attended the workshops: 14 men, 6 women and 10 youths (aged under 35).

The activities during the workshop sought to achieve the following primary aims:

- To improve the participants' ability to analyse their context and to achieve a deeper understanding of the root causes driving increased tensions between the range of stakeholders involved in NRM;
- To improve their understanding of the different interests and needs that are driving conflict between the relevant actors;
- To establish common interests with other stakeholders to provide a basis for improving engagement;
- To develop a strategy on how to engage constructively, based on an understanding of the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats within each community.