Equitable land rights promotion in three districts of Sierra Leone
Baseline Evaluation Report

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Data collected in November, 2013

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# TABLE OF CONTENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENT</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective of the Baseline</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience/Users of the baseline findings</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main key findings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main recommendations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. PROGRAMME BACKGROUND</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline objectives</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline strategy</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bio data of survey respondents</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the research and methodology</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation team</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 ABOUT THE PRE –PROJECT PERCEPTION / KNOWLEDGE OF PEOPLE ABOUT KEY LAND RIGHT</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 ABOUT THE CITIZEN’S PLATFORMS ESTABLISHED TO ENSURE CITIZENS’ PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING PROCESS</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Addax Bio-energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
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<td>HRC</td>
<td>Human Right Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KII</td>
<td>Key Informant Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAFFS</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALOA</td>
<td>Malen Affected Land Owners Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSIWA</td>
<td>Open Society Initiative for West Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACAP</td>
<td>Rural Agency for Community Action Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAC</td>
<td>Socfin Agricultural Company Sierra Leone Ltd</td>
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<tr>
<td>SiLNoRF</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food</td>
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<td>SLA</td>
<td>Sierra Leone Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socfin</td>
<td>Société Financière des Caoutchoucs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPHR</td>
<td>United for the Protection of Human Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFCG</td>
<td>Search for Common Ground</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

SFCG is grateful for the keen collaboration that Action for Large-Scale Land Acquisition Transparency ALLAT partners in the targeted districts in Sierra Leone and Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF) in Bombali District demonstrated during this baseline research. Rural Agency for Community Action Programme (RACAP) in Pujehun District and United for the Protection of Human Rights (UPHR) in Port Loko district were also very instrumental in the process for which we would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation.

Finally to the enumerators and supervisors who took their time to administer the surveys we tender my sincere thanks for a work well done.
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

The government of Sierra Leone in its ambition to promote investment in the country has embarked on massive land leasing to foreign investors either for agricultural or mining purposes. The last four years of the operations of especially agricultural investors have encountered serious challenges triggering conflicts as a way of expressing grievances from native land owners and land users. The Sierra Leone government in collaboration with some international partners like UNDP has developed a National Land Policy that is currently in a draft form waiting to be popularized and discussed in communities by civil society organizations. It is within this context that Search for Common Ground (SFCG) signed a cooperative agreement with Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) to implement a one year project which aims at promoting equitable land rights in Bombali, Port Loko and Pujehun districts of Sierra Leone. The project’s overall objective is to strengthen equitable natural resource management in Sierra Leone. The project has two specific objectives:

- To increase popular understanding of land rights in communities affected by corporate land concessions.
- To establish problem-solving dialogue platforms between community members, local government and investing companies.

Objective of the Baseline

The objectives of the baseline are as follows:

1. To assess the pre-project perception / knowledge of people about key land right issues in the target communities;
2. To gather information on the citizen’s platforms established to ensure citizens participation in decision making process in selected districts.

Audience/Users of the baseline findings

This baseline research is intended to inform Search for Common Ground’s programming. It will also help to measure achievements at the end of the project.
Methodology

The baseline research used qualitative and quantitative methods to generate the relevant data for the six indicators of the equitable land rights promotion project. The qualitative method used six focus group discussions (FGDs) and six key informant interviews (KII) which provided in-depth information around land issues in the selected districts. In the three districts, six FGDs were conducted; two in each district: one youth group and one female adult group composed of at most eight participants and at least five. The DM&E Coordinator for Search for Common Ground conducted the FGDs and the KII. The ALLAT partners assisted in the identification of the communities, identification of KII respondents and booking appointments for interviews. They also mobilized participants of the FGDs. In some cases they served as interpreters to clarify some points during the research.

The quantitative method required the administration of survey questionnaires per household in the targeted communities for which enumerators had one day training and the survey tool pretested. The survey team comprised of three enumerators and one supervisor that were fluent in both Temne and Mende, the two dominant languages of the three districts. A total of 408 household survey questionnaires were completed by the three enumerators across the three districts. A total of thirteen villages were identified for the research in the three districts based on where there would be or where there were land negotiations with investors. The thirteen villages were divided among the three districts based on the population density. The villages were selected by simple random sampling and questionnaires administered to at most twenty households in each locality.

The team took nine days to collect the data in the field starting from November 1 - 10, 2013. The Search for Common Ground DM&E Coordinator reviewed the completed questionnaires that were submitted to a data processing expert who did the data inputting and analysis within four days using SPSS software.

Main key findings

Below is a summary of the key findings of the baseline evaluation:

A. About the pre-project perception / knowledge of people about key land right issues

As the reader will learn with more details in the “methodology” section, this section of the findings was articulated around six main indicators.
**Indicator 1: Increased access to information on land issues in select districts**

In relation to the issue of the most reliable information source on land acquisition or transaction, 21.7% of the survey respondents said the radio was their most reliable source and 16.5% of them said the government. However, participants of the FGDs and KIs stated that their most reliable sources of information on land acquisition or transaction were not only the radio but their family members and friends as well.

Among those interviewed across the three districts who listen to radio, 58.2% listen to Talking Drum Studio Radio programme (Bush Wahala). To the question: Do you listen to the radio? In Pujehun District 64.9% of the respondents said they do. In Bombali District, 43% of the respondents said they listen to the radio while in Port Loko District, 55.8% of them said they listen to the radio. Based on the answers obtained from the respondents in the baseline research, for those who listen to radio, the most favorable times are:

a) 5.30 PM and 6.30 PM
b) 6.30 PM and 7.30 PM.

However, it is important to note that not all the people interviewed listen to radio.

**Indicator 2: Increased understanding of land legislation and rights by citizens (including knowledge of local protection mechanisms).**

Out of the 408 respondents interviewed during the survey across the three districts, 96.3% said they had no knowledge about the land policy prepared by the Ministry of Lands. However, during the FGDs some participants stated that what they have been told was that the land negotiations will bring development and that they will live better lives. Most key informants indicated they did not have any knowledge about the content of the land lease agreement although some authorities stated that they had some knowledge.

**Indicator 3: Increased citizens’ mobilization to monitoring land management and demand transparency in select districts.**

During the survey, in response to the question: Who negotiate land deals in your community? 3“Paramount chiefs” had the highest percentage of response Paramount chiefs in Pujehun District had 88.2%. Those in Port Loko District had 85.2% and the ones in Bombali District had 40.8%.

In relation to the question: Are you consulted or involved in land deal negotiations? Among the three districts, it was only in Pujehun District that “land owners” were the least consulted with 48.9% compared to Port Loko District 58.3% and Bombali District 55.6%. Within the three
districts, only 39.7% female respondents stated that they were involved or consulted in negotiations around land. Most FGD participants and key informants stated that there was no mechanism established to provide citizens and the government authorities to formally discuss land acquisition issues. Some spoke of community meetings held for this purpose but there were instances when citizens were said they were stopped by local authorities from expressing their views in such meetings. Others spoke of mediation committees that are currently helping to resolve land conflicts or some nongovernmental organizations working in their communities that advocate for the rights of citizens.

**Indicator 4: Effective increase of citizen’s engagement/participation in dialogues/discussion around land allocation and use.**

During the preliminary discussions for this indicator, there were questions on the respondent’s knowledge about land disputes in their communities or the district, grievance expression mechanisms that exist and engagement of communities by CBOs and NGOs. It also inquired whether there be improvements in terms of the relationship between investors and communities.

During the survey, the respondents were asked: **In the last three (3) months, have you heard of any land dispute in this community?** 94.7% of respondents in Pujehun District, 69.9% in Port Loko District and 49% in Bombali District stated that they have heard of land disputes in their communities for the last three months. Responses from the FGDs and KIIs revealed that majority of land owners and land users are not familiar with the content of the land lease agreement. Since people do not have clear understanding about the land deals, conflicts around land have emerged in the targeted communities.

Based on responses from the KIIs and FGDs, the Human Rights Commission and other organizations are mediating these land conflicts in the targeted communities. 47.4% of the entire respondents across the three districts stated that they have knowledge of the roles CBOs and NGOs are playing in resolving land conflicts in their communities. A follow up question to this was: **Have there been any improvements in terms of the relationship between investors and communities as a result of the work of CBOs and NGOs over the last twelve (12) months?** In Pujehun District, 91.4% of the respondents stated that there was no improvement in the relationship. 73% in Bombali District and 92% in Port Loko District also said there was no improvement in the relationship between investors and communities.

**Indicator 5: Effective improvement in land management.**

This indicator focused on dialogue with local authorities in times of conflicts over land with investors, fulfillment of corporate social responsibilities by companies. 74.8% of the total
respondents stated there was dialogue with local authorities in terms of land conflict. In relation to the question: **What tangible project(s) has the company undertaken in fulfillment of their corporate social responsibility?** 86.8% in Pujehun, 2.2% in Bombali and 5.9% in Port Loko Districts spoke of the construction of toilets. 52.8% of respondents in Pujehun District, 48.9% in Bombali District and 3.5% in Port Loko Districts spoke of potable water. In Port Loko District 74.1% of the respondents and 55.6% of the respondents in Bombali District spoke of other things done as the social responsibility of the company.

<table>
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<th>Indicator 6: Functioning Authorities-Citizens platforms established to ensure citizens participation in decision making process in select districts.</th>
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| For this indicator, questions were asked about mechanisms established to provide forums for citizens and the government authorities to formally discuss issues related to land acquisition. In relation to this issue the research team had the question: **Have there been any community level dialogues or meetings to hear public opinion and increase public participation?** During the FGDs and KII it was stated that these dialogues or meetings were organized by CBOs, NGOs advocating for the rights of citizens. In some FGDs it was stated that local authorities organize them but that citizens were not free to express their opinions on issues. Others stated that they came together as a community to discuss their concerns which their chiefs channeled to the companies. The research wanted to find out if the platforms were functioning to ensure citizens participation in the decision making process. 65.8% of the respondents in Pujehun District, 35% in Port Loko District and 9.4% in Bombali District stated that the platforms were not functioning. The survey further asked: **Do you think there will be improvement in land deal negotiations?** 78.7% in Pujehun District, 52.3% in Bombali District and 66.6% in Port Loko stated that there will not be improvement in land deal / negotiations. This is because as indicated during the FGDs and KII the land negotiations were perceived as not transparent.

**B. Main information about the existing citizen’s platforms**

There are existing citizens’ platforms. However these structures need to be reinforced to properly handle issues related to land acquisition or transactions. The existing citizens’ platforms do not at the moment provide adequate information on the land policy that is being developed by the Ministry of Lands. Some project participants interviewed stated that some land owners gave their lands to investors without any or proper documentation.

Some CBOs and NGOs are making efforts to advocate for the rights of citizens particularly land owners. But there is need for the public to be adequately informed on land policies or agreements so that people can take informed decisions.
Decisions-making in these districts vary from one district to the other. In Pujehun District decisions about community projects are usually taken by local authorities especially the Paramount Chiefs. In Bombali and Port Loko Districts, as stated by survey participants, decisions about community projects are usually taken in community meetings and sometimes they carry out need assessment surveys before taking decisions.

**Main recommendations**

There should be increased access to information on land issues in the targeted districts because the research reveals that majority of the respondents do not have any knowledge on the land policy of the Ministry of Lands. Since Search for Common Ground has a long standing relationship with the radios in the three districts, this relationship should be taped into to promote information dissemination in the targeted districts around land deals. However, not all the project participants listen to the radio in their community. Therefore, it is necessary to reinforce what is done by the radio stations in the three districts at community level through community outreach activities. Information is power. By having access to the right type of information the targeted population will be empowered.

There is need for massive sensitization on decisions-making processes around land transactions in these targeted districts. Decisions taken around land should be transparent and inclusive. Local authorities should be targeted in the sensitization programmes to adopt a participatory approach, making sure women and youth are involved in the decision-making processes particularly for the use of land belonging to their families or even in the selection of community projects that should be implemented by the companies.

Land owners and users should be sensitized to ensure that there is proper documentation around land transactions or negotiations. This will help to minimize conflict. Land owners should have a clear mind about corporate social responsibilities of these companies and the companies too should have a clear mind about land agreements.

Forums should be established in these districts where competent local authorities in land policies and agreements interface and dialogue with communities around land transactions.

A proper mapping exercise is required to know the organizations that are involved in resolving land conflicts in the targeted districts to know their strengths and weaknesses and how they could be further strengthened or empowered to continue the good work they have started. There is need to capacitate them to establish problem-solving dialogue platforms between community members, local government and investing companies.
2. PROGRAMME BACKGROUND

The government of Sierra Leone in its ambition to promote investment in the country has embarked on massive land leasing to foreign investors either for agricultural or mining purposes. The last four years of the operations of especially agricultural investors have encountered serious challenges triggering conflicts as a way of expressing grievances from native land owners and land users. The Sierra Leone government in collaboration with some international partners like UNDP has developed a National Land Policy that is currently in a draft form waiting to be popularized and discussed in communities by civil society organisations. It is within this context that Search for Common Ground (SFCG) signed a cooperative agreement with Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) to implement a one year project which aims at promoting equitable land rights in Bombali, Port Loko and Pujehun districts of Sierra Leone. The project’s overall objective is to strengthen equitable natural resource management in Sierra Leone.

This project seeks to build on the growing recognition of the importance of open and fair practices in natural resource management, particularly with regards to land rights, and thus to leverage the potential of civic engagement and media sensitization to improve practices in Sierra Leone. Additionally, the project seeks a durable mechanism for stakeholder dialogue around the allocation and use of land established and that this mechanism leads to more equitable and inclusive decision-making (that is, increased citizen participation in the decisions that affect their lives). The project has two specific objectives:

1) To increase popular understanding of land rights in communities affected by corporate land concessions
2) To establish problem-solving dialogue platforms between community members, local government and investing companies.

This project called “Equitable land rights promotion in three districts of Sierra Leone” is implemented by SFCG with four local partners: SFCG collaborates with Action for Large-Scale Land Acquisition Transparency ALLAT partners in the targeted districts- Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF) in Bombali, Rural Agency for Community Action Programme (RACAP) in Pujehun District and United for the Protection of Human Rights (UPHR) in Port Loko district.

The project started in September 2013 and is expected to come to an end in September 2014.
3. METHODOLOGY

Mixed methods were used in this baseline research: Qualitative and quantitative methods which enabled the research team to gather detailed and relevant information on the project indicators.

Baseline objectives

1. To assess the pre-project perception / knowledge of people about key land right issues in the target communities.

2. To gather information on the citizen’s platforms established to ensure citizens participation in decision making process in selected districts.

Baseline strategy

Objective 1: To assess the pre-project perception / knowledge of people about key land right issues in the target communities

The baseline tools were designed to help the research team measure the knowledge of the landowners and users about the legal framework for the acquisition of large scale land in Sierra Leone. In order to assess the pre-project situation, SFCG and OSIWA presented in a matrix the critical factors that the baseline study should focus on. The matrix contained the six project indicators. For each indicator there were questions on specific factors as highlighted below:

Indicator 1: Increased access to information on land issues in select districts;

During the discussions for this indicator, there were questions on source of information on land acquisition and/or transactions in the targeted communities and which of the sources they considered reliable.

Indicator 2: Increased understanding of land legislation and rights by citizens (including knowledge of local protection mechanisms).

During the discussions for this indicator, there were questions on knowledge about the land policy being prepared by the Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and Environment and whether the laws in the policy were in the interest of landowners or investors.

Indicator 3: Increased citizens’ mobilization to monitoring land management and demand transparency in select districts.

During the discussions for this indicator, there were questions related to people that negotiate land deals on behalf of communities and in this process there was the issue of involving land owners and users in the negotiation. The role of Paramount Chiefs was also looked into in land negotiations, as well as youth and women’s organizations in the communities advocating for land right issues.

Indicator 4: Effective increase of citizen’s engagement/participation in dialogues/discussion around land allocation and use.
During the discussions for this indicator, there were questions on the respondent’s knowledge about land disputes in their communities or the district, grievance expression mechanisms that exist and engagement of communities by CBOs and NGOs. It also inquired whether there be improvements in terms of the relationship between investors and communities.

**Indicator 5: Effective improvement in land management.**

This indicator focused on dialogue with local authorities in times of conflicts over land with investors, fulfillment of corporate social responsibilities by companies, the manner in which decisions for community projects are arrived at.

**Indicator 6: Functioning Authorities-Citizens platforms established to ensure citizens participation in decision making process in select districts.**

In the communities questions were asked about mechanisms established to provide forums for citizens and the government authorities to formally discuss issues related to land acquisition.

**Objective 2: To gather information on the citizen’s platforms established to ensure citizens participation in decision making process in selected districts**

**Tools**

i) **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) guides**

Six focus group discussions were conducted across the three districts. In each district, one youth group (mixed) and one female adult group were mobilized by SFCG partners operating within the district for the discussions. Each group was made up of at most eight participants and at least five. All the six FGDs planned for the three districts were accomplished; two in each district. The participants were selected in such a way that women from landowning and non-landowning families were included randomly from different sections of the town or village, with not more than one person from a household or family. The focus groups were mixed in terms of age and education level. Since the work was to be accomplished within a short time, focus group participants were identified and selected by partner organizations resident in the locations prior to the arrival of the team.

Each focus group discussion ran approximately one hour and followed the discussion guide (see appendix). The facilitator recorded the discussions that were later transcribed to inform the research report.

ii) **Key Informant Interviews (KII)s guides**

Only six KIIIs were accomplished across the three districts out of eighteen that were planned for. This is because those targeted were not available during the research period or were busy with other functions despite the fact that they were informed prior to the arrival of the research team in their communities. Paramount chiefs, members of parliament, counselors and other opinion leaders like heads of civil society organizations working on land rights and living in the
communities, were targeted. In the end a counselor, one Chiefdom Speaker, the Director of RACAP and the district human rights chairperson were interviewed in Pujehun District. In Bombali District only the SilNoRF project officer was interviewed. In Port Loko District one Paramount chief was interviewed; in all six personalities interviewed.

The Interviews followed the interview guide that was developed by the research team (see appendix). The interviewer kept notes during the interview and, any observations about the interview or key informant. The notes for all interviews were typed out to inform the baseline report.

**iii) Survey questionnaire**

The 62-question questionnaire administration was based on household (HH) heads of 18 years and above. The definition of a HH for the research was “eating in/from the same pot, sleeping under the same roof and having a major decision maker acting as head”. Only the household head was interviewed in each of the selected structures. A total of 408 households participated to the survey.

**Sampling**

Information obtained from the distribution of farming households by district from the 2004 census helped the research team to arrive 408 as the representative sample size for the survey. Details on the method used to arrive at this figure can be obtained in the baseline research methodology that was initially developed by the SFCG Design Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator, which will be available on demand.

At most, a total of thrity-two (32) questionnaires were administered in each village with 2 extras in the last two villages. In a situation where there were fewer households than the required quota, enumerators moved to the next village that was selected with approximately five mile radius to avoid biasness until the targeted quota was obtained.

Upon entering the village the method of selection was as follows: First, the enumerators selected the nearest line/street. On the right hand side of the street/line they went to the $1^{st}$, $3^{rd}$, $5^{th}$ and so on of the dwelling structures and on the left hand side they interviewed households on the $2^{nd}$, $4^{th}$, $6^{th}$ and so on of the dwelling structures, interviewing one household and only one person in the household.

**Locations**

13 villages were identified for the research and were divided proportionally by district (i.e the more the population the more the respondents:

a) **Pujehun District**: Kortumahun, Sinjo and Bassaleh villages
b) **Port Loko District**: Cimbeck, Masimra, Mamanka, Bantoron and Mayorsor villages
c) **Bombali District**: Makoth, Wreyema, Romara, Lungi Acre and Yenkasa villages.
For a village to be selected for the baseline research, it should either be a community where company operations were already on-going or about to start. Secondly, it was done by simple random sampling.

**Bio data of survey respondents**

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<th>TABLE 1: What is your highest level of education?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Highest educational level</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't go to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some primary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed primary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some vacational school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational school completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some secondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some university education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training college completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

To arrive at the 408 representative samples, the research team took into account the number of farming households by district that were obtained during the 2004 census in Sierra Leone. As shown in **Table 1**, there were 234 male respondents and 174 female respondents interviewed for the survey. Out of the total of 408 respondents, in Pujehun District there were 55.3% male and 44.7% female. In Bombali District, there were 48.3% male and 51.7% female. In Port Loko District 66.9% were male while 33.1% were female.

**Level of education**

Out of the 234 male respondents, 157 did not go to school. Among the male respondents, 29 fell under the option OTHERS. 17 of the male respondents completed secondary education while 14 of them had some secondary education across the three districts. 10 male respondents had some primary education. From a total of 174 female respondents, 139 did not go to school. 12 female respondents have some primary education while 10 of them completed their secondary education.
Main source of income/primary occupation

In relation to the question: What is your main source of income/Primary occupation?

In Port Loko District, 79.8% of the respondents were agriculturists / farmers; while in Pujehun District, 75.5% of them were agriculturists / farmers. In Bombali District, 72.4% were also agriculturists / farmers. Petty trading came second after farming as their main source of livelihood. 87.2% of the respondents that were petty traders were women; while 12.8% were men. 61.3% of the farmers interviewed were men while 38.7% were women.

Limitations of the research and methodology

This was a household survey and at most thirty-two (32) questionnaires were administered in each village with one extra in each of the last two villages. In situations where there were more houses than required and considering the distances between the villages the amount of households were increased in order to cover for villages that had lesser households than anticipated.

During the course of administering the survey questionnaires it was observed that because the enumerators did not understand all of the tribes in the southern and northern regions there were issues with Interpreting into local languages. This led in some cases to misinformation of respondents by interpreters. However, the SFCG partners operating in the communities also served as interpreters to remedy the situation.

It was observed that interpretation into local languages for respondent that did not understand Krio really consumed time. Therefore, SFCGA partners that facilitated the mobilization process for the baseline rendered tremendous help with the translations.

With respect to the Key Informant Interviews, in some places the people identified were either reluctant to divulge information on land use or in most cases advertently absented themselves.
especially the paramount chiefs. The team ended targeting other opinion leaders that were informed around land issues in the targeted communities.

**Evaluation team**

The research team had four (4) people: Three (3) enumerators and one (1) supervisor. The DM&E Coordinator for SFCG was part of the team. He conducted the FGDs and KIIIs at the various locations. The ALLAT partners assisted in the identification of the communities. They identified participants and booked appointments with KII respondents and mobilized the right category of people for the FGDs. In some cases they served as interpreters for communities where respondents had language problem.

**4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

**4.1 ABOUT THE PRE –PROJECT PERCEPTION / KNOWLEDGE OF PEOPLE ABOUT KEY LAND RIGHT**

As explained in the methodology section, information about the people’s perception and knowledge about key land issues were articulated around six main indicators:

1) Access to information on land issues
2) Understanding of land legislation and rights by citizens
3) Citizens’ mobilization to monitoring land management and demand transparency
4) Citizen’s engagement/participation in dialogues/discussion around land allocation and use
5) Improvement in land management.
6) Functioning Authorities-Citizens platforms established to ensure citizens participation in decision making process

The findings section on the pre-project perception and knowledge is therefore articulated around those 6 indicators.

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<th><strong>Indicator 1</strong>: Increased access to information on land issues in select districts</th>
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<td>As illustrated in graph 2 below, the radio (21.7 %) and government (16.5 %) are the two major sources mentioned by respondents as the most reliable sources of information on land acquisition or transaction. Apparently, 55.7 % of the respondents refused to answer: this has to be explained by the fact that 98.9 % of the total number of respondents interviewed stated that they have no knowledge of the land policy prepared by the Ministry of Lands (see 'We get information on land acquisition / transaction through word of mouth (chiefs and relatives i.e family elders)').</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Participant FGD
Lungi Acre village,
Bombali District*
But the issue of the most reliable source of information on land acquisition did not come out in the FGDs and KIs as it did during the survey. Another important data from the research is that almost half of the population does not listen to radio: indeed, 47% of the respondents from the three districts said they do not listen to radio. The survey data reveals that among those who listen to the radio, 56.7% male and 26% female listen everyday or almost everyday and 68.3% in Bombali District and 65.3% in Port Loko District listen to the radio between 6.30 and 7.30 PM. From 5.30 to 6.30 PM, 54.2% of the radio listeners respondents in Pujehun listen to the radio. For this option, Bombali has 61.7% and Port Loko has 61.1%.

**Indicator 2:** Increased understanding of land legislation and rights by citizens (including knowledge of local protection mechanisms).

During preliminary meetings held by OSIWA and SFCG, it was resolved that this indicator focuses on the knowledge about the land policy being prepared by the Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and Environment and whether the laws in the policy were in the interest of landowners or investors. Therefore, the first survey question was: ‘Have you heard about the land policy being prepared by the Ministry of Lands?’ As indicated by graph 3, 98.9% of the total number of respondents stated that they had no knowledge of the land policy being prepared by the Ministry of Lands. However, key informants were divided on this issue. Some said they have heard about it while others said they have no knowledge about it. Across the FGDs held, the only idea expressed was that they were told the companies would bring development into their communities by providing scholarships for school children, potable...
of the respondents said they participated in the land policy being prepared by the Ministry of Lands and they were between 36 and 59 years old. Nobody in the other age categories participated. Majority of the respondents, 93.6% in Pujehun, 95.2% in Bombali and 98.8% in Port Loko stated that they have not even heard about it. However, 6.4% in Pujehun District and 4.8% in Bombali District said they have heard about the land laws prepared by the Ministry of Lands. It was difficult for those who participated in the baseline research to state whether the said laws in the policy were in the interest of landowners or investors because majority had not only seen the document but have not even heard about it. The number of those who had seen the document or heard about it was very insignificant. However, among the options that the respondents had in relation to who the laws will favor, between 26 – 35 years, one respondent said it was the best policy. There was another respondent in favor of this response between 36-59 years. One respondent between 36-59 years stated that the laws will benefit the government. However, given the low response rate, the data is not significant enough to be extrapolated to the entire population of the districts.

‘I have seen the agreement documents and there are copies at the Green Scenery office in Freetown’.

**Director RACAP**
**Pujehun District**

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**Indicator 3:** Increased citizens’ mobilization to monitoring land management and demand transparency in select districts.

For this indicator, discussions mainly focused the key actors in the land negotiations. Some focus group participants said there were no prior arrangement between landowners and the companies exploiting their farming lands. The initial question discussed on this indicator was: **Who negotiates land deals in your community?**
As illustrated in graph 4, 88.2% of respondents from Pujehun District, 85.2% in Port Loko, 40.8% in Bombali Districts stated that Paramount Chiefs negotiate land deals in their communities. There are however 59.9% of respondents in Bombali District who said that members of Parliament negotiate land deal in their communities as compared to 27.2 % in Port Loko District and 5.4 % in Pujehun District. It is important to note that “family member” was almost never mentioned, with very insignificant percentages when it comes to taking decisions on land which happens to be the major source of livelihood for most of the project participants.

79.8 % of respondents in Port Loko District, 75.5 % in Pujehun Districts and 72.4 % in Bombali District stated that they are agriculturists / farmers. Above all, 84.1 % of all the respondents across the three districts are land owners. Across the three districts, 87 % of the respondents are land users; they exploit the land as most of them are farmers.

During the survey, the follow up question was: **Do you feel that land owners/users views are respected in land negotiations?** 59.8 % of the female respondents and 33.3 % of the male respondents stated that they were not consulted or involved in land deal.

This was followed by the question on the role of Paramount Chiefs and politicians in land deal: **What do you think about the role of the Paramount Chief (PC) in the land deal?** In some discussion groups it was said that paramount chiefs should play a crucial role in the current land negotiations because they are the custodians of the land; but that politicians should not be involved in the land negotiations. However, some key informant stated that if the paramount chief fails in performing his/her duty, then politicians can come in to save their people. 93.5 % of the male

‘The Paramount Chief (PC) is a lifetime position while the Member of Parliament has time limits. The PC is the custodian of the land so traditionally he should be involved. But if the PC does not do right thing and ends up hurting his/her subjects, then the politicians can facilitate mediation.

**KII - Chiefdom Speaker**

Malen chiefdom

Pujehun District
respondents and 78.5% of the female respondents stated that politicians should first of all consult community members as in most cases politicians have bring in investors into communities without the knowledge of the local authorities including paramount chiefs and councillors.

This was followed by the question on the work of organization: **How do you consider organization among youth groups in terms of engagement of authorities about issues of land affecting them?** According to the age brackets, 48% between 18 and 25 years said youth groups are very organized in terms of engaging authorities about issues of land affecting them. Between 26 to 35 years, 69% of the respondents also gave the same answer. 58% of the respondents between 36 and 59 years also stated that youth groups were very organized in terms of engaging authorities on land issues affecting them. There were 38% of respondents 60 years and above who stated that youth groups are very organized in terms of engaging authorities around land issues affecting them (Graph 5).

Information was also collected for women’s organizations in respect to the following question: **How do you consider organization among women’s groups in terms of engagement of authorities about issues of land affecting them?** As shown in graph 6 below, in terms of being very organized, women’s groups in Pujehun District had 0% while Port Loko had 73.6% and Bombali had 65.3%. This illustrates how different the situation is from one region to the other and the difference of role that civil society and women organization play. In Pujehun, there are community based organisations that engage authorities, though constitute women but are mainly dominated by men. However, women groups exist around for social and cultural purposes. Besides in most of these communities, most women still rely on men to protect and take decisions on their behalf.
Another critical question that followed was: Do you have organizations that advocate for land right issues in your community? As illustrated in TABLE 2, on the whole, 51.6% of the respondents across the three districts stated that there were organizations that advocate for land issues in those districts. Again, a closer look at the survey data sheds light on a very different context from one region to the other: while almost 90% of Bombali respondents answered that indeed there are organisations advocating for land issues, they were less than 47% in Pujehun and less than 20% in Port Loko to answer positively to the question. FGDs and KIIIs disclosed that in Bombali there was regular and consistent engagement of the SiLNORF with the operational communities as articulated in the responses. In Portloko, civil society organisations are not yet visible with regards to engagement of communities affected by activities of the so-called investors. The organisations have not been actively been holding meetings with communities nor engaging with the investors on behalf of the affected communities. Therefore, the communities seem to be abandoned in the hands of the Paramount chief, Member of Parliament and investors. In Pujehun, the situation is that initially they were very organized, prior to the survey another group had emerged which is a breakaway of the existing group MALOA which has been advocating various stakeholders on behalf of affected land owners. This to some extent presented a confused scenario that contributed to the responses. Infact, this incident warranted the intervention of the HRC to facilitate mediation among the various stakeholders of the conflict in the Sahn Malene including the Socfin company, local authorities, land owners and land users representatives.
The survey further wanted to obtain information on the organization the respondents felt was really advocating in the interest of the communities: **If yes, which organization do you think is advocating best on behalf of the community?** 40.9% of the total respondents stated that there were organized community discussions around land acquisition and use. 39.1% of the respondents spoke of NOGs / CBOs who organize community discussions around land acquisition and use. 27.8% of the respondents stated that the companies also organize community meetings to discuss around land acquisition and 27.4% of the respondents spoke of Paramount Chiefs who also organize community meetings around land acquisition and use. On the whole based on the percentages, meetings organized by community people seem to have higher percentage (40.9%) than the others.

The research also found out whether over the past six months there had been any community discussion around land acquisition and use: **In the last six (6) months has there been any community discussion on land acquisition/ use?** In Pujehun District 94.7% of the respondents, 69.9% in Port Loko district and 49% in Bombali said there has been community discussion around land acquisition and use.

<table>
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<th>OPTIONS</th>
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<td>Bombali</td>
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<td></td>
<td>% within District code</td>
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</table>
Discussions around this indicator focused on respondents’ knowledge about land conflicts in their communities, through what mechanisms did they express their grievances and how they were resolved. It was at this level the relationship between investors and the landowners was also determined.

The issue about land dispute was treated by this question: **In the last three (3) months, have you heard of any land dispute in this community?** FGDs held in some communities stressed that no forum has been created between landowners and the company; but that they normally meet as a community to raise concerns that are shared with the company through their chief. However, in other communities some key informant stated that meetings are organized between landowners and the company. During the survey, 67.9% of respondent said that they had heard of land dispute in their community over the last three months. When disaggregating the data from one region to the other, it appears that there seems to be less land disputes in Bombali district (49%) than in Pujehun where 94.7% respondents said that they had heard of land disputes over the last three months (see table 3).

The subsequent question was: **If yes, what was it about?** Results clearly show that the community-investors relation is perceived to be the main cause of conflicts: In Bombali District
84.5% of the respondents said it was between communities and the investors, 76% in Pujehun District and 72% in Port Loki. The other option that ran high in Pujehun District (61.4%) was the community and the local authorities. The issue of the land disputes being between communities had 32.4% in Bombali District and 28.3% in Port Loko District; and only had 9.1% in Pujehun District.

The research team further probed to obtain answers to the question: **How have community people expressed their grievances / concerns?**

64.4% of respondents in Pujehun District, 45.2% of those in Bombali District and 54.4% of the others in Port Loko District stated that community people expressed their grievances through peaceful community protest. However, 48.9% of those in Pujehun District, 91.7% of the others in Bombali District and 64.9% in Port Loko District stated that land grievances are normally expressed through official complaints. Some focus group participants said initially in their communities, they started with violent demonstrations but their brothers were arrested and locked in the prison. Although they were bailed out of prison, the issue had still not been resolved. Discussions in other groups indicated that the issues were usually brought to the chiefs who in turn inform the company about them. Other participants for the FGDs stated that they usually seek redress through civil society organizations.

![How have citizens been brought together to participate in resolving land disputes? Graph 7](image)

**But how have citizens being brought together to participate in resolving land disputes?** Participants in FGDs and even some key informants stated that some communities conduct meetings where issues are discussed and confided to their local authorities for onward transmission to the investors. As shown in graph 7, 80% of the respondents stated that citizens have been brought together in community meetings to resolve land disputes. 1.7% of the respondents mentioned radio discussion which seems very insignificant.

**Are they relevant in terms of advocating for your rights and entitlements in the land transactions?** 88.2% of the respondents in Bombali District and 62% in Port Loko stated that the platforms are advocating for the rights and entitlement of land owners. However, in
Pujehun District, 30.1% of the respondents stated that the platforms were advocating for the rights and entitlements of those concerned.

This was followed by a question on the perception of the respondents about the CBOs / NGOs representing their views: **Do you agree, disagree, or have no opinion that the CBOs or NGOs engage you to get and represent your views?** As illustrated in graph 7 above, 49.7% of the total respondents stated that they were not sure whether the CBOs / NBOs were engaging them to represent their views or advocate for their rights. It is only a very insignificant figure (3.9%) of the total respondents who said they strongly agree that the CBOs/ NGOs engage them to advocate for their rights.

The survey went on further and asked: **How often do these CBOs or NGOs engage you?** In Pujehun District, 50% of the respondents cannot remember while 46.8% said CBOs / NGOs engage them on a monthly basis. 3.2% said they engage them on a weekly basis. In Bombali District, 81.5% said they engage them on a monthly basis; while 11.9% cannot remember. 4.6% said in Bombali District, they engage them on a weekly basis. In Port Loko, 31% said they engage them on a monthly basis.

A question on the participation of project participants in discussion around land allocation followed: **Have you ever participated in any discussion or dialogue around land allocation in the past 12 months?** 70.1% of the male respondents and 45.1% of the female respondents said they have participated in discussion or dialogue around land allocation issues in the past 12 months. 29.9% male and 54.9% female said they have not participated in land discussion allocation for the past 12 months. The percentage for women seems quite high (54.9%) which indicates the low level of women’s participation in land issues.
As indicated in TABLE 4 above, 89.4% respondents said they dialogue with local authorities in Pujehun District in terms of conflict over land with investors. The second highest being Port Loko District where 84% of the respondents said there was dialogue with local authorities in terms of land conflicts over land with investors. In Bombali District, 55.6% said they dialogue with local authorities in terms of conflict over land with investors. 100% of those with some university education or who have completed training college stated that there was dialogue with local authorities in terms of land conflicts with investors across the three districts. 72.2% of the respondents with some secondary education agreed to this. Moreover, 74.3% of respondents that never went to school agreed that there was some dialogue with some local authorities in terms of conflicts over land. Despite these percentages revealing that the respondents usually dialogue with local authorities in terms of land conflicts with investors, some focus group participants stated that no dialogue forum has been created between them and the local authorities or the company. But that they usually meet as a community to think around issues affecting them that they relay to the company through their local authorities.

TABLE 4 indicates the percentages by district of the respondents who dialogue with local authorities in terms of land conflict with investors.

The next question helped to find out who usually resolve the issues: If yes, who arbitrates land conflicts in communities? 67.5% of the respondents in Pujehun stated that Paramount Chiefs arbitrate land conflicts. In this same district, 55.4% of the respondents stated that chiefs / community elders arbitrate conflicts. In Bombali District, 65.1% of the respondents stated that
chiefs/community elders arbitrate conflicts. In this same district, 56.6% of the respondents stated that civil society activists arbitrate land conflicts. In Port Loko District, 86.9% of the respondents stated that chiefs/community elders arbitrate conflicts. In this district, 38.5% said it is the Paramount Chiefs that arbitrate land conflicts.

What tangible project(s) has the company undertaken in fulfillment of their corporate social responsibility? In response to this question, participants of the focus group discussions across the three districts were divided on this issue. Some said the companies are undertaking development activities in their communities while others said the companies are not doing anything in their communities in terms of development. The key informants affirmed that there are developmental activities undertaken by the companies in the three districts. In Pujehun District for instance, 86.8% of the respondents spoke of the construction of toilets as a tangible project that the company had undertaken locally in fulfillment of their social corporate social responsibility. In this district 52.8% of the respondents spoke of the provision of potable water while 9.4% spoke of the construction/rehabilitation of schools and 1.9% mentioned of the construction of roads. In Bombali District, 55.6% of the respondents stated “other things” done as corporate social responsibility by the company while 48.9% spoke of portable water. In this district, construction/rehabilitation of schools and the construction of toilets had the same number of respondents (2.2%). In Port Loko District 74.1% of the respondents spoke of “other things” done as the corporate social responsibilities of the company. 52.9% of the respondents in this same district spoke of the construction/rehabilitation of schools. 3.5% of the respondents mentioned potable water. It is amazing to see that it is only in Port Loko District that 22.4% of the respondents spoke of construction/rehabilitation of health centers that was not mentioned in the other two districts.

How do they make these decisions of arriving at the projects implemented? In Pujehun District, 80.4% of the respondents said it is the Paramount Chiefs that take decisions on the projects to be implemented. 65.9% of the respondents in Bombali stated that community meetings take decisions on the projects to be implemented. In this same district, 54.5% of the respondents stated that needs assessment survey make these decisions of arriving at the project to be implemented. In Port Loko District 58.8% spoke of needs assessment survey.

‘The construction of the road from Bo to Sahn for the past 2 years. They have converted three wooden bridges on the Malen Pujehun road to concrete bridges. There is Health center call Bimock Center, they have now undertaken to construct a hospital that will hold 30 rooms (15 male and 15 female)’

Chiefdom Speaker
Malen Chiefdom
**Indicator 6: Functioning Authorities-Citizens platforms established to ensure citizens participation in decision making process in select districts.**

This indicator focuses on mechanism established to provide forums for citizens and the government authorities to formally discuss issues, policies, agreements about land. The survey questions started with: **Do you think there will be improvement in land deal negotiations?** As illustrated in graph 10 below, 91.4% of respondents in Pujehun, 73% in Bombali and 92 % in Port Loko had no as answer to this question. They think there will be improvement in land negotiations. **If no, why?** This is simply because as expressed in the FGDs, the land negotiations were not transparent. Participants stated that some land owners gave up their lands without documentation. In the FGDs participants stated that there will only be improvement through bottom – top approach.

In relation to compensation the following question was asked: **Do you feel that the compensation system is functional in your district?** In most focus groups, participants stated that the compensation system was not in their favor. 72.5% of the male respondents and 87.8% of the female respondents stated that the compensation system is not functional. 90.4 % of the respondents in Pujehun District, 76.5 % in Bombali District and 74.7% in Port Loko District stated that it was not functional.

**Has there been any mechanism established to provide citizens and the government authorities to formally discuss the land acquisition issues?** 68.5 % of the respondents in Port Loko, 61.7% in Pujehun and 49.7 % in Bombali stated that there was no mechanism established to provide citizens and government authorities to formally discuss the land acquisition issues.

Most participants in the focus groups expressed this same sentiment. Some key informants referred to some groups formed in their communities like the grievance committee to be the kind of platforms referred.
The team discussed around the channel to hear grievances: **What is the channel to hearing the grievances of farmers regarding the land acquisition cases?** During the FGDs and KIIIs, participants mentioned community meetings and CBOs/NGOs as the channels. In Port Loko District, 98.1% of the respondents spoke of community meetings. There were 62.7% in Bombali District and 58.1% in Pujehun District for community meetings as a way to channeling grievances of farmers regarding the land acquisition.

‘There is a social and grievance committee already established and I am part of the committee. If communities have grievances they should report the committee and this committee forward such concerns to Socfin’.

**Chiefdom Speaker**

**Malen Chiefdom**

**Pujehun District**

Have there been any community level dialogues or meetings to hear public opinion and increase public participation? If yes, who organized it? 60.2% of the total respondents stated that there have been some community level dialogues or meetings to hear public opinion and increase public participation. Focus group participants and key informants referred to community meetings and those organized by CBOs/NGOs that are usually held to discuss issues related to land in their communities.

**Do you feel that these platforms are functioning to ensure citizen's participation in the decision making process?** During the survey, 30% of the respondents in Pujehun District said to this question while in Bombali District there were 88.2% and in Port Loko District there were 62% who said yes to this question. In Pujehun District, it is important to note that 65.8% of the respondents said to this question. There is need to stress here again that in Pujehun District, when it comes to decision making in relation to community projects that the companies implement, the project participants stated that it is the Paramount Chiefs and community leaders that take decisions as illustrated in graph 9 above.
The survey questionnaire ended with the question: **Do you have any suggestions for the research team for promoting equitable land rights in Sierra Leone?** 85.6 % of the male respondents and 79.2 % of the female respondents stated that authorities do not seek the interest of communities in land negotiations. In fact 78.8% of the male respondents and 71.7% of the female respondents affirmed that the system is corrupt so there can be no improvement in land deals. Most focus group participants and key informants expressed the view that the system should be revised. And there should be bottom-top approach.

### 4.2 ABOUT THE CITIZEN’S PLATFORMS ESTABLISHED TO ENSURE CITIZENS’ PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING PROCESS

| TABLE 5: Who take decisions on community projects implemented by companies? |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| **Options**                 | Pujehun         | Bombali      | Port Loko    |
| Paramount Chiefs            | 80.4%           | 6.8%         | 11.8%        |
| Community Meetings          | 7.1%            | 65.9%        | 42.4%        |
| Needs assessment survey     | 0.0%            | 54.5%        | 58.8%        |
| Government                  | 0.0%            | 20.5%        | 0.0%         |
| Companies                   | 17.9%           | 38.6%        | 31.8%        |
| Others                      | 10.7%           | 2.3%         | 14.1%        |

In terms of taking decisions on projects to be implemented, as indicated in TABLE 5 below, various strategies are adopted across the three districts. In Pujehun District, 80.4% of the respondents stated that it is the Paramount Chiefs that make decisions with regards projects to be implemented. The same option (Paramount Chiefs) had 11.8% and 6.8% in Port Loko and Bombali Districts respectively. In Bombali District, 65.9% of the respondents said decisions on projects are normally taken at community meetings. In Port Loko District 42.4% of the respondents were in favor of this option while in Pujehun District this option only had 7.1%. Conducting needs assessment survey before taking decisions had 58.8% in Port Loko District followed by Bombali District with 54.5%. In Pujehun District, this option had 0 %. Some focus group participants in Pujehun District confirmed what is stated in the graph; that their local authorities take decisions with regards the selection of developmental projects that companies implement in their communities. But in Bombali and Port Loko Districts focus group participants mentioned that it is in community meetings that decision are taken on community development projects.
5. CONCLUSION

As stated above, majority of the people that participated in the research are farmers who suddenly see themselves in land deals they do not fully understand or trust. Mistrust leads to lack of confidence in the whole process because since the process was not transparent, the fear they may have is that the land negotiations will rip them off their farming lands for several years with no proper arrangements for benefits. Some participants even said they never signed any agreement with the companies exploiting their lands. Therefore it is important that both parties be satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations. Structures that are currently working to promote land rights can be reinforced to make sure land negotiations are transparent and understood by parties involved and communities should see the advent of investors as an opportunity to improve their lot and not the reverse.

In terms of being inclusive in the decision-making process, some effort is being made in Port Loko and Bombali District where decisions are made on community projects to be undertaken by the companies in community meetings. Assessment survey was even mentioned for these two districts as a process they are usually engaged in when it comes to selecting community projects to be implemented by the companies. In Pujehun District however, it clearly came out that such decisions are purely in the hands of local authorities. Although there is need to review the decision-making process across Bombali and Port Loko Districts, Pujehun District will need more attention since community people have the tendency of allowing the chiefs to decide on issues affecting them whether it is in their favor or not.

Structures such as CBOs /NGOs and community meetings already existing within the three districts have begun some advocacy work which should be embraced. Rather than creating parallel structures, it will be good to maintain and reinforce existing ones that the communities are already familiar with.
6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Increase access to information on land transaction / acquisition in the targeted communities
The contents of the land policy being formulated by government should be made known to the public. This document should be made simple for everybody to read. The radio can be a very useful tool. Fortunately, Search for Common Ground has a long standing relationship with the radios in the three districts; this relationship should be tapped into to promote information dissemination in the targeted districts around land deals. However, not all the project participants listen to the radio in a particular project district. Therefore, it is necessary to reinforce what is done by the radio stations in the three districts through community outreach activities. Information is power. By having access to the right type of information the targeted population will be empowered. Some video messages could be developed to be projected in the targeted communities for the public to be informed on land negotiations.

2) Need for massive sensitization on inclusive decision – making process in the targeted communities.
There is need for massive sensitization on decisions-making processes around land transactions in these targeted districts. Decisions taken around land should be transparent and inclusive. Local authorities should be targeted in the sensitization programmes to adopt a participatory approach, particularly in Pujehun District making sure women and youth are involved in the decision-making processes particularly for the use of land belonging to their families or even in the selection of community projects that should be implemented by the companies.

3) The essence of proper documentation on land transaction / acquisition.
Land owners and users should be sensitized on the essence of proper documentation around land transactions or negotiations in each of the three districts. This will help to minimize conflicts. Land owners should have a clear mind about corporate social responsibilities of these companies and the companies too should have a clear mind about land agreements. This will enable them take informed decisions.

4) Establishment of exchange sessions or community forums to educate people on land issues.
Forums should be established in these districts where competent local authorities in land policies and agreements interface and dialogue with communities around land transactions.

5) Identification and reinforcement of community groups and organizations.
A proper mapping exercise is required to know the organizations that are involved in resolving land conflicts in the targeted districts to know their strengths and weaknesses and how they could be further strengthened or empowered to continue the good work they have started.
This will capacitate them to establish problem-solving dialogue platforms between community members, local government and investing companies.