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Sierra Leone Agriculture (SIVA Group) biopalm project in Port Loko, Sierra Leone

▼ Description

Sierra Leone Agriculture (SLA) signed a 50-year lease in May of 2010 for 41,582 ha for the development of palm oil for biofuels, displacing over 30,000 residents and farmers in the Port Loko district, Sierra Leone. At the time of signing, SLA was a subsidiary of UK-based Caparo Group, which is owned by Baron Swraj Paul, an Indian-born, British-based business magnate and Labour politician close to former Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The project planned to establish palm oil plantations on 40,000 ha by 2017, as well as associated biofuel plants, nurseries, and infrastructure. In 2011 SLA was purchased by SIVA Group for US\$5 million, thereby transferring the lease to the gigantic Indian-owned company. No information about the deal was given to the local communities, and communication continues to be vague and contradictory. For example, the Oakland Institute (OI) reports village chiefs understand the lease to be renewed every 7 years, but the Crad-l (owner of initial lease, now defunct) website reports a lease of 50 years. 8,500 jobs were promised, but as of October 2012 only 600 were working, mostly casual and without contracts. An outgrower scheme may or may not exist, as well as additional intentions to expand to another 20,000 ha. Specific details are not listed on the company's website. Additionally, the Minister of Agriculture of Sierra Leone said he has never heard of SLA – indeed OI reports SLA negotiated directly with local chiefs, therefore bypassing the national government (and its' regulations), and neither landowners nor local people have copies of the lease. Since the lease was negotiated without the input of the national government, an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment was never done for the SLA lease. The current status of the project is unknown.

[See more...](#)

▼ Basic Data

Name

Sierra Leone Agriculture (SIVA Group) biopalm project in Port Loko, Sierra Leone

Country

Sierra Leone (/country/sierra-leone)

Province

Northern Province

Site

Bureh Kasseh Maconteh Chiefdom, Port Loko district

Accuracy of Location

MEDIUM regional level

▼ Source of Conflict

Type of Conflict (1st level)

Biomass and Land Conflicts (Forests, Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Management)

Type of Conflict (2nd level)

Deforestation
Agro-fuels and biomass energy plants
Land acquisition conflicts
Agro-toxics

Specific Commodities

Land (/commodity/land)
Ethanol (/commodity/ethanol)
Palm oil (/commodity/palm-oil)

▼ Project Details and Actors

Project Details

The lease is for 50 years, but is eligible to be renewed for an additional 21, and again for 7 (total 99 years). The project is expected to produce 85,000 cubic meters of ethanol annually for the national grid. The project entails a nursery (capacity for one million seedlings), an additional outdoor nursery, and 35,000 ha total to be planted with oil palm. Although the MAFFS guidelines state the investor shall pay US\$12 per ha per year, since the agreement did not go through the National Government the deal is not held to these standards. At last mention SLA pays \$2 ha/year.

Project Area (in hectares)

41,580

Type of Population

Rural

Potential Affected Population

32,170

Start Date

2010

Company Names or State Enterprises

Sierra Leone Agriculture (/company/sierra-leone-agriculture) from Sierra Leone (/country-of-company/sierra-leone)
Geoffpalm (/company/geoffpalm) from Malaysia (/country-of-company/malaysia)
Biopalm Energy (/company/biopalm-energy) from Singapore (/country-of-company/singapore)
Biopalm Star Oil (/company/biopalm-star-oil) from Singapore (/country-of-company/singapore)
SIVA Group (/company/siva-group) from India (/country-of-company/india)

Relevant government actors

Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency

Environmental justice organisations and other supporters

Oakland Institute, <http://www.oaklandinstitute.org>, ActionAid, <http://www.actionaid.org/>, Green scenery, [greenscenery.org](http://www.greenscenery.org), Christian Aid, <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/>

▼ The Conflict and the Mobilization

Intensity of Conflict (at highest level)

MEDIUM (street protests, visible mobilization)

When did the mobilization begin

UNKNOWN

Groups Mobilizing

Farmers
International ejos
Local ejos

Forms of Mobilization

Community-based participative research (popular epidemiology studies, etc..)
Creation of alternative reports/knowledge
Involvement of national and international NGOs
Media based activism/alternative media
Arguments for the rights of mother nature

▼ Impacts

Environmental Impacts

Visible: Deforestation and loss of vegetation cover

Potential: Biodiversity loss (wildlife, agro-diversity), Loss of landscape/aesthetic degradation, Soil erosion, Surface water pollution / Decreasing water (physico-chemical, biological) quality, Groundwater pollution or depletion

Health Impacts

Visible: Malnutrition

Socio-economic Impacts

Visible: Increase in Corruption/Co-optation of different actors, Displacement, Loss of livelihood, Specific impacts on women, Violations of human rights, Land dispossession

Potential: Militarization and increased police presence

▼ Outcome

Project Status

Unknown

Pathways for conflict outcome / response

Migration/displacement

Development of Alternatives

A report from Christian Aid has the following recommendations, including a binding regulatory framework (based on international guidelines for responsible agricultural investment) for foreign investment in farmland that emphasises protection of local people and the environment, limiting leases to 1,000-2,000 ha, and binding compensation for all crops, trees and important resources based on the real value of each over its productive life span. Until such recommendations are applied, the report calls for an immediate moratorium on large-scale investment in farmland in Sierra Leone.

Do you consider this as a success?

No

Why? Explain briefly.

The project appears to be moving forward, although it is unclear.

▼ Sources and Materials

Legislations

Sierra Leone Environmental Protection Act (2008)

References

[click to view] (<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/who-is-benefitting-Sierra-Leone-report.pdf>)

Oakland Institute, 2011, 'Understanding Land Investment Deals in Africa â Country Report: Sierra Leone'

[click to view] (http://media.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/OI_SierraLeone_Land_Investment_report_0.pdf)

Action for Large-scale Land Acquisition Transparency (ALLAT), 2013, 'Who is Benefitting?'

Links

, 'Billionaires at play in the fields of the poor (part 5): Chinnakannan Sivasankaran',

[click to view] (farmlandgrab.org)

Crad-l website, archived

[click to view] (<http://archive.is/eIGal>)

Oakland Institute, 'Meet the Millionaires and billionaires suddenly buying tons of land in Africa'

[click to view] (<http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/meet-millionaires-and-billionaires-suddenly-buying-tons-land-africa-0>)

[click to view] (<http://farmlandgrab.org/post/view/22512>)

Other Comments

The lease may be found under CAPARO Group from 2003-2011, then SIVA or Geoff Palm (Sierra Leone) Limited until present. It may be labeled as SLA throughout the company control changes.

▼ Meta Information

Contributor

Aliza Tuttle

Last update

24/06/2014

▼ Comments

(<http://acknowledgej.org/>)

(<http://www.ejolt.org/>)



(<http://envjustice.org/>)



(<http://ictaweb.uab.cat/index.php/>)



(<http://europa.eu/>)



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