

**“Business Impacts on Human Rights,
the Environment and Peacebuilding:
A toolkit for women and women
human rights and environmental
defenders in Liberia**



INTRODUCTION

In countries with a history of conflict, like Liberia or Sierra Leone, businesses can have a major impact on the environment and human rights of the people living in local communities. Businesses can contribute to jobs, local development, cooperation and support peacebuilding efforts. Too often, however, businesses adversely impact the environment by for instance contributing to water pollution, water scarcity or degradation of land and food resources. Business activities can also contribute to the violation of human rights, for instance, displacement of local communities, loss of livelihoods, or the violation of land rights. This can worsen social tensions and lead to social conflicts.

Women are particularly and directly affected by business activities. They often lack the same access and rights to land, natural resources, and jobs. When decisions about business projects are made, women are often excluded from participation. Additionally, women can also meet resistance, exclusion or sexual and gender-based violence when raising their voices about how business activities impact land rights, natural resources, human rights, social conflict or peace.

This is a toolkit for women in Liberia and Sierra Leone who live in communities where businesses activities have a large impact on the management of natural resources, land, human rights, and the risk of conflict. The toolkit is a cartoon that tells a story about Jebbeh and her concerns around land rights, women's rights, and how a new company might impact the environment, rights of women, and the risk of social conflict. The toolkit outlines Jebbeh's concerns about how the business will affect her and her community and what rights all women have. The toolkit also brings up the obstacles that Jebbeh and other women face when defending their rights and seeking redress. Lastly, it outlines which actions to take and where to turn if businesses adversely impact the environment, rights or contribute to social conflict.

At the human rights organisation's office

Women's rights include the freedom from violence, slavery, and discrimination, as well as the right to education, property ownership, voting, and a fair and equal wage.

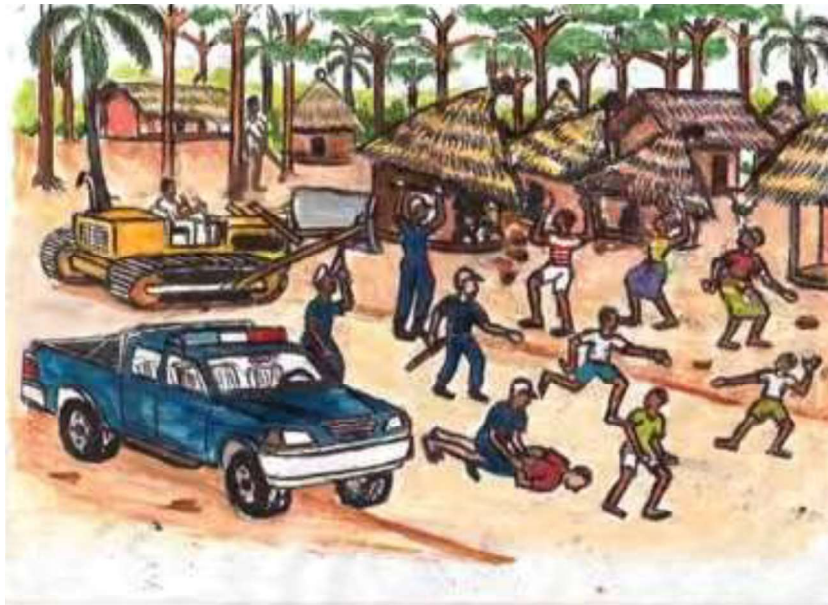


...And Jebbeh is in search of groups that can help claim land left by her father

Bendu informs Jebbeh about the Environmental Protection and Management Law of Liberia and the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

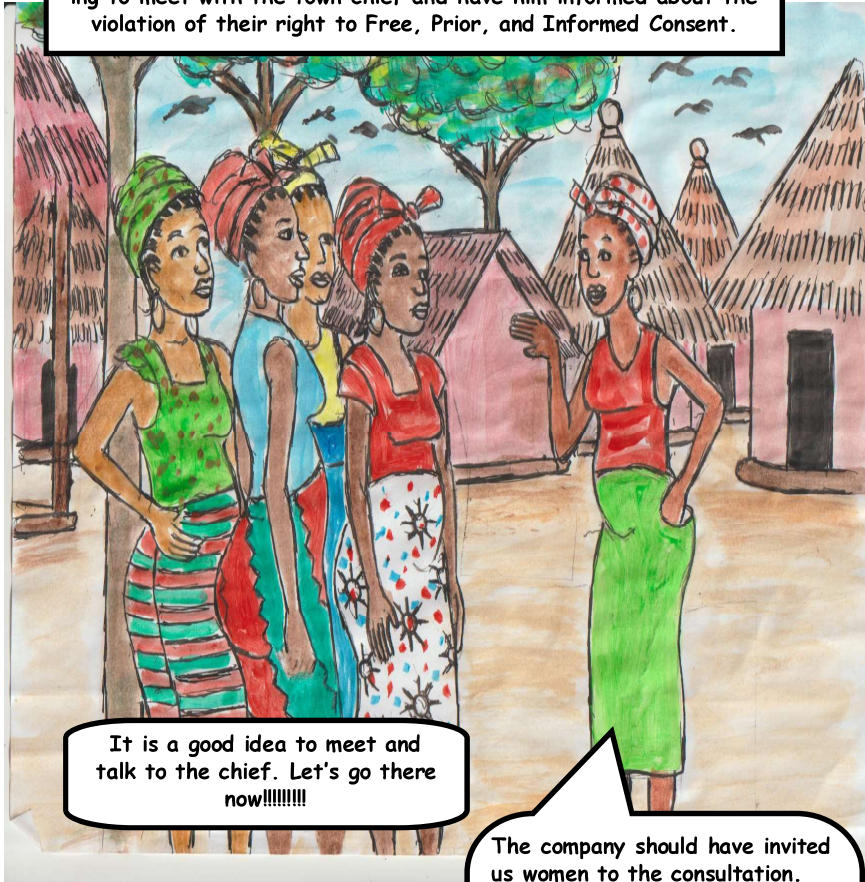


Land acquisition
Without FPIC, forced eviction



Jebbeh remembers what happened in a neighbouring community after a company came to town.

After being prevented from speaking at the consultation with the company, Jebbeh and the other community women are now organizing to meet with the town chief and have him informed about the violation of their right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.



It is a good idea to meet and talk to the chief. Let's go there now!!!!!!!

The company should have invited us women to the consultation. Why were there no women there? I want us meet the town chief concerning the women issue in our town to know why only men are making decision for the town. Even the women chairlady husband beat on her just for the same issue

Jebbeh and the women met with the chief but he insisted that if she continue with her Women rights advocacy, she will be asked to leave the town and go elsewhere.



Hello Chief, We are here because we are not satisfied been prevented by the town leadership and the company to talk in matters concerning our town land, company operations, community decision making processes and many others.

I know it is this troublesome Jebbeh girl who has encouraged you all. Even you Ma. Watta?! Jebbeh, if you continue this, I will ask you to leave this town before you spoil the rest of the women with your human right thing.

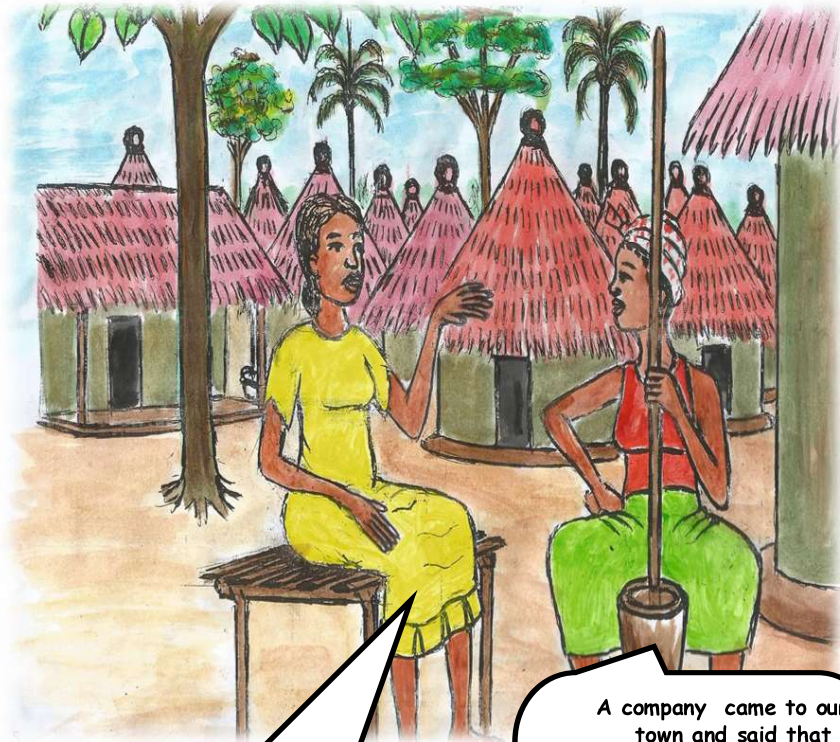
Still shock by the chief reaction, Jebbeh is still seeking other sources that can help her seek redress to the situation she and the women of her town is facing



The chief got very angry and even threatened to send me away from the town. Right now, I'm confuse because my family are asking me to stop or leave the house.

Don't give up yet. Let us go to the NRWP to informed them. After, we will contact the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, Ministry of Gender, Environmental Protection Agency and informed them that women are not participating in the ESAI processes and other decision making spaces for the community around the new business.

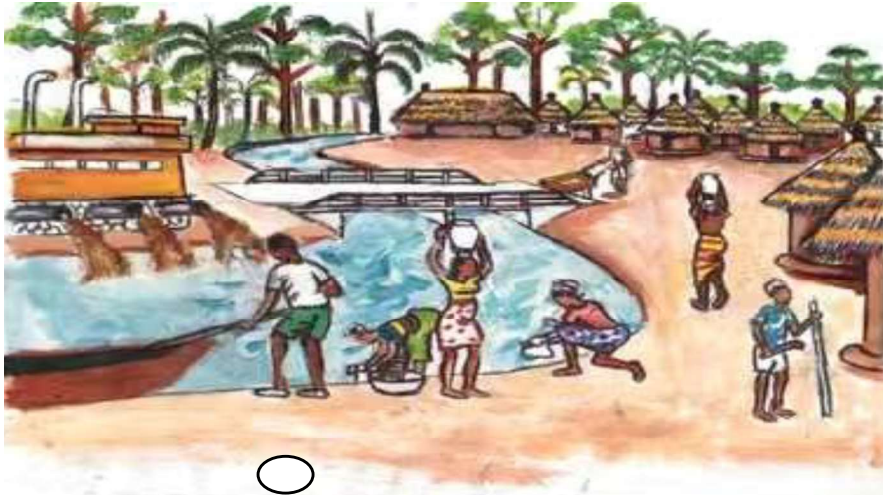
Amid the town's Environmental concerns regarding Mining company, Jebbeh is seeking clarity from Bendu on the issue.



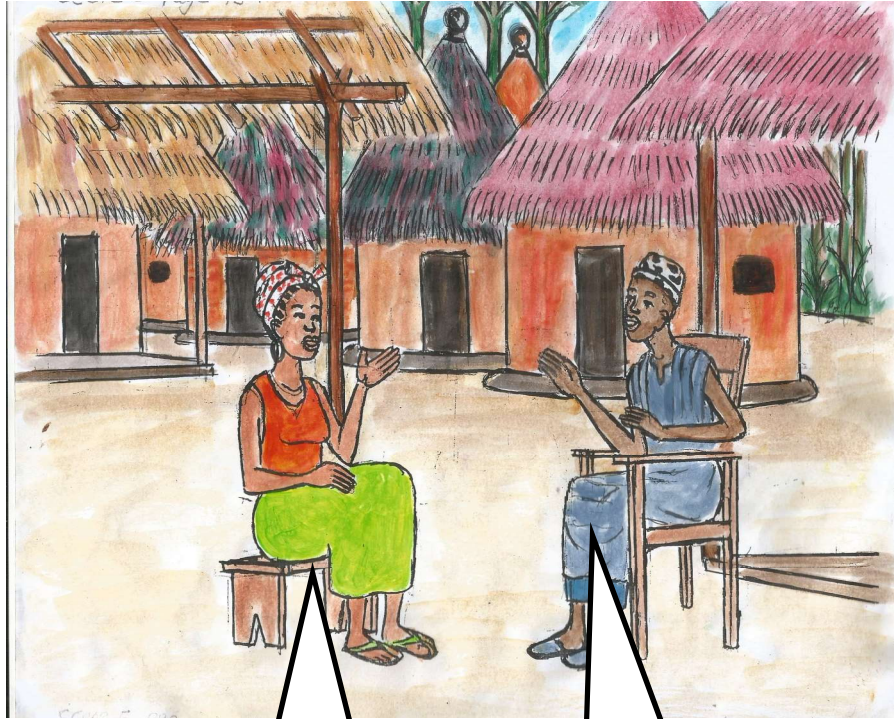
Jebbeh, in Liberia there are several Laws that are put in place to protects the Environment and the people in situation like this. I think it will be good for me to meet with your town Chief and the elders.

A company came to our town and said that they want to engage in mineral extraction but the town chief and the town members are afraid that their operation will pollute our rivers and damage our farm land. What do you think?

Water pollution, environmental degradation



Amid the towns confusion as to what to expect from the mining company, Jebbeh went to seek clarity from an organization and she came to have the chief informed of what she learned.



Chief, I'm here to share information concerning the issue some members of the town are having with the company that came here the other day.

Thank you Jebbeh. But I want to invite the rest of the elders for them to hear this.

The chief invited the elders, Jebbeh and Bendu so that clarity can be provided on the confusion the town is facing as it relates to the Mining company.



Thank you Bendu for the information. We will invite you to a meeting with the EPA, and the company representative.

Thank you chief, there are several laws that are put in place to protect the environment and the people in situations like this. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency who is responsible for protecting the environment has a process called the ESIA (Environmental Social Impact Assessment) this process ensures that everything from the protection of rivers and water to the air are taken into consideration before any company start operation. To ensure that a business is adhering to what was placed in their ESIA the Environmental Protection Agency carries out regular monitoring of the operations.

Bendu is here to tell us about the existing laws on responsible business investment which can also serve as an advice to potential conflicts and address our concerns about the mining company

A meeting with Mining company, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Natural Resource Women Platform (NRWP) and the elders of the town.

hello everyone. Today we have in our midst a representative from the company, EPA and NRWP. We are here to address our concerns about this company. So we will start with the company

I am here to ensure you that the EPA will conduct test of all your water, soil, and air to make sure that they are not polluted or damaged by the company operations. But in case anybody from the community notice that pollution is taking place, they should immediately report it to the town authorities, local government offices, Communities NGO's and national NGO as well.



The Mining Company will provide Jobs, build roads, schools, and hospitals. Our operations will not disturb any of your water sources and farmland. We will justly compensate you for all of the damaged crops and make sure to protect your human rights as well as protect and respect the women and youth.

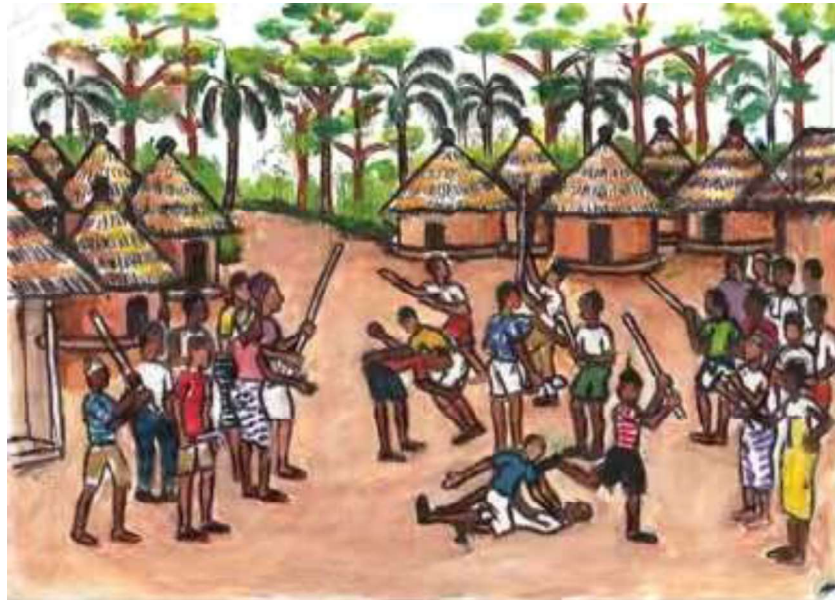
A meeting with Mining company, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Natural Resource Women Platform (NRWP) and the elders of the town.



Since we have different thinking now, we will call another meeting with the rest of the members of the town to get their views.

For me I agree for the company to operate because of the benefits their work will bring to our town.

**Land conflict between communities/
intra-community conflict**



In the consultation, community members bring up their concerns about the risk of social conflict.

After receiving money from the company representative, Pa Siaffa is now sharing the money to convince others about the new company which already brought conflict to the town



Okay...pa Siaffa. With this money, I will diffently agree for the company to work in our town.

Morning Jonny.

In the meeting yesterday, the company coming with so many good things. So, I want you to agree for them to work in our town. Here is ten (10) USD for you to get somethings for yourself while you are thinking about what I told you.

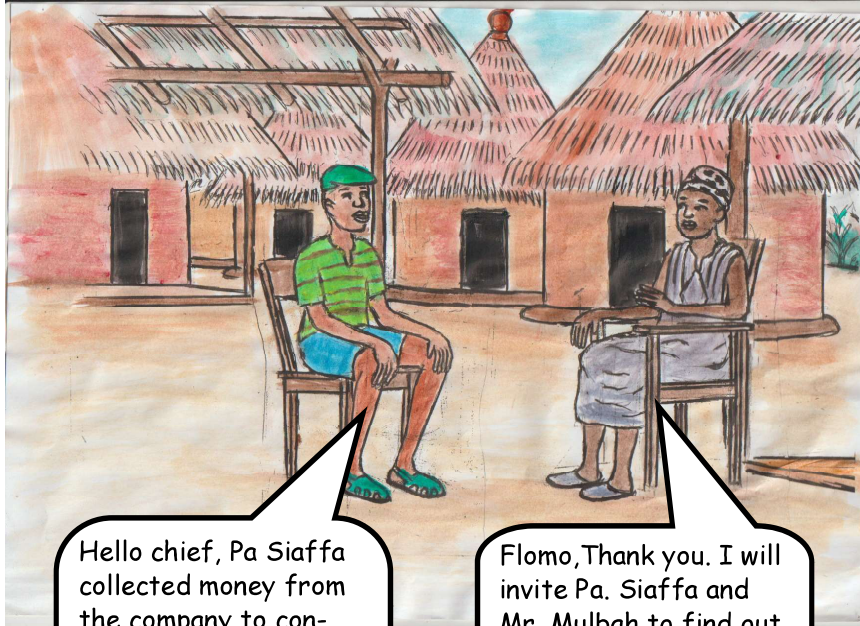
After receiving money from the company representative, Pa Siaffa is now sharing the money which begin to divide the town, strain their peaceful coexistence and then start a serious social conflict within the town.



Why are you doing this to the community Pa siaffa? You know majority of the town is against this company and yet you collected money to convince people in the town. I am on my way to inform the chief.

Flomo, in the meeting yesterday, the company coming with so many good things. So, I want you to agree for them to work in our town. Here is \$10 USD for you to get somethings for yourself while you are thinking about what I told you. I told Johnny the same thing on my way here.

The company is providing money to some members of the town. This is influencing the decision regarding the company's planned work. And Flomo is not happy about it so he brought it to the chief's attention.



Hello chief, Pa Siaffa collected money from the company to convince member of the town. Before coming, I met Pa Siaffa and he offer me money to agree to the company.

Flomo, Thank you. I will invite Pa. Siaffa and Mr. Mulbah to find out why they are doing this.,

After giving money to Pa Siaffa to convince members of the town to allow his company to operate Mr. Mulbah is invited by the chief and the elders to explain why he decided to do such.



I called this meeting and invited Mr. Mulbah because I want us to find out why he gives Pa Siaffa money to help convince people to allow his company to

It is true that I give some money to Pa. Siaffa to help us talk to people to know what they are thinking and some of the things they want our company operations to bring to their town since the last meeting was not concluded properly. However, we are sorry that it started bringing confusion amongst members of your town. our intention was to make sure that we get the views of everyone within the town as well as their needs, education level, amount of people that have skills that can be useful to our operations, things that the town needs, and how our operations can improve the socio-economic status of the people living in the town and their neighbors as well.



After the dialogues with the community, the chief, the company, and the NGO, the company came to an agreement. The company will respect the Liberian Land rights Law of 2018, other local laws and FPIC, will include women in the decision-making process in matters about land or natural resources. If new conflicts arise, the different parties will use the company grievance mechanism, multi-stakeholder dialogues or other mechanisms to solve future disputes about land, business, environment, or rights, to prevent escalation into social conflict.

Where to turn for Human Rights Violation or environmental Harm?

Step 1:

- ◆ Start a dialogue in your community by contacting youth leaders, mammy queen, town Chair Ladies and town Chiefs

Step 3:

- ◆ Contact the company mechanisms for solving disputes with local communities and for seeking compensation.

Step 5:

- Turn to State mechanisms
 - ◇ Labor inspectorates
 - ◇ Employment tribunals
 - ◇ Environmental tribunals
 - ◇ OECD National Contact Points
 - ◇ Consumer protection bodies
 - ◇ Privacy and data protection bodies
 - ◇ Public health and safety bodies
 - ◇ Professional standards bodies.
- Report to the Independent National Commission on Human Rights, Ministry of Gender, or Environmental Protection Agency
- Bring up the ESAI process or FPIC when speaking to the chief, the human rights organisation, the company or State mechanisms

Step 2:

- ◆ Turn to a local or national civil society organization or human rights organization that work with rights to help you file a complaint, write a letter, hold dialogues, or take other actions.

Step 4:

- ◆ Seek alternative dispute resolution (ADR)

The issue can be raised in a:

- ◇ Chiefdom security committee.
- ◇ District security committee.
- ◇ Provincial security committee.

Step 6:

- ◆ Report to the police or legal system

Lastly, you can also turn to the police and they can bring your case forward in the legal system.

How to organize?

Do you and other women want to organize for your rights? Then you can:

Step 1: Organize around needs: Start by thinking about what is important to you and other women (such as food security, employment, healthcare or something else).

Step 2: Write down who has power over that issue: Women and girls can identify people and institutions in government and private sector and hold them accountable to respect, protect and fulfil those needs and rights.

Step 3: Start a campaign: Once women and girls have done step 1 and 2, they can choose a way to campaign and defend their rights.

Step 4: Change laws and policies: Sometimes, changing the laws or policies may be the best way to help women's rights. It is not only national laws that are important, also harmful traditions in communities can lack respect of women's rights

Step 5: Use formal mechanisms: talk to a local or national human rights organization, turn to the company, legal system or others.

Step 6: Use the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC): Women and girls can insist on the right to FPIC. If decisions that affect them are only made by men, then women's rights are not respected. Instead, make sure that women are invited to platforms for dialogue;

Step 7: Solidarity action and movement building: As part of their campaign, women and girls can also talk to international organizations and people that work on the same topics around the world. Women in different parts, local and international, can cooperate.

SUMMARY

This toolkit told the story about Jebbeh and a group of women in her community that are concerned about a company's impact on human rights, the environment and social conflict.

The women lack the same access to land, livelihoods, and natural resources. This gives less power to influence land and resource issues when the new company comes. When the women want to exercise their rights, they face many obstacles like exclusion from decision-making, social pressure, and sexual and gender-based violence and discrimination.

Women have human rights. These are called women's rights.

Land rights

Women do not have the same access to land. Fathers, sons, and husbands often inherit and own land.

Violence and discrimination

Women can face violence and discrimination when reporting on business impact on environment, human rights, or social conflict.

Freedom from violence, slavery, and discrimination: it is illegal to beat a woman or discriminate her.

Decision-making

Women are often excluded from meetings with companies and from community decision-making.

Free, Prior and Informed Consent, FPIC: Women have a right to get consulted when a company wants to use land and natural resources, according to the international legal principle FPIC.

The Environmental Protection and Management law of Liberia: Liberian law says that women can participate during stakeholder meetings before any company is awarded the right to mine or use their land.

Environmental protection

Some companies impact the environment negatively, by for instance water pollution, hazardous waste or degradation of land, or the people who use the land and resources, by forced eviction, or by not consulting the community.

The Environmental Protection and Management law of Liberia: Liberian law says that women can participate during stakeholder meetings before any company is awarded the right to use their land and natural resources.

This toolkit was developed by Green Advocates International (GAI) and Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNORF) with the support from Swedwatch. Swedwatch do not necessarily share the expressed views and interpretations.

This project has been granted funding from Folk Bernadotte Academy's (FBA) support to civil society for peace and security, read more at www.fba.se/stöd. GAI and SiLNORF are responsible for the content.

The project has also been granted funding from United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). GAI and SiLNORF are responsible for the content.