

Port Loko Declaration:
Women say “We want our lands back!”

Women and the expansion of industrial oil palm plantations

We, leaders of groups of women affected by the expansion of industrial monoculture plantations, particularly oil palm plantations, coming from all regions in Sierra Leone and different countries from West and Central Africa;

We, national and international organizations involved in the struggle for the rights of women and local communities in Africa, Latin America and Asia, signatories of this declaration, met from 14 to 15 August 2017 in Port Loko, Sierra Leone.

Considering the pivotal role women play in maintaining their families and securing food for their children;

Considering the essential role of land to produce food for our families;

Considering the importance and diversity of the traditional use of oil palms, ranging from food to building materials to medicines, providing over 30 different products of great importance for women’s livelihoods;

Considering the impacts and human rights violations suffered by women, specifically the dramatic increase of sexual violence against women and children, as a consequence of concessions to oil palm companies that invade communities’ territories;

Considering the duty of governments to protect the rights of people and women, as enshrined in several international human rights related conventions that they have signed;

Aware of the fact that women play a central role in the struggle against land grabbing and the deprivation of their communities;

We denounce:

- monoculture plantations, particularly oil palm plantations, for robbing women of everything they have as they take the agricultural lands and forests that women depend upon for their livelihoods and for feeding their families.
- the expansion of oil palm plantations for leading to a substantial increase of local food prices due to the loss of agricultural land for food production and the resulting need to import food from far away areas, additionally threatening food security.
- companies for coming with lots of promises (such as schools or hospitals) that never fulfill.

- the lack of participation of women in decision making processes related to oil palm plantations, as they are neither invited to meetings nor ever consulted, and women in the countries of the region are not even allowed to own or buy land.
- that, as a result, only men are involved in these decision-making processes and that families without male members are excluded.

- chiefs and paramount chiefs who accept bribes, which often leads to concessions being granted without the consent of the women and the community as a whole.
- companies for not employing local people, but bringing in outsiders, or if they do hire some local people, discriminating against them and providing them with the lowest ranking jobs with precarious working conditions, such as dangerous tasks involving the application of agrotoxins without adequate safety equipment.
- plantation companies and those family members who only see women as laborers.
- the long hours that women laborers must work, putting their children at risk.
- the expansion of plantations for causing women and children to suffer from increased violence and sexual violence such as rape and other sexual harassment, with a consequence that women are restricted from moving around freely and are afraid of leaving their houses or going to work.
- the intimidation and criminalization of women who denounce the impacts of plantations and the violation of their rights.

Women demand:

- full participation for women in all decisions regarding the land. Women want the right to own and make decisions over land.
- the right for communities and women to say no to industrial oil palm plantations.
- the respect of the rights of communities.
- the right for women to speak freely.
- that, at the very least, the conditions for handing over lands to companies and the respective contracts are revised and the companies fulfill their promises.
- access to education and safety for their children.
- their lands back from industrial plantation companies.
- protection against intimidation and violence for women and human rights defenders.

We, Women want our land and forests back so that we can have an agriculture that feeds us. We want a change that allows us to provide livelihoods that allow for good, healthy lives in dignity for our communities.

Signatories

Women's Action for Human Dignity, Sierra Leone

Women's Forum, Sierra Leone

Human Rights Committee, Sierra Leone

Sabulla Women's association, Sierra Leone

Women's Center for Human Rights and Progress, Sierra Leone

Tamaraneh Women's Association, Sierra Leone

Women's Initiative Forum for Empowerment (WIFE), Sierra Leone

Advocacy Movement Network, Sierra Leone

Defense for Children, Sierra Leone

Culture Radio, Sierra Leone

Association pour le Développement Durable et la Protection de l'Environnement en Guinée (ADAPE-Guinée), Guinée Conakry

Women's Forum for Human Rights and Democracy, Sierra Leone

Maluwa Landowners and User Association, Sierra Leone

Surprise Dem Social Club, Sierra Leone

Kataittmma Women's Association, Sierra Leone

Munafa Awnie Bom, Sierra Leone
Dimdin Women's Association, Sierra Leone
Tawopaneh Women's Association, Sierra Leone
Makula Landowners and Users Association, Sierra Leone
The Natural Resource Women Platform, Liberia
Sierra Leone Network for the Right to Food (SiLNORF), Sierra Leone
United for the Protection of Human Rights, Sierra Leone
RADD, Cameroon
World Rainforest Movement
Bread for all
GRAIN

