



# Green Scenery

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The Country's Natural Resources Are Nature's Gift To Us What We Make Of Them Are Our Gift To Posterity

**PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE**

**24 October, 2014.**

## **IN THE MIDST OF THE EBOLA EPIDEMIC SOCFIN POISED TO CAPTURE MALEN CHIEFDOM**

In the heat of the Ebola pandemic and the efforts to battle it, it has been observed and reported that hardly any of the sections in the Malen chiefdom, Pujehun district has gone unscathed by Socfin Agriculture Company (SAC). It has been alleged that SAC now has expropriated 35% of the land mass of Malen chiefdom, amounting to 12,000ha as estimated by MALOA. In June, 2014, Socfin stated that they have acquired over 9,300ha of the 34,600ha of Malen chiefdom.

Socfin in league with some chiefdom authorities continued to take up land from the people of Malen. In a letter dated 16 July, 2014, copying a list of stakeholders including the Paramount Chief, Ombudsman and the Human Rights Commission, one Foday Sellu expressed fears of the company taking over his land by force.

A village has been rendered frozen of all agricultural activities since March, 2014. Allegations are that the company ordered the freeze of farming activities since they will proceed to survey and subsequently brush the land. Up to this moment, Libby village is frozen with villagers suffering from food insecurity now worsened by the Ebola crisis. "We are not happy with this unfortunate land transaction that has forced us from our land. We have made several complains to our councillors and member of parliament, yet nobody seems to care", says Jaiah K of Libby. In Green Scenery's field monitoring of Socfin's operation, it was discovered in June, 2014 that only one section - Nyadahun and three communities - Feyeima, Njama and Talia were untouched by the company's operations. According to recent reports reaching Green Scenery from communities, only less than ten villages in the entire chiefdom remained intact from the company's operations.

In a telephone conversation in August, company General Manager Gerben Haringsma told Green Scenery that he will not divulge information that will be used by the organization to damage his company after the Executive Director, Joseph Rahall enquired from him the land size already under the control of the company. "We want to see that SAC is doing the correct thing which will not hurt communities. We find it very difficult to understand why the company should hide such a simple information that is meant to be in the public domain. At a time like this when the Ebola epidemic is ravaging with Pujehun registering 25 confirmed cases, it will be best practice for the company to minimize its activities and avoid attracting large numbers of people in its operational areas", says Joseph Rahall.

On Friday 24 October, 2014, Bolloré Group, major shareholder of Socfin will be having dialogue in France with communities affected by their operations around the world. Green Scenery will love to see where Socfin's operation would stop expanding in Malen and the badly acquired land returned to the rightful owners.

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