



How Effective is the Promotion of Women’s Customary Land Rights in Improving Women’s Land Tenure Security in Sierra Leone?

The impact of an FAO project in Sierra Leone
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This paper assesses the effectiveness of a specific land tenure intervention to improve the lives of women, by collecting new data in Sierra Leone.

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Abstract

This case study reviews available literature on the land tenure situation of women in Sierra Leone and analyses the impact of an FAO project in two rural villages in ensuring that women are better able to claim their customary rights to land. We argue that the intervention had a positive impact on the rights of women to access and manage lands as they have been allocated plots on their own; that through the new awareness of all community members, women seem to have increasingly been taking part in decision-making processes in regard to land, such as the allocation of a plot of family land to an individual; that the creation of Village Land Committees – with 50% female representation – acting as custodian of the lands instead of the traditional leaders, involved women in land disputes resolution and provided an additional option in-between the traditional system of chieftaincy and the shunned formal court system for women to claim their rights.

We however find that the gendered division of labour within household, not only continues to keep women away from some management rights, but also diminishes their legitimate claims to the lands they access. Tasks such as clearing forest, cutting trees, planting cash crops or building a dwelling, which represent a development of the lands and make a claim to a family plot more legitimate, are still clearly reserved to men.

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Introduction

Land Tenure in Sierra Leone is governed almost exclusively by Customary Laws, which while unwritten, are known and accepted by each member of a community. In the area investigated, customs dictate that most lands belong to lineage families as a whole. Individual plots of lands are then allocated to households, usually consisting of a husband and wife or wives and their children. The allocation occurs through family agreements, but influential elders, especially the family heads will most of the times take those decisions. A plot of land will usually be given to a recently married man of the family and his wife from another family or another community.

There is a general agreement in the literature that customary land tenure in Sierra Leone is subordinating the rights of women to the head of lineages descending from the original settlers (Unruh & Turray, 2006; Williams, 2006). Women will have less access to land through inheritance, gifting or allocation through the family. Most often, they will enjoy less tenure rights from the bundle of rights, especially when it comes to management or transfer rights and will not participate in decision-making regarding whether to plant cash crops, build a dwelling or lease the land away.

While there is no law that prohibits women from holding land and the Government of Sierra Leone has introduced policies and laws which protect the rights of women to use, inherit and control land, everyday life is still strongly defined by patrimonial and patriarchal customs, which limit women's access to land.

This case study observes the impact of a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) pilot project in the villages of Matatie and Rosint, Port-Loko district, Sierra Leone on the tenure rights of women. The intervention entitled, Promoting Women's Customary Land Rights In Sierra Leone, aimed at ensuring that rural women are better able to negotiate their rights of access, use and ownership of land by strengthening their capacity to understand their land rights and to self-advocate for the protection of their customary land rights. Besides providing 20 beneficiary women with seed materials and awareness trainings on women's tenure rights, the initiative set up Village Land Committees which act as custodians of the lands, adopting by-laws and protecting women's rights to land. Half of the committee members are women ensuring that they are part of decision-making processes at community level. Finally, the boundaries of each family's lands were demarcated and mapped using digital technologies.

Through interviews and group discussions, we found out that men and women of both communities have developed an understanding that women are currently treated unfairly in regard to their land rights. Most interviewees argue that as a consequence of the FAO intervention, a change occurred, through which women have gained rights to access and in regard to some tasks, to manage lands. Those changes are most visible in regard to inheritance rights of widows and the acquisition of individual land plots by married women. Women of the communities, whether belonging to the land-owning family or married into it, assertively claim their rights to keep access to the household lands after the death of their husband and are aware of the mechanisms existing to ensure those rights. Practices such as women inheritance or sending a widow back to her biological family seem to have reduced. Furthermore, women have been allocated plots of land on their own, on which they enjoy more rights out of the bundle of rights and even formed a cooperative in one of the villages. Nonetheless, we argue that while women gained rights to access and withdraw from lands and that those rights are more secured, they did not meaningfully gain management rights in regard to specific men-related tasks, and that their rights of transfer and exclusion did not increase. Our main findings rather suggest that the gendered division of labour within household, not only continues to keep women away from some management rights, but also diminishes their legitimate claims to the lands

they access. Tasks such as clearing forest, cutting trees, planting cash crops or building a dwelling, which represent a development of the lands, and thus an increase of value of a land plot in rural Sierra Leone – and makes a claim to a family plot more legitimate – are still clearly reserved to men.

Finally, according to interviewees, following the project, women are increasingly involved in decision making processes at family or household level, such as the allocation of a family plot to an individual. At community level, the creation of land committees, which are tasked with the resolution of conflicts and the protection of women's tenure rights among other things, seem to represent an additional option in-between the traditional system of chieftaincy and the shunned formal court system for women to claim their rights.

I. Context: Land tenure in Sierra Leone and the Situation of Women

A strong belief that land exists for the living, the dead, and the unborn of a lineage is deeply anchored in the cultures of Sierra Leone, as it is in other West African countries (Berry, 2006). Land in rural area is held by land owning families (lineages) usually transferred through patriline. Families derive their rights to lands from their ancestors who originally founded or conquered the village. The rights to access and use the lands are given through the head of a family. The right for any member of the family to receive land for housing or farming is therefore obtained through the permission of the head of family. He or she has to make sure that decisions are in the interests of the whole family and that land is safeguarded for the ancestors and will be available for future generations (Hanson-Alp, 2015). Persons external to the lineages such as strangers (a person not from a particular chiefdom, such as migrants, internally displaced, or foreigners) wanting to acquire land will obtain permission to lease through the local chiefs, eventually through the paramount chief, who acts as custodian of the land and needs to agree to any land deal.

Land tenure in Sierra Leone, like in many West-African countries, is regulated through a dualistic system. While the Western Area peninsula is only subject to statutory law, mostly based on nineteenth century English land law, the provinces of Sierra Leone are governed by customary laws.

Statutory Land Law

Land tenure in the provinces of Sierra Leone is almost exclusively governed by customary law. The Provinces Land Act, Cap. 122 is in fact one of the few statutes existing. It declares that "all land in the provinces is vested in the Chiefdom Councils who hold such land for and on behalf of the native communities concerned." The term "vested" is not defined in the law, and more often than not, title to land is considered held in different entities such as the communities, the families, or individuals.

Customary Law

Customary law is usually unwritten but recognized by the constitution. Nonetheless, the constitution provides that customary law does not prevail if it is in conflict with natural law, equity, and good conscience. It can be enforceable not only in local but also in regional statutory courts where customary experts will handle the issues. There is no single body of customary law in Sierra Leone. Every linguistic/ethnic group has its own set of customary laws as well as its own court within the chiefdom unit (Renner-Thomas, 2010).

Customary law is recognized by the constitution as "the rules of law which by custom are applicable to particular communities in Sierra Leone" and through the Local Courts Act 1963, which indicates that

customary law is grounded in the custom and must be generally accepted and recognized as having the force of law by any community of that ethnic group within a chiefdom (Renner-Thomas, 2010).

Collective Land Tenure

While according to statutory law, the chiefdom council is the custodian of all lands in a chiefdom, most lands in the area studied will belong to land-owning families. Nonetheless, the chiefdom council, formed by the paramount chief,¹ the sub-chiefs,² the councillors, and men of note elected by the people according to customary law, retain extensive control relating to the tenure of land. Customary practices grant them veto power on any land deals involving non-natives and give them the rights to receive tributes or a “shakehand” in the form of money for accrediting a land transaction. Finally, they have the customary duty to resolve land dispute in their constituency through arbitration.

Three main forms of tenure exist under customary law in Sierra Leone: communal tenure, family tenure and individual tenure. Historically, communal tenure features in area where land was gained through and for the whole community by conquest, annexation or settlements, while family tenure is found where areas of virgin forests were cleared by individuals for the benefit of their extended families (Renner-Thomas, 2010). Individual tenure, while already existing in pre-colonial times, tends to be a product of modernity (Renner-Thomas, 2010). In Temne chiefdoms, such as the one investigated in this research, communal tenure is not common, while family tenure is the predominant modus of land tenure.

Because of its pluralistic nature, it is often difficult to speak of ownership of land in the provinces of Sierra Leone. Different entities may simultaneously hold an interest or rights to the same piece of land. While the aggregation of rights may give decision-making power to an individual or an entity, the rights and interests of all parties to a given plot of land run concurrently. It is, for example, possible for the same piece of land to be a) held by the community as a whole, thus giving the community members the right to use, access, and withdraw resources; b) allocated to a specific family, thus giving this family the right to manage and transform the land, such as building structures; c) controlled by the traditional leader, thus giving him/her the right to restrict or enforce given activities; and, finally, d) owned by previous and future generations as well, binding decision-makers to act for their benefit.

Communal tenure. Communal land is claimed on behalf of the community as a whole, which is endowed to legally enforce and defend its rights to the given area of land. Membership to a community, and a member's right to claim an interest in communal land is, as in regard to family land, based on patrilineal affiliation to a descendent kinship within the community. Communal lands are claimed by the community as a unit but vest in the head of the community such as a paramount chief, a section chief, or a village headman who holds them to the benefit of the whole community. Communal lands can be apportioned and allocated to sub-groups or individuals, but access should be guaranteed to all community members (Renner-Thomas, 2010). Members of the community, as well as families, have a right similar to the right of income (*Fructus*) in communal lands. Nonetheless, they also remain partly possessor of those land and plots can be allocated to them or they remain beneficiaries of a lease to a stranger.

¹ The Paramount Chief (PC) is the traditional representatives of the Chiefdoms. He is elected out of the ruling families by all citizens of the chiefdom for a lifetime. He levies taxes, leads the traditional judiciary system and allocates land through the sub-chiefs. The sub-chiefs are the Section and the Town/Village chiefs, all accountable to the PC.

² Traditional chiefs are chosen – and elected in the case of paramount chiefs – by their community for a lifetime.

Family tenure. In the context of Sierra Leone, the term family defines two distinct groups. On the one hand it describes the residential family or household, usually husband, wife/wives, and their children. On the other hand, it describes the extended family or unilateral descent group (Joko, 1983). The expression family will be used to describe the descent group in this study. Such a family can be defined as a group of individuals tracing their origin to a common ancestor. The Temne ethnic group adopt the rule of patrilineal descent, implying that a person “can only claim to be a subject of a chiefdom, and therefore entitled to rights in land therein, if he is able to trace kinship relationship with any particular family within the chiefdom” (Renner-Thomas, 2010, p.148). The family as a unit “has the capacity to claim and hold lands under customary law, to have title vested in itself as an entity and to enjoy the fullest cluster of rights recognized by customary law over the lands in question” (Renner-Thomas, 2010, p.148). Nonetheless, as indicated above, the land titles and the rights linked to them may be subject to the interests held by other entities in those same lands, such as the right of control, held by traditional chiefs.

Family lands are apportioned and vested in sub-family groups and individuals, who hold a lesser interest, held in specific portions of the collectively owned land. While the family as a unit disposes of the maximum bundle of rights permitted under the local customary law, the right of access, withdraw and management to a particular plot of land are exercised by sub-groups within the family. The family as a whole retains the rights of transfer by sale, loan, lease, gift or pledge. The duration of the family's interests in family lands is unlimited, unless the family relinquished those rights or becomes extinct. All those rights are, however, subject to the control rights of customary laws and of the traditional chiefs.

A member of a family can acquire family land through the following methods:

- By appropriation of unoccupied family land through clearing virgin forest or taking over abandoned land;
- By receiving a portion of land by the head of family or a head of household
- By succession or gift from a deceased relative

The institution of the family is led by the head of family aided by principal members of the family. Traditionally, the position is held by the oldest male for lifetime. He is chosen by consensus between the principle members of the family. While sub-family or individual parcels are managed by their designated sub-owners, only un-apportioned or unappropriated areas of family lands are supervised or controlled by the head of family. The family retains an interest of ultimate control over appropriated areas.

The allocation of a plot of land to a family member lies in the responsibility of the family head. Nonetheless, different factors such as traditional practices and current relationships within the family, and the authority or leadership style of the head, will define who is included in the decision-making process and what conditions are attached. In some families, the head may decide in an autocratic way, while in other he/she will include specific family members such as brothers and sisters or typically elders, or even include the whole family to take part in a decision. No studies exist that measure the prevalence of democratic features of land related decision-making in families. Nonetheless, given the respect for traditional leaders and family elders, it is to expect that even in broader family gatherings, only few individuals will talk and impose their own decisions.

The following represents the distribution of rights held by the different entities to the same piece of land under family tenure:

- Right to access: Community, subjected to rights of exclusion

- Right to withdrawal: Household family, head of family and selected members of the extended family
- Right to manage: Household family, head of family, community heads & traditional leaders
- Right to exclude: Household family, family head, community head & traditional leader
- Fructus rights: extended family (especially family head)
- Right to transfer/alienate: Family head, community head & traditional leader

Individual tenure. Individuals may acquire individual customary land titles through clearing virgin forests, purchase, gift, long possession, partition of family lands, or succession from land hold individually. Such ownership can be described as absolute but is still subject to the interest of traditional chiefs as mentioned above. It is therefore possible that the enjoyment of the full rights of ownership may be limited through the complex customary socio-political right of control. Oral testaments are respected under customary practices, allowing an individual to appoint an heir for his/her lands, but because the basic presumption is that a person will not disinherit his/her children without good cause, the devisee will need strong proof (Renner-Thomas, 2010).

Statutory Laws Protecting Women's Tenure Rights

The Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 through Article 27(2) prohibits discrimination attributable to description by sex. However, through Article 27(4)(d), the non-discrimination article does "not apply to any law so far as that law make provision with respect to marriage, divorce and property on death." This provision poses a threat to widows as customary laws which discriminate against women in the process of inheritances will not contradict the constitution, and thus remain valid.

In regard to land issues, although formal law supports women's rights to land, only few women actually own land (Abdullah et al., 2010; USAID, 2010). Statutory law through the 2007 Devolution of Estate Act provides for a woman to inherit at least 30% of her deceased husband's property if he dies without a will.³ It recognizes customary marriages, the rights of polygamous spouses and stipulates penalties if a surviving spouse is evicted from the marital home. The act recognizes cohabitation, that is, a person of the opposite sex, who, while not married to the testator, continuously cohabited with him for a period of five years immediately preceding the death.

However, these rights only cover property owned through individual tenure, but do not extend to property held through family tenure (GOSL, 2007; Irin, 2012). It is thus not applicable in many situations regarding rural lands, as the vast majority of land in the provinces of Sierra Leone is held under family tenure.

Furthermore, through the 2009 Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, a wife in customary marriage shall have the capacity to personally acquire and dispose of properties and to enter into contracts in her own behalf (GOSL; 2009). However, the women's "ignorance about the marriage registration laws (and men's reluctance to comply) prevented them from being able to access land and property rights" (Maguire; 2012). Furthermore, none of the women interviewed in a 2012 DFID survey had heard of a satisfactory resolution of a land dispute through formal or informal justice mechanisms.

Marriages, Divorces, Inheritances and Access to Land

Marriages and access to land. Under statutory law, the Christian Marriage Act 1960 and the Civil Marriage Act 1960 govern marriage and only provide for monogamous marriages. The

³ Depending on the existence of children or not

Mohammedan Marriage Act 1960 recognizes marriages under Islamic law, thus including polygamous marriages to up four wives.

Customary marriages are recognized through the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, 2007, which in turn recognizes customary law as dictating the terms of divorce. Marriages under customary law has as a principal objective, the procreation of children, but also represents an alliance between two families. In comparison to marriages under general law, customary law recognizes polygamy (Lisk & Williams, 1995). Most commonly, a form of bride price as a formal payment is made by the groom's family to the bride's family (Joko Smart, 1983). The monies or goods are distributed among the relatives. In case of a divorce, the payment must be returned to the husband.

Access to land for a woman is mainly given through the father or the husband. In a survey conducted with women in Port-Loko and Pujehun district (Kabba, 2017), none of the 92 respondents had requested a share of land from their fathers, most often giving as an answer that those were family lands (and thus only eligible to be passed on to sons). Therefore, most married women will access lands through their husband and non-natives – women that married a man and live in a different chiefdom – will almost exclusively have access to land through their husbands. These married-in women will often not be considered members of the family and thus might be ineligible to receive land plots or will not participate in family meetings whereby land plots are allocated to a member of the family.

Divorces and division of property. Divorce is not common in rural Sierra Leone and can, under customary law, only be granted for specific reasons. While they vary among communities, they generally include from the husband's perspective; infertility, disobedience, and suspected adultery and from the wife's perspective; Failure to maintain her (especially in polygamous marriages), insanity, persistent cruelty, or if the husband stops showing a sexual interest in her (Lisk & Williams, 1995; Joko Smart, 1983).

While Islamic law will entitle the woman to one-fourth of her husband's possessions upon his death, customary law will be decided from case to case, often to the detriment of the woman, and will most often prevail in Sierra Leone. Non-native women experiencing a divorce, will in most cases have to return to their native families and work for their father or brother on the family lands. Native women who received land from their family together with their husband may be able to retain a piece of land on their own.

In case of a customary divorce, between $\frac{2}{3}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ of women questioned in Kabba's studies (2017) in Pujehun and Port-Loko believed that they would not be allowed to retain the land they were using. $\frac{3}{4}$ would expect resistance from their husband as well as the community leaders if they would request to retain lands upon divorce. In the group discussions conducted, men commented that inheriting lands would encourage women to divorce more and more in order to gather property. Non-native women were also expected in $\frac{3}{4}$ of the cases not to receive land upon divorce and would thus be expected to return to their parent's localities. Exceptions are made if the women in question has children or is an advanced age.

Death and inheritance. Under Statutory law, the Devolution of Estates Act, 2007 dictates inheritance rules. However, the act stipulates that it "shall not apply to family property [...] held under customary law," and is thus inapplicable for the inheritance of most lands in Sierra Leone, including the ones under investigation in this study.

Under customary law, an individual can allocate portions of his/her lands under family tenure to another member of the family while still alive, but he/she has no right to appoint an heir to his lands

after his death.⁴ In theory, any member of the extended family is a potential successor for the lands of a deceased under family tenure and the decision is subject to the family head and his/her advisors. In practice however, the proximity of kinship or affinity to the deceased will play an important role in the decision taken. This is especially the case if permanent structures were erected or economic trees⁵ were cultivated. Nowadays, children of a deceased male will most often inherit their father's interest in family, communal, and individual lands.⁶ Nonetheless, the possibility remains that the family unit through the head of family decides to reallocate those lands to another member of the family upon the death of the original possessor.

Around 90% of the women interviewed in Kabba's studies (2017) indicated being allowed to retain the lands (usually in their entirety) upon the death of their husband,⁷ if they have the means to use them.⁸ However, certain conditions are attached to a peaceful co-existence between widow and relatives of the deceased. On the one hand, children should be product of the marriage. This breeds empathy for the woman who is then allowed to stay in the husband's house and raise their children. On the other hand, if she is young, she is encouraged to re-marry the deceased's younger siblings. Women who fail to re-marry within their ex-husband's family may have issues accessing and using the land of the deceased under the customary system. Thus, these women resort to borrowing or renting land on ridiculous conditions. They are also handicapped financially and are not able to contract people to help them on their farms to improve productivity. Renner-Thomas argues that in some cases, wives have been allowed as sole heiress of the household lands, but "The practice of allowing a wife to succeed as sole heiress to rights in land held under customary law is not sufficiently widespread for it to be categorized as a modern rule of customary law" (Renner-Thomas, 2010, pp.236-37). Renner Thomas maintains that no matter however the status of women may have improved under customary law in recent times, given the patrilocal pattern of society, a woman remain a stranger to her husband's ancestral families and may in most cases not claim an interest in the lands.

60% of Kabba's (2017) interviewees believed that community leaders would not be comfortable with women acquiring land on their own through inheritance and that between 60% and 80% say that relatives of the husband disturb or challenge widows if they intend to take over the lands under family tenure.

⁴ It is however important to distinct between an *individual's interest in family land* and an *individual's self-acquired interest in family land*. In the latter, the individual will have acquired the land through his/her own effort (such as clearing virgin forest) on behalf of the family and will thus have a more legitimate privilege to decide on his/her heirs. This self-acquired plot of land can be passed to the direct descendent, while the plot of land allocated trough the family head will be subject to the family's decision.

⁵ Long-term trees yielding agricultural output such as cashew or palm trees.

⁶ Traditionally, and still practice in conservative communities, the eldest brother of the deceased would inherit the land and act as a "trustee" to the children of the deceased. Children would need to "beg" for land to their uncle in order to be allocated a plot.

⁷ Women expected to retain resources attached to the lands, such as constructions or economic groups – which are treated separately to the lands under customary land laws – in only 50% of the cases.

⁸ Otherwise the lands need to be redistributed to other family members. This is due to the fact that lands are not allowed to lay fallow uncontrolled, as they will be otherwise recognized as abandoned and can be claimed by any member of the family.

Settlements of Disputes and Courts

The statutory, English-type courts and traditional courts co-exist in the provinces of Sierra Leone.⁹ The jurisdiction of English-type courts in matters relating to land tenure is however restricted in many respects (Renner-Thomas, 2010).¹⁰ Jurisdiction to hear matters involving a question of title to land is vested in the local courts as part of civil cases governed by customary law (Renner-Thomas, 2010). Lawyers have no right of audience in local courts. There is nonetheless a right of appeal from local courts to the English-type district appeal court. In regard to customary law and local courts, each chiefdom is an independent and autonomous unit for the purpose of the administration of justice under the traditional system. Each has its own court, but different laws, depending on the ethnic group. Since women, who are non-natives are not recognized as belonging to a descendant family of their chiefdom of residence, they are effectively excluded from access to justice through the customary court (USAID, 2010).

In practice, most land disputes in the provinces will however not be brought before a court but are resolved informally. Land disagreements within the family are brought to the head of family while disputes that involve the head or which cannot be resolved by him/her are brought to the traditional chief who will apply a process of customary arbitration. Formally, the Family Support Units (FSU), a department of the Sierra Leonean Police is mentioned as drop-in centres for aggrieved women. While the department's mandate revolves around the child rights act, and thus, violence against children and women within households, they also handle complaints relating to disputes over inheritance and divorce, but only few women resort to them.

In general, 50% of Kabba's (2017) interviewees in Port-Loko and Pujehun believed that they could not sue a man over a land dispute. They also responded that if they perceived having been unjustly treated in regard to an inheritance, 40% of them would do nothing, 33% would direct their grievance to the local chief and 26% to the family, that is the family head or other leading members they will comfortable addressing. More than ⅓ expected an arbitration non-favourable to their demand.

Women and Decision-making

In general, women and men in rural Sierra Leone have different roles in the value chain of production. Men clear land while women plant and tend crops and market the products. Women will rather be involved in the production of food crops, while men will be responsible for cash crops farming.¹¹ For example, women are exclusively responsible for manually processing cassava and rice (World Bank, FAO & IFAD, 2009). The work carried out by women in food production is perceived as their "customary obligations to the household and therefore goes unpaid" (Beoku-Betts, 1990, p.31), while men will benefit from selling cash crops. Furthermore, the division of labour, the discrepancy of literacy levels and the full possession of financial capital by men implies that those will buy the necessary inputs and thus, make the decisions of how, what and when to plant.

Patriarchal norms shape gender roles and responsibilities in Sierra Leone, entailing that decision-making usually lies in the heads of households and families, and their advisors, mostly male. 31% of

⁹ English type courts are the supreme court, the court of appeal, the high court of justice, the magistrates' court. Traditional courts are the local courts and the group local appeal courts. Customary rights can be handled by magistrates' courts, whereby an expert in the law will support the judge.

¹⁰ While the supreme court and the high court will refrain from handling matters other than leasehold to non-natives, the magistrates' court may deal with matters in special circumstances, such as on petition of the conflict parties.

¹¹ Cash crops are grown to sell for profit, in contrast to subsistence crops. In Sierra Leone those include mainly cocoa, coffee, cashews, and palm fruits/oil

women do not participate in any household decisions, while 45% participate in major decisions, usually jointly with their husbands (FAO, 2018). The women interviewed by Kabba (2017) answered in 62% of the cases that their husband alone takes decisions on land use within the household, while 36% reported taking the decisions together with their husbands. On the extended family level, answers varied considerably between regions, as between 5% and 30% of the women reported being consulted by their brothers regarding family land related decisions. When asked why they would not be consulted, all women answered either, "my brothers don't allow me because I'm a woman," "because I'm a woman," and "because it is family land."

Urban emigration of young men to work as wage labour in mines and cities, among other reasons, has led to an increase of *de facto* women-led households.¹² Nonetheless, because of the patriarchal practices, they are restricted from putting the family plots to use without the consent of male family members, even in the event of absence or death of their husband (ActionAid, 2013). Furthermore, their lack of financial capital and traditional power undermine their prospects to hire labour force or receive quality farming lands from the village or family head (Beoku-Betts, 1990).

At the higher decision-making level, the big majority of traditional leaders, that is Paramount, Sector, and Town/Village chiefs are men. In some ethnic groups of the country, among others the Temne people, women are not allowed to become Paramount chief. Women intending to compete for local level leadership in the other hand are expected to be member of the *Poro* male secret society, a process largely undocumented, but implying high pressure on women and many shying away from the idea (Rogers, 2011).

Conclusion: Women's Land Tenure Security

There is a general agreement in the literature that customary land tenure in Sierra Leone is subordinating the rights of women and, despite the fact that the government of Sierra Leone introduced gender policies and legislation,¹³ women still have limited opportunities to own land and land reform has made slow progress.

The customary land tenure system makes it especially difficult for women to access or invest in land (FAO, 2013). Women in Sierra Leone generally have less access to land than men through inheritance, gifting, renting and purchasing (Abdullah et al., 2010; Action Aid, 2013). Women only enjoy few tenure rights even when they are part of a land-owning lineage and are the one that mostly work the lands. Their tenure rights are most of the time obtained through their relationship to a male (husband, brother, father or uncle) and thus could be considered a secondary right.

A patrimonial and patriarchal system and lack of female decision makers is cited as the dominant barriers to women's land tenure security (Unruh, 2008). For the majority of Sierra Leonean citizens, the unwritten traditional laws and practices determine who is able to hold, use, or transfer land. The application of those rules in everyday life is affecting women more adversely than men. Women are often treated as minors who need the guardianship of a man (father, brother, or even son) to own or acquire lands. In the worse cases, they are regarded as the possession of their families, married after receiving money from the groom and inherited to another male member of the family after the death of her husband through the practice of widow inheritance. Single women face the worst and may be allocated only a small portion of land, which can lead to women entering into relationships just to secure a living (ActionAid, 2013).

¹² According to the 2015 Census (Stats SL), 28% of household were female-headed.

¹³ In 2007-2008, three gender acts were introduced: The Domestic Violence Act, The Devolution of Estate Act, and the Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorces Act.

There is no customary rule prohibiting women from holding an interest in family land or to acquire property in her own rights independent from her husband. Nonetheless, “the socio-cultural realities of life in the provinces do not often permit an individual female to acquire a separate interest in family or communal lands. A woman is expected to look towards her husband for the provision of land needed for her immediate family” (Renner-Thomas, 2010, p. 237). It does however happen that families owning extensive lands may apportion a piece to a woman, even if she has married into another family. Upon her death, her lands would be passed on to her children in the same manner as lands owned by a man.

Context in Rosint and Matatie Villages, Bureh Chiefdom, Port-Loko District

The villages investigated in this research, Rosint and Matatie are inhabited by Temne communities. Most of the women living in those communities are Muslim, living under customary law.

Around 108 households live in Rosint, whereby the land is divided between four land-owning families. The village chief and all the family heads are men. The village is located at the main road from Port-Loko to Guinea and thus well linked to local markets. A river passes near the village, which created a swamp¹⁴ area, ideal for rice planting. Community lands in Rosint include four swamp areas, the school, and the cemetery. They are managed by the chief who makes decisions together with stakeholders of the community, including elders. Access to community land is given by the chief and his committee and resources can also only be gathered through formal approval. All members of the communities are allowed to gather firewood and water in any lands of the community.

Matatie is twenty minutes walking distance from the main road inside the forest. Around 300 households live there and three families claim lands. The village is situated near the river Bath-Bana and also disposes of swamp areas for rice planting. None of the community land has been leased to investors or individuals outside of the community. Community lands are managed by the chief who takes decisions together with the elders on how the lands should be used. Women elders, including the chief who is a woman, are taking part in those decisions. Resources such as wood and water can be gathered by anyone in the communities. The cutting of trees is however prohibited.

The village chief of Matatie is a woman, which is not common in rural Sierra Leone.

FAO Project: Promoting Women's Customary Land Rights in Sierra Leone

In 2018, the UNFAO partnered with local nongovernmental organization in a pilot project entitled “Promoting Women's Customary Land Rights in Sierra Leone” in the villages of Rosint and Matatie in Port-Loko District. In order to support the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) and the National Land Policy, approved by the Sierra Leonean parliament in 2015 but not enacted yet.¹⁵ This project aimed at ensuring that rural women are better able to negotiate their rights of access, use and ownership of land by strengthening their capacity to understand their land rights and to self-advocate for the protection of their customary land rights and the elimination of discriminatory barriers through improved reforms in land rights administration. The project objectives and activities revolved around four main topics:

¹⁴ Swamp is the name given to areas which are overflowed during the rainy season and often continue to be naturally watered during the dry season.

¹⁵ In 2020, two bills were drafted by the Ministry of Land. The customary land rights bill and the National Land Commission bill, which will enact the National Land Policy.

1. Awareness rising of community

During a two days session, 80 community members (64 women and 16 men) participated in an awareness training on the National Land Policy 2015. After teaching basic knowledge on the Sierra Leonean land tenure system, the training explained the principles of non-discrimination of women, equity and justice, gender equality and their relationship with customary and statutory land rights. Specifically, the rights of women to use and inherit lands were stressed. Furthermore, the benefits of integrating women in making decisions on land use were emphasized. The training targeted community decision-makers in order to sensitize them to the rights of women. On the other hand, the participating women were encouraged to report property- and inheritance-related violations and to seek legal redress. To accompany this awareness process, community radio discussions and jingles were produced for local radios and posters with messages from the land policy were distributed in the communities.

To further build on the knowledge of community members and capacitate women to claim their rights and seek redress, a capacity building training of two days on Land-ownership and customary land rights, the three gender acts 2007¹⁶ and the National Land Policy 2015, and other laws such as the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, 2007 was given to a total of 79 members of the community.

2. Livelihood support

Farming inputs (seeds, cuttings, and vines) and tools were distributed to 20 direct beneficiary women in the communities. The whole process was made in presence of the whole village for full transparency and accountability. The beneficiaries were selected by the communities independently and were then provided with rice, groundnut, pepper, cassava, okra, cucumber, krain-krain seeds as well as shovels, hoes, cutlass and gardening tools.

3. Establishment of Village Area Land Committee (VALC) and formation of by-laws

The VALC is an institution provided for in the National Land Policy (2015) and the resulting draft bills, in order to replace the chieftom Council as the custodian of the land. While supervising the allocation of community lands, VALCs are also tasked with mediating land disputes. Furthermore, the VALCs have the responsibility to adopt by-laws to govern the use of the land and natural resources of their communities. The new committee as provided by the National Land Policy, should be composed of an equal number of women and men.

The committee in Rosint was established through the FAO project and their elected members, of which half of them were required to be women, were guided to fulfil their tasks. After their establishment, the Committee was encouraged to adopt by-laws, with the advice from the traditional chief and in consensus with all community members, to support the goals of the National Land Policy and the VGGT as well as promote the sustainable management of natural resources in the community.

In Rosint, by-laws regarding land tenure already existed, but additional ones were adopted. The following by-laws affecting women's tenure rights were decided on: 1) Women belonging to land holding families should have equal access and control over land inherited from their parents; 2) Equal opportunity should be given to both boys and girls to have access, own and control land.

¹⁶ In 2007-2008 Three Gender acts were introduced: The Domestic Violence Act, The Devolution of Estate Act, and the Registration of Customary Marriages and Divorces Act

4. Boundary demarcation and Community land mapping safeguard customary land tenure rights, especially for women

Heads, elders, and other members of the three extended families in Rosint delimited the territory of their community and of their own families by clearing and marking the boundaries. The process took over a week as all families needed to agree on the common boundaries.

Mainly young members of those families participated subsequently in a training on the use of the Solution for Open Land Administration (SOLA) software in order to themselves participate in the digital mapping. After this training, the families, together with FAO enumerators, digitally marked the boundaries before creating maps that were presented to the communities for consensus.

The lands of Rosint village are distributed between four land-owning families, while the lands of Matatie belong to a total of three families.

II. Theoretical Framework

Research Question

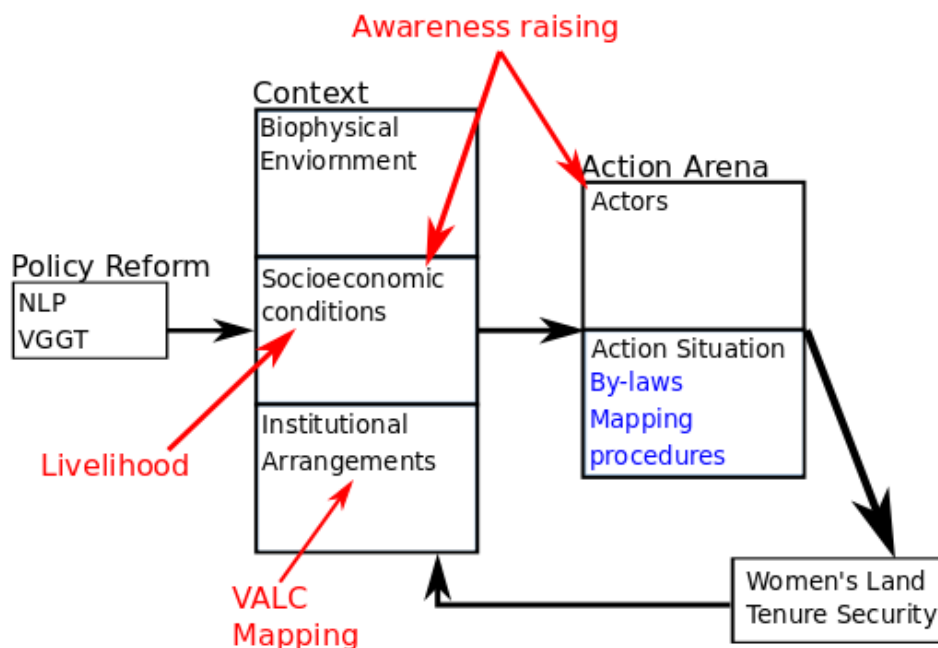
This research intends to assess how effective the FAO project: Promoting Women's Customary Land Rights in Sierra Leone has been in increasing tenure right security of women according to the framework developed by Doss and Meinzen-Dick (2018) to study women's perceived tenure security.

Hypothesis

We expect the four activities carried out by the FAO project to influence women's land tenure security at different levels of the Institutional analysis and development framework, as indicated in model 1. Awareness rising on NLP and women's rights to land.

The FAO project empowered women to claim their rights to land and created the platform to demand for a change in the inheritance of the land as provided by statutory law. Women with increased awareness of their own rights to land are expected to speak up to their husbands and heads of household and to demand in community meetings that their land rights be respected. Furthermore, the awareness raising is expected to lead to changes in the inheritance practices of land in the village of Rosint, because of husbands and fathers considering appointing their wives or eldest daughters as heirs. Finally, participation in the awareness workshop is assumed to have changed the minds of male decision makers toward women ownership of land in the village of Rosint.

Through awareness rising, action resources of selected actors within the communities are affected. The rights given to women through the NLP and their benefits for the community as a whole will affect the action arena where by-laws are enacted, the mapping of boundaries is carried out and social norms evolve. The project empowered women to claim their rights to land and created the platform to demand for a change in the inheritance of the land as provided by statutory law.



Model 1: Impact of FAO project through the Institutional analysis and development framework

Livelihood. Livelihood support to women was provided through the UNFAO project by providing seeds and tools to women to farm on the land. The seeds were provided for only one farming season.

The fact that women are the owners of seeds and tools give them the right to plant the land at their disposition, that is, to transform and harvest from the land. In the cases that women were not allowed to decide when and where to plant the seeds based on their own judgement, we expect them to have taken part in the decision-making process previous to the use of the provided materials. Finally, by harvesting the product of their own seeds we suppose that the women had increased access to private earnings of money and materials. The provision of seeds and tools gave the women access to transform the land which led to an increase of their tenure security and could guarantee the women a permanent access to the land and the rights of management and transformation. The fact that women have their own crops on their lands may even help them to win a case in a local court if they face a boundary dispute. In some occasion, we expect women or women groups who received seeds but had no access to land to have acquired the right to lease a family land plot from their family head or community land from the village/town chief. Asking for permission from family heads to have access to land for their private socioeconomic lifestyle.

Village Land Area Committee. The VALC was created through the National Land Policy, in order to replace the paramount chief as the custodian of the land. While charged with the allocation of community lands, VALCs are also charged with mediating land disputes. Finally, the VALCs have the responsibility to adopt by-laws to govern the use of the land and natural resources of their communities. The new committee as provided by the National Land Policy, should be composed of an equal number of women and men. For this reason, we expect VALC to handle women issues more seriously and to take decisions less disadvantageous to women than decisions made by traditional chiefs. As custodian of the lands, VALC will have a higher tendency to sublease community lands to women groups or individual woman in need of land for livelihood purposes. Finally, VALCs are accountable to the general assembly of adult members of the community and thus are expected to be more transparent and accountable in their decisions than traditional chiefs. In respect to the creation

of by-laws, we expect VALC to, on the one hand, not develop by-laws that discriminate women's land rights and, on the other hand, to even adopt legislations that will purposely protect women's tenure security. Expect the VALC to influence the traditional land custodians the chiefs and village elders to chart a way that customarily empowers women in community land matters.

Mapping. The FAO conducted land right demarcation and mapping to protect women's customary land rights and ensure women land tenure security. The fact that women were included in the mapping process and took a leading role may increase their ability to raise their voice in decision-making about land. It is however not clear in the FAO project how demarcating family households land boundaries should specifically increase the tenure security of women within the families. The mapping will present on paper the general size of land which each individual family owns. This will pose a platform for women who do not own or does not have access to family land demand for their own portion to utilize. We suspect the mapping activities to have an adverse impact on women's tenure security by formalizing the ownership in the possession of the family head, and thus increase the probability of the family head to deny rights of *usus* to women, especially from other families or strangers if the titles are registered under one individual's name.

Women's land tenure security. According to Doss & Meinzen-Dick's (2008) conceptual framework we define land tenure security through the concepts of *completeness, duration and robustness*.

The completeness of the bundle of rights will be assessed through the questions under annex 1. The scores will only help to make comparisons between the individuals interviewed, especially between the two villages and will not be used for further quantitative results.

III. Methodology

This research will utilize a qualitative case-study approach. In order to assess the impact of the FAO interventions, we will conduct interviews in two villages, which benefited from the intervention. Data will be gathered through Focus groups discussions and Key Informant Interviews, using predetermined questions, but opening the opportunity for interviewers to deviate from the script in order to address the issues through diverse questioning. All the questions are listed in Annex 9.

The following data gathering activities will be carried out in both villages.

- Key Informant Interview with local CSO
- Focus Group discussion with 7 women beneficiaries of the FAO awareness and livelihood activities each.
- Key Informant Interviews with 6 women beneficiaries of the FAO awareness and livelihood activities
- Key Informant Interview with village chief
- Key Informant Interview with village chief's wife
- Key Informant Interview with the leader of the village women's group
- Key Informant Interview with all household heads (3-4 families)
- Key Informant Interviews with 2 elders, members of the customary court
- Key Informant Interviews with 4 members of the Village Land Area Committee, two men and two women

General questions will be asked to several of the actors mentioned above. Annex 2 gives an overview of the questions asked to which actors.

IV. Results: How did the FAO Project Affect Women's Land Tenure Security?

Changing the Socio-economic Conditions

In the trainings given by FAO and Sierra Leonean CSOs on women's tenure rights, a relationship paradigm between men and women in the target villages was changed. Women beneficiaries of the project assert that they realized having been unfairly treated in regard to their land rights. They assure that practices such as widow inheritance or depriving a woman of inheriting her husband's properties used to be more widespread. In this context, half of the women interviewed internalized a theoretical idea that men and women should be treated equally and agree that there have been significant improvements towards this goal. Many beneficiaries interviewed argued on the base that they belong to the same families as their male counterparts (brothers), and that they therefore should be regarded as equal with respect to land issues. Others clearly claimed that married women should have the same rights as their husbands, given the fact that they are also working the lands. A woman in Rosint explained that in general, the "wickedness" from men to women reduced by "creating fear in men to handle their women badly." They would fear consequences, such as the involvement of a Human Rights organization or being taken to a local court by their wives if they do not allow women access to lands or inheritance rights. She further advanced, that family members are also more afraid of seizing advantage of married women by using or taking away their lands.

Community decision makers, such as village chiefs and family heads acknowledged that women are more aware and have started claiming their rights to land from the community, and that men start to understand that women were unfairly treated. A male member of the Village Area Land Committee explained: "We thought that we were more important than them [women], but through this training it gave us awareness that we are equal in terms of decision making, rights to own and access land."

From an economic perspective, all women interviewed emphasized the technique learned in regard to the use of manure, crop rotation, or desisting from using the slash and burn method helped them to increase their harvest. A monitoring study from Green Scenery shows the lower expenses for food during this period (Green Scenery, 2020).

As the seeds were provided to the women, most of them decided together with their husband on how, where, and when to use the seeds. Some women acknowledged that it marked a change to the previous practice of having household heads make the decisions. Nonetheless, others said that they always were involved in the decision-making - planting and harvesting being traditionally tasks performed by women. It is not clear if the distribution of seeds increased the women's management rights. On the other hand, after receiving the seeds, women in Matatie formed a cooperative where they together managed the plantations. They were allocated a plot of community land by the village chief where they planted the seeds during one season.

Changing the Institutional Arrangements and the Action Situation

Decision-making. Traditionally, in rural communities, decision-making regarding land is a task reserved to men, which will hold positions such as village chief, family head, or elder. The fact that the village chief of Matatie is a woman represents an exception. On the other hand, the fact that all family heads, who are central in decisions regarding to land, are men, is common. As mentioned above, the processes around the allocation of family lands differ among families, but individuals holding traditional positions of power, often reserved to men, will deeply influence those decisions. In the focus group discussions, women explained that before the FAO project, men would pledge, lend or

seasonally rent their household lands without consulting their wives or sisters, which often led to marital or family conflicts.

Most interviewees, whether women beneficiaries or traditional leaders, have emphasized the fact that as a consequence of the project, women are increasingly included in decision-making processes on land issues. While the extent to which women are considered in family meetings is difficult to assess, it is unambiguous that they have been participating in meetings, wherein decisions are taken to allocate a plot of land to a family member or to an individual outside of the family. Most women interviewed claimed, however, being heard and that their arguments were considered in those meetings. A male member of the village area land committee reported that a consensus is sought, which includes all member of the family, before a land is allocated. Women participating in the Focus Group Discussion in Rosint emphasized that now even non-native women, that is women married into a land-owning family, participate in those meetings. An elder of Matatie would as a consequence of the project further say: "Before we lease any lands to a stranger, we call all people affected, including the women. If we don't call them, they won't allow us to give the lands."

Village Area Land Committees. The creation of the VALC has transferred some of the duties traditionally performed by the village chiefs to a group of community representatives, consisting of 50% women. The Committees meet on a regular basis and discuss issues regarding land in their communities. Members of the community regard their main tasks as solving land conflicts, enforcing by-laws in regard to the management of the land to the benefit of the community, and especially to protect women's tenure rights, as was explained to them during the awareness trainings. All members interviewed certify that women VALC members talk freely during the meetings and that their views and opinions are being respected.

Women beneficiaries of the FAO project recognize that the main task of VALC is to settle disputes between family members or between families in regard to land, but that they also prevent men from taking advantage of women. Giving an example, one of the interviewees explained that the VALC prevented a man from limiting his wife's access to land after a marital dispute.

Most interviewees emphasized the fact that conflicts in general have reduced within their communities since the creation of the committees, as the committee members are often involved in resolving the conflicts before escalation. They further clarify that conflicts are now being resolved within the communities and do not need to be taken to a local external court, which would ask for significant sums of money. In Rosint, most women mentioned that the committee must thereby support women that are disadvantaged in their families, for example by ascertaining that widows can keep access and management rights of their household lands. Given the fact that half of the VALC's members are women, Two out of the four male VALC's members interviewed confirmed that their task consists in protecting women's rights to land. During the creation of the Committees, customary by-laws were adopted to protect the women's tenure rights, specifically that "boys and girls have equal rights to land," which according to interviewees are being respected.

Mapping. As we have seen above, the impact of land mapping and awarding of land titles may not be only beneficial for women. In Matatie and Rosint, all family heads are male and thus, awarding the land to a family as a unit may strengthen his position as land owner and thereby reduce access or management rights held by women family members by formalizing the bundle of rights under the control of the family head, and thus increase his legitimacy to deny rights of *usus* to women. Nonetheless, women interviewed explained that after their family lands were mapped, nobody intruded into the lands that they manage anymore. While boundaries were not clear, influential members of a family would tend to claim lands of a less influential member for their own activities such as farming or cutting trees. Men who tend to hold higher positions in the family hierarchy would

thus usurp lands managed by women. In fact, disagreement on land parcel boundaries in Matatie escalated in the past to the point of conflict parties destroying plantations and cash trees of other family members. Through the mapping, boundaries of household lands have been agreed on by all members of the family, and thus, nobody can afford to claim another person's parcels. All interviewees emphasized on many occasions that boundary disputes were reduced in their communities, reducing the costs engendered through settlements in local courts.

Dispute resolution. While according to the interviewees, disputes have reduced in both communities, the project, especially through the land committees, has offered a new option for women to claim their rights in case of disagreements. All interviewees were aware of the existence of the committees and mentioned them as one of the instances they would reach in case of dispute on land issues with their husbands or their families. Generally, people in Sierra Leone, especially the rural population, tend to avoid formal courts and try to settle issue at local level, because on the one hand, of the costs involved and, on the second hand, that they don't want to "shame" their family. In regard to land issues, most women interviewees therefore maintained that in case of land disputes with their husband or family, they would complain to the family head or a family member that they trust, the *sabab* (the person who arrange the marriage), elders or the chief of the community, and finally, if things could not be solved at the local level, to a Human Rights Body (by which they understand the Civil Society Organizations who gave them awareness trainings), or, in a last instance, a statutory or regional court. While it is, therefore, clear that the beneficiaries of the project understand their options, it is still obvious that a lot of impediment, social or financial, exist which would stop women to claim their rights and demand just treatment. On the one hand, land disputes will be avoided at all costs as they will embarrass the family as a whole. On the other hand, traveling to the next city or asking a traditional leader to mediate a dispute will involve direct financial costs which, if affordable, will burden a woman heavily. The VALC, which were often mentioned after members of the community but before formal courts as an instance for complaints, seem therefore to represent an additional step in the resolution of a land dispute. As we will see below, while a new platform for dispute resolution was created, in which women have a greater voice as arbiter and which may be more sensitive to gender equality, conflicts are still most often settled in favour of men.

Changing Women's Access to Land

Access to land for most Sierra Leoneans is guaranteed through their families. We identified two different possibilities for women to access family lands. On the one hand, if women marry in their own community, while gaining access to the land of their husband's family, they will also retain access to the lands of their own family. They may not use them or benefit from them while they are married, but they may retain access to those land in case of becoming a widow or divorcing. This is apparent as women interviewed, who are native from the chiefdom they live in, claim that their rights to access their land is given to them from their forefathers, while on the other hand, women married into another community or chiefdom will rather maintain that their access to land is given to them through their husband, that is, through their marriage into the land-owning family. While this study is limited to a small number of observations, it noted that there may be differences between the rights to access land enjoyed by native women and the ones enjoyed by women married into a family.

Marriage. While as we will see, it is possible for a single woman to receive a plot of land on her own, it is most common that upon marriage a couple will be allocated a plot of land by their respective land-owning families. The most common practice is to allocate a plot to a son of the family, while women will receive access to land through their husband.

It is possible for a recently married woman to receive land from her own family. In fact, half of the women in Rosint and most women in Matatie claimed that their daughters would receive a plot from

the family head upon marrying if they asked for it and stayed in their own community. This practice has, according to women interviewees, increased since the FAO intervention but is still not very common, as most often women will marry and gain access to lands through their husbands. On the other hand, the Focus Group Discussion in Matatie unanimously agreed that if a woman marries outside of her community, she would not receive a plot of land, as she should receive access to land through her husband.

Traditional leaders, that is chiefs, elders and family heads had diverging views regarding the issue, showing that the paradigm of women's access to land is transforming. Matatie's chief, who is a woman herself, clearly stated that a single woman cannot receive a plot of land upon request, while family heads and elders maintained that a single woman could if she respectfully asks for it and is perceived as hard-working; that is, she will develop or at least maintain the lands. Being married is, however, a strong advantage as women accompanied by a man or even sons will be regarded as more suitable to develop the plot. In fact, demands for land will always be handled from case to case by the family leadership who will assess based on its own criteria, which include the strength of the claim (Are the woman "begging for land"? Or are her parents/siblings esteemed members of the community?), how the request is done (including a gift to the family? Humble request), and the development perspective for the community (is the person hard-working? Does she have the means to develop the lands, build a dwelling).

Women can also access rights to manage lands through the head of household, that is most often a husband or an older sibling. All but two women interviewed expected the head of household to give them a plot of land to manage on their own, if they asked for it and in fact, two women have received their own plots which they can manage independently and from which they can freely use the earnings, to the benefit of the household. This practice has according to women interviewees also increased since the FAO intervention. Receiving household lands to manage does however not mean that they enjoy further exclusion or transfer rights.

In general, there is still reluctance to allow a single woman or even a married woman to acquire a plot of family land. This fact seems to stem from the fear of a family to have their lands claimed by a stranger. If a single woman who acquired family lands were to marry a man outside of the community and give birth to children, her lands would de facto be claimed by a stranger to the family and his children would also gain a legitimate claim. On the other hand, a married woman non-native from the community is expected to have access through her husband. Allocating a plot of land to her as sole owner may create a difficult situation in the case of her remarrying after the death of her husband or divorce.

Inheritance. The question of inheritance seems to be one of the issues most affected by the FAO intervention. Women interviewed perceived that in the past, women were victim of injustice and now demand to be fairly treated upon the death of their husbands. Several interviewees claim that before the intervention, a man's property would most often either return to the family as a unit or it would be inherited by the man's children, most of the time his sons. Widows would then depend on the family or their children to continue having access to the lands. The different rights, such as management or exclusion that they enjoyed as a wife may have thereby changed. The practice of widow inheritance – whereby women had to remarry a sibling of her deceased husband to continue having access to land and family resources – was also more widespread as women would indulge in it to keep access to the household lands.

Since the intervention, however, women beneficiaries as well as decision-makers interviewed such as family heads, chiefs, and elders confirmed that a woman does now inherit the property and land she had been using with her husband whilst he was alive; that is, she would keep the bundle of rights she

had enjoyed. Moreover, as expressed by the interviewees, even non-native women are now allowed to keep access and management rights, as long as they do not remarry and they are able to manage the lands. VALC members even assure this practice is now established in customary law and one of them stated that 60% goes to the family of the husband, while 40% to the wife. As none of the others confirmed this repartition, we observed that there is here again a slow change of paradigm within the two communities, whereby new norms are emerging on how to treat women equally in regard to land inheritance, but clear practices are not agreed on yet. Interviewees noted themselves the changes and one committee member explained that "the inheritance process has changed and many factors are being considered and taken into account on devolution of estates in the provinces." Thus, through the awareness trainings, the communities have learned about the national laws guiding the inheritance of properties and are adapting their local practices. Elders and chiefs of both villages agree that the likelihood widows will keep access to their household lands increased through the project.

Nonetheless, for a family to consider a woman for keeping the household lands, a major condition needs to be fulfilled. All interviewees are unanimous on the fact, that if a woman would remarry outside of the family, she would not be allowed to continue using the household lands, which would then be allocated to her children. Furthermore, many assume that for a woman to keep her household land, it is helpful, if not necessary to have given birth to children. Here again, it seems that rural community are averse to the idea of having a male individual, stranger to the community, and his descendants laying claim to their lands. Other interviewees emphasize that a cordial relationship between widows and their deceased husband's families is necessary in order for them to remain in the community.

In regard to daughters inheriting lands from their father, one of the by-laws adopted by both communities through the project in 2018 required that "equal opportunity should be given to both boys and girls to have access, own and control land." While most interviewees acknowledged that both sexes have the right to inherit properties and land equally from their parents, and that in some occasions, girls have received lands, they still see that there is a tendency to award smaller portions of land to girls as they are expected to marry and move to the husband's family where they will have access land through their husbands.

Finally, women beneficiaries observed an important change in regard to widows returning from other communities after the death of their husbands. In such occasions, when those women for any reason had to return to their community in Matatie or Rosint, they were given a plot of family land to manage and restart their life. Before the project, they would not be allocated their own plot but would rather be taken into their father's or brother's household.

Changing Women's Tenure Rights

Bundle of rights. In both communities, access rights to all lands, either community, family or household land is ensured to everybody through customary law, with few restrictions to the genders in regard to the sacred bushes.¹⁷ While native women from the community maintain that these access rights are given to them through their forefathers, women married into the community say that they acquired those rights through their husbands.

In Rosint, withdrawal rights, apart from the cutting of trees, is also given to all community members, who are allowed to gather water or firewood in any of the community, family or household lands. The situation in Matatie is more ambiguous as some women declare being able to gather wood anywhere,

¹⁷ Men are not allowed to pass through to the women secret society bush, while women do not have access to the men secret society bush.

while others seem to be limited to their family or household lands. We noticed however, that one of the women allowed to gather wood anywhere was of rather high "status," being an elder of her family and part of the village council.

In general, management rights to land such as planting or building a dwelling, are enjoyed at household lands level, and most of them are held by the household head. While women do participate in decisions regarding the time and location of planting and the type of crops, or the construction of a dwelling, it is most often the head of household – in all interviews the husband or father – who takes final decisions. All interviewees unanimously maintained that tasks such as planting cash crop trees and cutting trees for charcoal or other purposes remains firmly in the hands of men. In some occasions, women mentioned that even the household head had to consult the family head or family elders before planting or cutting trees. This constrain comes from the fact that an individual will have a stronger claim on a plot of land after having transformed and especially developed it through cash crops or a dwelling, and thus needs to consult the family first.

Nonetheless, since begin of the project, the number of women who have acquired a plot of land to farm (that is access, use, control and manage) on their own has increased significantly. While one woman received a plot from the family to plant the seeds received, others have negotiated to receive a plot of household land, and finally in Matatie, women formed a cooperative to plant and harvest together. Several interviewees expressed that such practices were not as widespread before implementation of the project, especially the awareness trainings and the distribution of seed. We thus observe a small shift towards women's independence to manage their own plots.

In regard to earnings through land assets, or as labelled in our study, Fructus rights, changes seem also to have occurred as some women beneficiaries of the project claimed that while they did not receive a share of the earnings of harvest's sales before, they do now. Nonetheless, while the majority of women interviewed sell the product of the harvest on local markets, they will hand over the earnings to their husbands, who in some occasions will give them back a share. Half of the women further clarified that they together with their husbands make decisions regarding how the money will be invested. Furthermore, as mentioned above, some women have now received full management rights of small plots of lands and thus do also now profit of the earnings which they can independently invest to the benefit of the household.

In case of household lands or family lands being leased, all women are confident that they would receive their fair share of the rent, as long as the land is not pledged to repay a family debt. The situation has, however, only occurred in the case of one of the interviewees.

Transfer rights, that is, the right to allocate, lease, rent, or pledge lands are held by the family as a unit in case of family land and to the household as unit in case of household land. As mentioned, allocation to a family member or lease to a stranger are usually decided in participatory meetings, but each family may have its own procedures. As we have seen above, in both communities, the perception of all stakeholders, is that women are now highly involved in this consultative process in comparison to before the FAO-intervention.

In general, women still cannot transfer any of their rights to another person on their own. Access and withdrawal rights are regulated at community level through customary laws and practices, and management rights can only be given by the head of household. Women will often be consulted by their husbands before taking a decision though. In this regard, they may together allow somebody else to use their own land for farming. There is an increasing understanding among men for the necessity to include their wives in such decisions, mainly in order to avoid conflicts. Only one of the interviewees, an elder widow, part of the village council, claimed having all the rights of ownership, saying that

although her son, a married father himself, was the head of household, he was not mature enough to take such decisions. Finally, women do not seem to enjoy any exclusion rights. As is the case with transfer rights, the exclusion of other people to access or manage their lands lay in the hand of either the community or the head of family/household, in consultation with other stakeholders, including women to a certain extent.

In regard to who shall inherit a woman's land upon her death, also referred to as future rights, most women expected and also wanted their husband and thus, through him, their children to inherit both any lands allocated to herself and household lands shared with her husband. Some women however, especially the ones in a polygamous relationship, confided wanting their children and not their husband to inherit the lands as they would fear on the one hand, that the husband may disown her own children in favour of others that he prefers and on the other hand, that he may remarry and thus her children may lose on inheriting the lands. The fact however remains, that women cannot influence who will inherit their household lands upon their deaths, while men may leave an oral will. While interviewees assert that a daughter's prospects to inherit from her father increased through the project, it seems the intervention did not change the women's limited opportunity to influence how the lands she accessed, controlled, or owned will be inherited.

Duration of tenure. In regard to the duration of a women's claim to land, all stakeholders perceived significant changes, especially in regard to inheritance. While women were subject to discriminating practices such as widow inheritance or becoming dependent on their children, norms have now changed towards a more legitimate claim by women to a deceased husband's lands. Conditions, such as having given birth to children and staying in the community still have to be fulfilled, but women have internalized their right to inheritance and are willing to defend it with the means at their disposition.

Divorce. Divorce was a debatable issue among the interviewees as answers ranged from women not receiving any portion of land to others expecting an equal partition of properties. As the chief of Matatie explained, "Women have no rights to land when they divorce, unless the government [through the legal aid board] intervenes. There is however no law that guarantees that a woman can receive lands." We know that divorce in statutory law is guided through the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, 2007, which in turn recognizes customary law as dictating the terms of divorce. As Matatie's chief explains, customary law does not guarantee that a woman will receive land. Therefore, in case of disputes, the community, through the family, or in case of escalation through traditional leaders or a local court will settle the issue, which explains the different observations of the interviewees.

In the focus group discussions, women were unanimous that if a woman divorces from her husband, her lands "will be taken away from her." In case she gave birth to children, she may keep access to lands through them, however creating a very tense relationship between her ex-husband, her children, and herself.

One elder of the community said the property is divided equally between the man and woman or women, regardless of conditions leading to the divorce or the presence of children. Another elder said that the woman will receive a portion of land only if she bought the land together with her husband but not if she met her husband already owning the lands in discussion. Two other elders said that if a divorcing woman has children the family may give her a plot but will not if she has not given birth yet. While different decision-makers from the village chief to the family elders may be included in a divorce settlement, the VALC is recognized by the interviewees as a central instance. In this regard, all female VALC members postulated that the property is shared equally (half/half) even in a polygamous set up, while the male members said that either part of the property will be given to the children, and that

thus women will keep access through the children or that she may be financially compensated if she decides to go back to her native family.

Finally, most other interviewees (women leaders, family heads) clarified that a woman may receive a small share of the lands upon divorce, only if she had children with her husband or if she and her husband acquired the lands together, but that this share will . If she remarries or leaves the community, she will lose any claim to the lands in question.

Here again, we observe that, while there seem to be a change of norms, customary laws have not adapted yet, and thus, actors involved have different views on how issues should be settled.

V. Analysis: Is there an Improvement in Women's Tenure Security?

Enjoyment of the Bundle of Rights

Through the various interventions of the project, such as awareness raising, livelihood support to women, the creation of land committees, and the mapping of family and household plots, women have gained access to more land than they had before. It seems that in conjunction, the awareness raising activities, by clarifying that women should have the same rights to make decisions on land use and the supply of farming inputs and agricultural trainings to women, paved the way for married women to manage their own plot of lands. While the plots obtained remain small, the women can independently decide what, where, and when to plant, and most importantly, they have acquired the rights to the earnings of harvest sales. We can, therefore, argue that women have gained access, withdrawal, management, and some fructus rights to additional lands through the project.

In regard to acquiring further rights from the bundle of rights, results give a mixed picture. While women who received their own plot to manage may have gained management and fructus rights for those smaller plots, they did not significantly gain further rights on the remaining lands. In general, the traditional gendered division of tasks has not been changed and men continue to make important management decisions, such as cutting trees, planting cash crops, or building a dwelling. This fact is significant since latter activities indicate that the plot of land has been developed. The propensity that a plot of land will be developed is often a criterium for the family head and his/her advisor to decide to which individual it will be allocated. On the other hand, the fact that an individual has developed his/her land asserts a higher claim to keep them or inherit them to descendants. Therefore, because men are traditionally performing the tasks leading to the development of the land, they will be regarded as more prone to receive lands and subsequently be in the position to lay a more legitimate claim to them.

While some women claimed receiving now a share of the household earnings, to which they contribute significantly, the decision is still dependent on the discretion of their husband or head of household. Women can influence decisions taken on the use of the household budget, which, however, seems not to be an achievement of the project, but the final decisions are still always taken by men.

Allocation of Land to Women

Although by-laws have been adopted to ensure that boys and girls have equal access to land and some interviewees assure that equality is guaranteed, others make it plain that boys are still preferred in regard to inheritance and that women marrying into another community will have access to land in their husband's community. The tendency remains, therefore, to allocate a plot of land to a male family

member and it seems that the underlying causes of such decisions by the family leadership are deep rooted.

Decision Making Processes

Due to the limited understanding of family and household meetings in this study, we will refrain to claim that women have gained any rights to transfer lands. There is however a clear perception by all stakeholders, including the concerned women, that they have been attending family meetings and that their opinions and views are heard during those meetings.

Finally, women have not gained the authority to entitle to or exclude anybody from the rights that they enjoy.

Duration of Tenure Rights

Neither a legal provision nor a customary practice seems to exist which can protect divorcing women. The perception of women in the community is that they will not be able to keep their tenure rights in case of a divorce, or in the best of cases access can be provided by a benevolent husband, only if children came out of the relationship. On the one hand, men seem to fear that women would take advantage of acquiring lands through divorce by remarrying and divorcing several husbands. On the other hand, as mentioned above, we argue that there is an aversion to the idea of a woman remarrying with a stranger from the community and laying claim to land of his wife. Thus, the situation for divorcing women remained unchanged, and continues to put them in a difficult, discriminating situation.

Finally, the fact that women who married into another community can regain access to land in Matatie and Rosint in the event of losing it in their family-in-law, does strongly increase tenure security. We, however, expect this practice not to be only newly applied through the project.

Robustness of Tenure Rights

Through the interviews conducted, we argue that the land tenure security *robustness* of women in the target communities has increased. On the one hand, women are aware of the statutory rights they should enjoy, especially regarding a just inheritance of their husband's land in accordance to the Devolution of Estates Act, 2007. On the other hand, their claim is based on a cultural, customary basis, that they also belong to the same families and thus should not be treated unfairly. Women are aware of the mechanisms available to them to enforce their rights to land and are willing to make use of those. Nonetheless, their understanding of land ownership is that they can independently make decisions in regard to managing their lands and enjoying the benefits. While this comprehension is not inaccurate, it may omit further rights such as transfer, exclusion or future rights.

Men and duty bearers seem also to have to a certain extent, accepted the fact that women's tenure rights should be respected equally to men. As a VALC member explained in Matatie: "We thought that we were more important than them [women], but through this training it gave us awareness that we are equal in terms of decision making, rights to own and access land."

In order to enforce their rights to tenure, women continue to rely mainly on local institutions or individual decision-makers, due most often to a financial constraint, mistrust in corrupt state institutions, or fears of shaming the family. The project has however offered new possibilities for women to claim their rights. Having human rights organizations observing the situation of women's tenure rights in their communities has given women the awareness that they could be heard if they

feel unjustly treated, without generating financial costs, but however involving strangers to the community into the dispute. The VALC on the other hand offer a local instance for women to ask for help, in which women are also represented as arbiter. Taken together, those two instances have further reduced the feeling of impunity perceived by men who disregard women's tenure rights, as a respondent in Matatie put it: "The "wickedness" from man to women reduced, by creating fear in men to handle their women badly. They would fear consequences if they don't allow women access to lands or [inherit land]."

VI. Conclusion

The 2018 project implemented by the FAO in cooperation with Sierra Leonean organization in Matatie and Rosint, among other villages, intended to ensure that rural women are better able to negotiate their rights of access, use, and ownership of land by strengthening their capacity to understand their rights and to self-advocate for the protection of their customary land rights, as well as eliminate discriminatory barriers through improved reforms in land rights governance.

We assess that women in the two villages analysed have indeed slightly gained access to lands by receiving household plots for individual management or community plots for management as a women's cooperative.

On the other hand, we argue that women did not significantly gain on the rights included in the bundle of rights to tenure. Gendered work tasks not only continue to keep women away from management rights, but also diminishes their legitimate claims to the lands they access. Tasks such as clearing forest, cutting trees, planting cash crops, or building a dwelling – which represent development, that is, an increase of value of a land plot and which make a claim to a family plot more legitimate – are still clearly reserved to men. It could be argued that the increased inclusion of women in family meetings represents an increase of their transfer rights. As we cannot confirm that women can influence the traditionally very patriarchal allocation of land to family members through their participation, we will however refrain from assuming that they gained such rights. We can however confirm that women perceive being treated more justly as they are consulted before such decisions are taken. We further argue that the *duration* of women's tenure rights slightly increased due to a slow change in inheritance norms. While in both villages, the perception that wives and daughters are more justly treated, is shared among all actors, it seems that no decision has been formally challenged yet. We thus still expect disputes to arise when women will challenge the existing structures to uphold this perceived change in inheritance norms.

Finally, we argue that the creation of Village Area Land Committees and the presence of civil society organizations in the communities has offered new opportunities for women to complain and demand to be treated fairly in regard to land issues.

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Annex 1: Questionnaires

1.1 Annex 1.1: Individual Questionnaires

Women's Tenure Rights – Individual Questionnaires			
What is your full name?			
What is the name of the Family owning the land that you use?			
How are you related to this family?			
What is the name of your head of household?			
How are you related to the head of household?			
What is your marital status? (Married, single, widowed, separated)			
How many children do you have? How many sons? How many daughters?			
Do you have children from a previous marriage, adopted children or children of a relative?			
Are you native of this chiefdom?			
	Community Lands	Family Lands	Household lands
Can you describe the lands that you use or own? Size, type of land, use, type of crops planted?			
Are any of your lands leased to a company?			
What are your most valuable lands? How are they most valuable to you?			
Access rights			
Which lands can you pass through?			
How did you acquire this right? Or Who gives this right to you?			
Do season changes affect your access to those lands?			
Withdraw rights			
In which lands can you gather fire wood or use the water sources?			
How did you acquire this right? Or Who gives you this right?			
Management rights			
Which kind of lands ¹⁸ can you use for planting?			

¹⁸ Upland farms, 'bolilands' (lowland depressions that flood each year), swamps, tree-crop plantations, fallow bush areas, backyard gardens and 'battilands' (lowlands and riverine grasslands)

Who decides what and when to plant on those lands? Are you part of those decisions?			
Are you allowed to plant trees for cultivation? What kind of trees? Who decides which trees should be planted? Are you part of those decisions?			
Can you decide which trees to cut down? (if no, who decides?)			
Are you allowed to construct irrigation facilities on the household land? Who makes the decision where, how and when those facilities should be built? Are you part of those decisions?			
Do you have the right to build a dwelling on the household land? Who decides to build on that land? Are they any conditions?			
Did you notice any differences in harvest between when FAO brought the seeds and other years? How?			
How did the harvest of the FAO seeds affect your participation in deciding what, when and where to plant?			
When you received FAO seeds, did you decide where and when to plant them? Who took this decision? (your husband? both your husband and yourself? your husband alone? the family head?)			
This year (no FAO seeds), could you decide where, when and which seeds to plant? Were you part of this decision?			
Fructus rights			
Who harvests the lands that you planted?			
Who decides when to harvest? (your husband? You and your husband? You alone? The family head?)			
Do you sell the harvest on the market? (if no, who?)			
Who decides on how to use the earnings of the harvest sells?			
Was there any differences with the earnings of the harvest of FAO seeds?			
If some of the lands are leased by the head of family, would you receive a share of the lease?			
Transfer rights			
Can you allow another person to gather water or firewood on the lands? (if no, who can make those decisions?) Are you part of those decisions?			
Can you allow another person to cut down trees on those lands? (if no, who?) Are you part of those decisions?			
Can you allow another person to cultivate plants and harvest those lands? (if no, who?) Are you part of those decisions?			
Can you make decisions to sell, lease or lend the lands to another person? (if no, who?) Are you part of those decisions?			

If your family intends to lease a part of their family lands, would you be part of this decision?			
Future interest			
Will you be able to continue using those lands exactly the same way if the head of family/head of household of the lands dies? Who or what will decide that you keep those rights?			
What will happen to your lands if you die (<i>before your husband</i>)?			
What do you think should happen to your lands when if you die (<i>before your husband</i>)?			
(<i>If husband</i>) Who do you think will receive your household lands if your husband dies?			
(<i>If husband</i>) Who do you think should get your household lands if your husband dies?			
Will your children inherit your lands when you and your husband die? Will boys and girls benefit equally?			
Right to exclude			
Can you prohibit people from passing through your household lands or to gather fire wood? Who makes those decisions?			
Can you allow people to farm on your lands? Who makes those decisions?			
Acquire land			
Would the head of family/head of household agree to give you a plot of land if you asked him?			
When your daughter marries, will she receive a plot of family land if she asks for it?			
If your daughter would ask your head of household for a plot of household land, how would he/she react? Do you think she would receive it?			
(<i>If husband</i>) Would your husband agree to give you your own plot of land?			
Disputes			
(<i>If husband</i>) If you disagree on decisions regarding the household land with your husband, can you complain to somebody?			
If you disagree how your household land are inherited after your husband dies, can you complain? To whom? Do you think that your complaint can be successful?			
Decision-making			
When your family decides to allocate a plot of land to a member of the family, are you included in those decisions?			
If your family decides to lease a plot of land to a stranger, are you included in this decision?			
FAO related			
You participated in Green Scenery's trainings on land rights, what do you recall from those trainings?			

Did those trainings change anything for you?	
Do you know the existence of the Village Land Area Committee?	
Did anything change since the creation of this committee in regard to your right to use and own land?	
Do you know if there are any by-laws that protect the right of women to own land in this village?	
Two by-laws were adopted in 2018: - Women belonging to land holding families should have equal access and control over land inherited from their parents - Equal opportunity should be given to both boys and girls to have access, own and control land Did anything change since those by laws were adopted?	
How has mapping the land of your family and household affected your community?	

Questions in blue will only be asked to the women who benefitted from the FAO/Green Scenery project in 2018.

1.2 Annex 1.2. Focus Group Discussion Questionnaires

Women's Tenure Rights – Focus Group Discussion questionnaires
What is the name of your village?
Which Family do you belong to?
How many of you are native of this chiefdom?
Do women own land on their own? (If yes, what do you understand by owning?)
Do you have shared family lands for planting? When the planting season comes, how is it decided what seeds, where and when to plant on the family lands? Are women part of those decisions?
In regard to the household lands, how is it decided what seeds, where and when to plant? Are women part of those decisions?
What about cash crops and crop trees? How is it decided what seeds, where and when to plant? Are women part of those decisions?
In 2018 women of your village received seeds and tools through Green Scenery's project. Could they decide where and when to plant those seeds?
Was it different from other years? If yes, why?
When harvest times comes, who will participate in the harvest?
Do women sell the products of the harvest themselves? Do they get their own share of earnings?

Was it different in the year when you received seeds from Green Scenery?
Can a single woman own a plot of family land on her own?
If a woman asks her husband for her own portion of household land to plant, how would he react? Would she receive a piece of land?
If a woman asked the family head of her native family for her own portion of land to plant, how would he react? Would she receive a piece of land?
If a woman asked the family head of her husband's family for her own portion of land to plant, how would he react? Would she receive a piece of land?
When your daughters will marry, will they receive a plot of land from your family or the family of your husband?
Is a woman able to continue using the household lands exactly the same way she used to if her husband dies? Who or what will decide that she keep those rights?
Will a woman inherit the household lands if her husband dies? (If no, who will inherit those lands?)
Will children boys and girls of a diseased be considered equally to inherit the lands of their father/mother when they die?
If some of your family lands would be leased to somebody, would you get a share of the rent? (yourself or through your husband?)
When a family decides to allocate a plot of land to a member of the family, are women included in those decisions? Or do they take part in those meetings?
If a family wants to lease lands to a stranger, will women be consulted? Or take part in the meetings where those decisions are taken?
Most of you attended the Green Scenery trainings on land rights? What do you recall from those trainings? What did you learn in those trainings?
Did anything change for you as individuals or as community since you participated in those trainings?
Do you know the existence of the Village Land Area Committee?
Did anything change since the creation of this committee in regard to your right to use and own land?
Do you know if there are any by-laws that protect the right of women to own land in this village?
Two by-laws were adopted in 2018: - Women belonging to land holding families should have equal access and control over land inherited from their parents - Equal opportunity should be given to both boys and girls to have access, own and control land Did anything change since those by-laws were adopted?

If a woman disagrees with her husband on decisions regarding the household lands, can she complain to anybody?
If a woman disagrees how the household land are inherited after her husband dies, can she complain? To whom? Do you think that the complaint can be successful?
How has mapping the land of your family and household in 2018 affected your community?

Questions in blue will only be asked to the women who benefitted from the FAO/Green Scenery project in 2018.

1.3 Annex 1.3: Questionnaires to Stakeholders

Questions	Chief	Chief Wife	Women leader	Family head	Elders	VALC member	CSOs
How many hectares of land does the village possess?	x				x		x
How many families are living in the village?	x				x		x
Are they community lands? How big are they?	x				x		
How are the community lands managed? Who makes decision on how they should be used? Do women participate in those decisions?	x	x	x		x		x
Who can access the community lands? Who can gather resources from those lands?	x	x	x		x		
How much bush land, swamps, boliland, secret society lands is there?	x						
Where is the village and its lands situated? Near a lake, river, street?	x						x
Has any land been sold or leased to strangers, investors in the last 5 years?	x			x	x		x
Do by-laws regarding land tenure exist?	x				x	X	
Can a single woman own a plot of family land on her own?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x
If a woman asks the family head for a piece of land, would she receive it?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x
What happens to a woman after her husband dies, in regard to the lands? Can she inherit them? Are they conditions?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x
Will children boys and girls of a diseased be considered equally to inherit the lands of their father/mother when they die?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x
Can girls inherit lands from their fathers?							
What happens after a woman and her husband divorce, in regard to the lands? Can she keep some of them? Are they conditions?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x
When a family decides to allocate a plot of land to a member of the family, are women included in those decisions? Or do they take part in those meetings?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x

If a family wants to lease lands to a stranger, will women be consulted? Or take part in the meetings where those decisions are taken?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x
Questions	Chief	Chief wife	Women leader	Family head	Elders	VLAC member	CSOs
Has Something changed for women since Green Scenery came? That is since the boundary mapping, the VALC and the by-laws?	x	x	x	x	x	X	x
How would you describe the task of the VALC?	x					X	
Did the VALC change something for women farmers?	x					X	
Has the VALC already played a role in resolving land disputes?						X	
Did any women complain to the VALC in relation to a land conflict? If Yes: Have those conflicts been resolved in favour of the woman?						X	
How did the training received by FAO impact your capacities to solve land conflict?						X	
Are the women's opinion respected within the VALC?						x	
Do you think women have been treated more equally in regard to land ownership since the VALC? Do you have any example?	x	x	x			x	
Two by-laws were adopted in 2018: - Women belonging to land holding families should have equal access and control over land inherited from their parents - Equal opportunity should be given to both boys and girls to have access, own and control land Did anything change since those by laws were adopted?	x		x		x	x	x
How has mapping the land of your family and household affected your community?	x		x	x	x	x	
Did anything change since the creation of the Village Land Area Committees?	x	x	x	x	x	x	x