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Large-Scale Agricultural Land Development in Post-war Liberia: Investigating the Golden Veroleum and Sime Darby Palm Oil Plantations

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Abstract

The present research examines the impact of the large-scale agricultural land developments in post-war Liberia, particularly investigating Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum palm plantations. Liberia experienced two civil wars, one from 1989 to 1996 and another from 1999 to 2003. And since the civil conflict ended in 2003, the country is slowly transforming into a peaceful democratic country that it once was. The nation's development and means of dealing with its multitude of problems, depends heavily on aids, loans and the foreign direct investments from other countries. However, the country has its own tax regime and revenue generating mechanisms but they are dependent on the constant inflow of foreign investment to keep the entire nation a little bet above budgetary shortfall and economic hardship (Liberia National Investment Commission, 2016). Against these backdrops, two palm oil plantation companies called Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum were permitted Liberia. Sime Darby has it's headquarters in Malaysia whereas Golden Veroleum has it's headquarters in Indonesia. Golden Veroleum mainly operates in Sinoe county and Sime Darby operates in Cape Mount county. These two companies advocate that they have vowed to contribute to the development and economic growth of Liberia especially in communities where they have their agriculture plantations. However, local inhabitants on the other hand argued that they were not involved in the initial negotiations of the land deals between the government of Liberia and the management teams of these companies. In this regard, this paper attempts to examine the two investment entities, talk to major actors, local workers in the two agribusiness companies, and hear the narratives of local inhabitants within areas of these large-scale agricultural land development projects of Golden Veroleum and Sime Darby palm oil plantations respectively. Qualitative interviews were conducted and responses were coded thematically before analysis. The findings of the study revealed that promises given by the foreign investors to the local inhabitants about employment opportunities, compensations, development of infrastructural facilities were not met.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Liberia is a country in West Africa, which is bordered by Atlantic Ocean in the South, Ivory Coast in the east, Guinea in the north, and Sierra Leone in the west. On July 26, 1847, Liberia was declared as an independent nation. Thus, this country became the oldest independent country in the history of Africa but remains one of the poorest and underdeveloped land. According to (CIA Factbook 2016 Report on Liberia) and (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017) latest census taken in Liberia in July 2017 estimated the population at 4.73 million people. There are 16 ethnic groups and 15 counties in Liberia, it is also enriched with many resources like fish, oil, diamond, gold, etc. The country is one of Africa's poorest countries with one of the highest illiteracy and unemployment rate as well.

Liberia experienced two bloody civil wars, one from 1989 to 1996 and another from 1999 to 2003. These wars hampered the development of Liberia as a prosperous nation and heavily affected the country in many sectors. Now, Liberia is slowly transforming into a democratic country. The recent incidence of deadly Ebola virus took its toll on the societal and financial sectors of Liberia.

Liberia, for its development and for dealing with multitude of problems, depends heavily on the foreign direct investments from other countries. Liberia, as a nation, is striving hard to walk in the path of progress; however, the corrupt practices that are prevalent all over the country, lack of accountability, and the dearth of skilled manpower are the chief factors that become the stumbling blocks in the path of progress.

In this scenario, two palm oil plantation companies called Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum entered Liberia. Sime Darby is headquartered in the country of Malaysia whereas Golden Veroleum is headquartered in Indonesia. Golden Veroleum functions in Sinoe county and Sime Darby functions in Cape Mount county. These two companies had gotten their licenses from the government of Liberia and they had entered into agreements with the government for acquisition of about 1.5 million acres of agricultural lands for about 60 years. Since then, these two companies hogged the country's news headlines, as the people living within the counties of these two palm plantations revolt against the two companies. The local people in the plantations denounced that they were not included in the discussions between the

managements of the companies and Liberian government on the acquisition of agricultural lands. The local people have no knowledge of the terms and conditions in the agreement between the government and the companies. They do not have any information on the benefits that will be shared among the parties to the agreement and they do not know what such benefits will mean to them.

Further, there is another side to this issue. These two big agricultural projects can cause significant impact on the environment in these plantations. These projects can have an effect on the food security of the local people and the natural resources like land and water.

On the contrary, these two companies advocate that they have vowed to contribute to the socioeconomic growth of Liberia where they are doing their businesses (Sime Darby Plantation, 2015; Golden Veroleum Liberia, 2014) They claim that they are providing employment opportunities, starting schools, building roads and bridges, and taking up many infrastructure projects. However, it will be interesting to explore whether the cost overheads for these developmental activities can be justified while considering the revenues generated out of these two large agricultural projects. The local people say that they were not called for the discussion; on the other hand, only a few bureaucrats from the management of the companies and Liberian government were involved in the talks (Evans & Griffiths, 2013). In this setting, the local people suspect that this could be a sort of “land grabbing” or “accumulation by dispossession,” which has the potentiality of undermining their food security, forest, land, water and overall livelihood. In this line of thought, it is pertinent to note that if a government does not involve the people in its policy decisions, which have the possibility of affecting their livelihood and on the other hand wants the people concerned to come to terms with whatever is discussed, such act will definitely have a bearing on their lives (McNeill et al., 2012).

In this background, this research is being carried out to bring to light the facts related to these two palm plantation companies. Further, this research will bring forth the facts on the sharing of advantages and on the social and economic aspects, thereby providing a win-win situation for all the parties involved (Sayer et al., 2012b).

1.2 Problem Statement

The large-scale agricultural projects carried out by Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum instigated the local people living in these plantation areas and they revolted against the two companies Penikett and Park (2013) because they think that the two companies grabbed their lands unjustly, as they were not involved in the negotiations on the land deals between the government of Liberia and the management teams of these companies. According to Balachandran et al.(2013), the local communities are worried about their food security because of the acquisition of their lands by these two companies, since there is a competition between the people and the companies for the resources (land, water, forest ect). The people are also saying that the terms and conditions should be discussed once again involving themselves. In addition, there is a potentiality of infringement of the human rights.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to study the impact of the large-scale agricultural land developments in postwar Liberia, particularly investigating Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum palm plantations. The best suited approach will be utilized to study the aim of this research. The objectives of this research are follows:

- To research the effect of these large-scale land projects on the water and food security of the people.
- To study the impact of mono-agriculture on the environment of Sinoe and Grand Cape Mount counties.
- To research the positive and negative implications on the social and economic aspects of the people in these plantations.
- To determine the winners and losers of these land deals.
- To research the terms and conditions of the agreement as to the resource and property.
- To study how the people of Liberia will benefit from these two palm plantations and the utility of the palm products.
- To research how the win-win situation can be reached among all the parties involved in these two large land projects.

1.4 Scope and Significance of the Research

The scope of this research pertains to the two palm plantation companies called Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum and their large-scale agricultural land deals with the government of Liberia. This research will study the actual problems in these land deals and their implications and impact on the people of Liberia, particularly the local communities living at these two palm plantations. This research also investigates the facts behind the agreements between the managements of these companies and Liberian government.

It is believed that this study will augment the present information and data with respect to the large-scale land development projects in the developing world. More often, the land grabbing comes in the disguise of large land projects, but actually turns out to be land dispossession ultimately (Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012). This research will investigate the actual fact in these projects.

1.5 Chapter scheme

The current research will have the chapter planning as stated under:

Chapter I- The first chapter of the current study is the Introduction where the explanatory information on the research topic has been provided coverage. Furthermore, the problem statement, the aim and objectives of the research and the scope and significance of the research are elaborated.

Chapter II- The second chapter is the Literature Review where the earlier studies in the context relevant to the current study are elaborated and deliberated. In this section, a descriptive elaboration on the notions of large-scale agricultural land development, notions of foreign direct investment and related core issues, why is Africa the destination FDI?, impact of large-scale land development on local people, glimpse on the issues related to Golden Veroleum and Sime Darby palm plantations, and research gap can be found.

Chapter III- The third chapter is the Research Methodology section. This section explains the kinds of research methodology undertaken in the current study which states how the data are collected and analysed, and the type of approach utilised.

Chapter IV- The fourth chapter is the Results section. The results of the current research are covered and the facts behind these two large-scale land projects are elicited and analysed in this section.

Chapter V- The fifth chapter has been the discussion and conclusion section where the outcomes of the current research are explored in order to analyse the significance of impact of these projects on the people in the two plantations. Moreover, the conclusions of the study are extracted and suggestions for upcoming researches are divulged.

1.6 Summary

The present chapter covers the background of the research, the research aims and objectives, the problem statement, the scope and significance of the research and the chapter scheme associated with the present research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the recent times, there has been a growing interest for investment in the agricultural economy of the developing countries, especially in the African nations. Many African countries are the destinations of this type of investment (Hallam, 2009) and the nation of Liberia is no exception. Liberia is one of the African nations, which is blessed with the abundant natural resources (Sirleaf, 2011) and hence attracts international community to invest money. This Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) does of course invite some conflicts and confrontations in the country. The entry of the foreign companies, Golden Veroleum and Sime Darby, marks such confrontations among the public of Liberia, as their investment causes some apprehensions, confusion, and doubts in the minds of the people of Sinoe County and Cape Mount County (Font Page Africa, 2015).

This literature review sheds light on the general notions of large-scale agricultural land development, notions of FDI and related core issues, why Africa is the destination of FDI, impact on local people, glimpse on the issues related to Golden Veroleum and Sime Darby Palm Plantations, and research gap.

2.2 Notions of Large-scale Agricultural Land Development

There has been a constant argument in the scholarly world with respect to land acquisition for the investment in agricultural sector and this argument highlights a point whether such an acquisition or large-scale land development for the investment purposes creates a win-win situation (Sayer et al., 2012a) or this so-called development has been a masqueraded land grabbing activity by the foreign countries to create colonialism. This discussion is two-pronged; one for and another against. The foreign direct investment in the agricultural sector will bring in the development in the poorest nations, especially in the context of African nations. The GDP of Liberia was at two billion dollars in 2015 (Trading Economics, 2017) and the economy of Liberia cannot grow without the foreign investment, as the percentage of dependency is 90%. Hence the investment from the international community is important for the poor nations like Liberia. On the contrary, such investment has its own disadvantages and dangers. The people who are living traditionally generation after generation

will be driven out of their own land and there is a danger of being reduced to insignificant minority group of people.

The supporters of the large-scale land development argue that the poor nations can take advantage of the benefit by maximizing their foreign exchange economy thereby acquiring new business benefits and access to new international markets. This argument is supported by the view that the administrating governments of these developing countries cannot raise the economy on their own because of the dearth of infrastructure. Thus the foreign investment in the agricultural economy of these nations will develop their infrastructure. Allowing the foreign countries in a country's agricultural businesses can raise the nation's agricultural produce. There is an advantage of the introduction of new techniques and sophistication in the agriculture. The agriculturists of the country can learn new practices and techniques and hence their yield will be higher than before. This will definitely steady the price of the food and this will help the local as well as global markets. Another advantage of this land development is to generate new job opportunities in the rural areas. There will be plenty of agricultural jobs and other farm-dependent jobs available for the people and this will definitely raise their livelihood. There will be improvement in the countryside infrastructure. New educational institutions and hospitals can be built for the benefit of the people. These developments can happen only when all the dealings take place in an open fashion and the privileges of the local people are also addressed. This will create a win-win situation for both the local people and investors and both the parties can enjoy the fruits of this endeavour.

On the other hand, those who are critical of the large-scale agricultural land development state that this will impact the lives of the local people and ecosystems (Cotula et al., 2009; Braun & Meinzen-Dick, 2009; Daniel & Mittal, 2009). At the outset, the contracts and other relevant documents will approve of the well-being of the investors rather than local people, as the corporates have got an enormous power of negotiation with the local government and the top bureaucrats of the administration. When their negotiation is fruitful, the corporates will try to relocate the indigenous people of the land and the assured growth and infrastructure will be far from reality.

It has been periodically observed that giving away the lands to the corporates may violate human rights. According to Schutter (2009), the governments will deprive their local people of their access to food and livelihood and push them to abject misery, if they sell off or give away the lands on agreements to the corporates. Such act will also deprive the

administrative government of its power and authority on the lands and hence the bureaucrats will act only in the interest of these corporates (German et al., 2011).

The perils of acquiring land for the large-scale land development should be discussed often and these dangers should be minimized in order for the host nation to have a sustained development. If this is not done, this acquisition will become a curse to the nation and this will lead to a flurry of multifaceted complex issues (Robertson & Pinstrop-Andersen, 2010). There is a danger of overlooking the civil rights and benefits of local indigenous people and demolishing their prospects of future lives in the race of ushering the nation towards food security and building of infrastructure (Kachika, 2010). While many such development projects proposed by the foreign countries target the world's poorest nations where the public are already traumatized by the substandard living conditions, frequent wars, and lack of access to basic amenities, these projects do not greatly help the hosting countries, but they indeed serve the interest of the countries from where such projects originate and lead to a sort of neo-colonialism. Recent researches held in some East African countries expose that assured growth like nation-building and employment opportunities did not take place (Theting & Brekke, 2010).

In addition to the above issues, certain large-scale land projects may lead to unstable government and volatility. These projects could deter the political stability of the hosting country. As an instance, Madagascar government was overthrown because of a deal with Daewoo. These large-scale projects will run over the lives of the indigenous people and it will not ultimately offer the benefit for which such deals are materialised.

2.3 Notions of Foreign Direct Investment and Related Core Issues

The trend in the foreign direct investment (FDI) is linked to food security. This is aggravated by the latest climb in the prices of food materials, the apprehension in the market due to change in the policy of export, and the dependency. The countries, which have limited water and land resources, but have growing population, development, sophistication, per capita income try to allay their shortcomings by re-strategizing their policies. Hence, investing in the countries where the resources are aplenty is the solution for them. Such ventures are welcome by the administration of these host countries. The same reason underlies the investments to manufacture agricultural raw materials to uphold the level of output of processing industries. The corporates outside the host nations with food security issues or needing the inputs of

agricultural raw materials for processing also benefit from the prospects of portfolio diversification into food production deals, essentially because the return on investment or ROI from other ventures are less profitable. Certain global corporates are attracted by the profits provided by the biofuel ventures. Many investment funds like the Africa Transformational Agri Fund (DAFML, 2017) have lately been begun to catalyse the investment in African agricultural sector with certain funds addressing the societal and economical goals.

Certain developing nations are trying hard to bring in FDI in many of their sectors especially agricultural sector. For such nations, FDI is being viewed as a significantly vital provider to cement the gap in the investment, even though it is not certain to determine whether such investments can meet their goals really. The economic advantages that the hosting nations can get because of the land transfers do not often seem to be great. The rents for the land can be less or can be zero. If many concessions for the FDI are given, then it means that the revenues from the lands are lost. But, FDIs are often viewed as possibly offering the progressive benefits by means of various ways like sharing the technology, job offers, and nation-building measures.

2.3.1 Alternatives to Foreign Direct Investment

Investing in the land projects often safeguard the nations with land and water resource constraints from food security issues. These investments should be viewed under broad context of food security strategies in general. A number of other areas including generation of local food supplies, economic tools to control risk, mutual pacts containing counter-trade and development of global food market data systems can lead to energising the food security for resource-restrained food importers. Investment could be made in most sought-after infrastructure and avenues, which currently limit the developing nation's agriculture much, essentially in Sub-Saharan Africa. Such mechanism in addition to the best endeavours to develop the competence and dependability of global markets as sources of food could increase the food security by means of widening the manufacturing and trading capabilities. These initiatives can be same as the formal developmental aid, however with an indirect advantage to the givers by means of boosted export accessibility. The instances can be taken from the Japan's planned investments to raise the food production particularly in Latin America (Hallam, 2017) and China's investments in scientific study to raise the rice yield in Mozambique (Chichava, 2010).

2.3.2 Alternatives to Land Acquisition

FDIs that are linked to the land acquisition often bring in conflicting situation and have multiple risks and perils. Certain investment projects like joint ventures or farming based on agreement and out-grower plans or investments in important stages of value chains are able to offer much security of supply to corporates that are investing. The venture of European supermarket chains in the progress of East African horticultural production for export is of much significance. These looser setups may benefit the hosting country, providing more comprehensible advantages to smallholders and their associations. But, even this raises the queries with respect to the compatibility of the quantity and quality standards of investors with isolated smallholder agriculture. This can raise the queries on poverty reduction possibility. In spite of this, joint ventures between outside investors and regional producers or their associations as partners will offer more spill-over advantages for the hosting nation. Under farming on agreement or out-grower plans, smallholders can be provided with inputs like credit, technology offer and a guaranteed market at a stable price but after the sacrifice of options over crops to be cultivated. Mixed models are also potential choices of investments in a large-scale business in the centre but also including the out-growers under agreement to complement the core production. Certain governments are inviting FDIs in such ventures like the Tanzanian sugar sector or Farm Blocks (Mwambazi, 2015) in the country of Zambia. The type of business model will rely on the particular situations and the product. If the large-scale economies or investments in infrastructure are needed, the investors will prefer acquiring land and large-scale commercial agriculture. If such priorities are not important, farming based on agreement or out-grower plans involving smallholders are the choice.

2.3.3 Benefits of Foreign Investment

The core is the level to which advantages of foreign investments diffuse into the domestic market in a coordinating relationship including the current smallholder production systems and other value chains like input suppliers. A precondition for such a relationship is a home agricultural sector with absorbing capability. Advantages should rise from investment inflows, technical offering promoting modernization and raise in the produce, energizing home production, quality development, job creation, availability of labour in the region and other intakes and throughput and potentially a raise in the food sources for the home market and for the export. But, these advantages will not be fruitful if the investment outputs the formation of a domain of advanced agriculture in a dualistic system with conventional smallholder

agriculture and that smallholders cannot reproduce. The essential conditions for positive spill-over advantages will not be present where the change in the guidelines is inevitable.

2.3.4 Flip Side of Foreign Investment

Foreign direct investment in the agricultural sector is the most researched area and hence the information in this aspect is abundant. This information also provides the facts on the merits and demerits of FDI. The present FDI in the agriculture prefers lax agreements rather than procuring the assets. The past proofs on the impact of the foreign direct investment in lands recommend that the assured or promised assistance is not attained by the hosting nation. Moreover, since the investing countries bring in the necessary sophistication to the hosting nation, there is a little or no chance of job offerings. This problem is further fuelled by the growing reliance on the foreign aids, growing annihilation of home production and market, the negligence on the part of investing countries in regards of the ecosystem of the hosting nation, lowering groundwater level, land pollution, and suppression of labour privileges. However, there are long-term advantages like technology assistance, good quality products and services, and introduction of new products and services on a par with the global market.

Therefore, it is necessary to weigh each merit and demerit of the FDI in the background of the development of hosting nation to come to a conclusion on the FDI. Having said that, it is not prudent to depend entirely on the FDI, as there is no guarantee that the FDI can prolong and there can be a possibility of recall of the FDI. As stated earlier, there is a chance of political and ethical instability. It is pertinent to think that due to the inflow of foreign investment, there is a chance of raise in the overall food sources but this need not necessarily mean that the food security for the host will be ensured especially because the expectation of the investors is to ship the production to their countries. This can happen at the cost of suppression of domestic producers and farmers. FDIs also tend to elevate the land prices in the hosting nation (Mabikke, 2011). FDIs can also predispose the host to the increased intervention in its internal affairs from the investing country.

2.4 Why is Africa the Destination of FDI?

The hosting nations where the FDIs are done usually could be the struggling countries, which attempt very hard to woo the outside entrepreneurs, since these nations want to grab the chances of being funded for their advancement of domestic agriculture and nation-building

efforts. Also, the entrepreneurs focus on these developing nations, which have fragile land and water resources management and lax policies and regulations in such management. In addition, these nations will have a plenty of natural resources, lack of knowledge as to how to use these resources towards a progressive development, high smallholders population, and fragile investment policies that can be easily tampered with. The entrepreneurs aim at the hosts where legal volatility and political instability are high.

There are certain other parameters, which are taken into account while investing. They are geography and weather parameters, cost of labour, cost of manufacture, sea ports, and sea routes. Another important parameter is the existence of corrupt practices.

Today the African states are the foremost destinations of foreign direct investment in land projects. The inferences from the Land Matrix exhibit that there were 754 land transactions of 56.2 million hectares in Africa in relation with 17.7 million hectares of land transactions in Asian continent, and the land projects of 7 million hectares in Latin American countries. The land transactions that happened in African continent amount to 4.8% of Africa's entire arable land (Anseeuw et al., 2012). These land deals happened in a select few nations of Africa. As many as 84 nations throughout the world are the destinations of FDIs. Of these 84 countries, 11 countries are the most sought-after countries. In these 11 countries, 7 nations are African nations such as Ethiopia, Sudan, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, Congo, and Zambia. An increase in the intra-regional investment can be seen in South America and Asia as the regional investors in these continents repeat their triumph in their countries once again across the boundaries. For example, corporates in South Africa attempt to venture into land deals in other African countries. In addition, these corporates help other entrepreneurs in continents outside Africa to mobilise investments in other African countries since they have the thorough knowledge of the African culture and practices (Cotula & Polack, 2012). Trade collaborations are the ways of achieving success for the entrepreneurs because such associations can decrease the fees and taxes and these collaborations are useful from the legal perspective. As an instance, in Land Matrix analysis, about 12% of the total entrepreneurs abroad ventured into collaborations with the corporates in the host nations. In addition, these investors from the foreign nations act collaboratively within themselves. For example, the entrepreneurs from the United States of America, South Africa, and the United Kingdom have found such collaborations in every third venture (Anseeuw et al., 2012). A specific style of bidirectional investment ventures has been found after the formation of commercial, cultural and political

ties and geographical constraints. The Gulf nations are supporting the ventures in African OIC member states. China supports African countries such as Mozambique, Angola, Zambia (Braun & Meinzen-Dick, 2009).

Large-scale land developments have gained momentum post worldwide increase in the food prices in 2008. This is the first foremost reason why the global investors look at the African continent. In the long-term, the food prices are perceived to soar further and hence, the investors try to venture into the agribusinesses in order to capitalise on such increase (Cotula et al., 2009). The nations that depend on other countries for food sources because of being deprived of land and water resources (for example, Gulf countries) view food security with the most significance. Likewise, reduction in the fossil fuel resources is a major concern for the investing countries. So, they look for the countries, where resources are plentiful for the manufacture of biofuel. This fuel is produced for various purposes from the biomass (Cotula, 2007). Large-scale land developments in Africa take place for other non-agricultural projects also. There is always growing need for cocoa, coffee, tea, sugar, cotton, rubber, soya, and palm. Therefore, the investing countries are in constant search of foreign lands (Cotula et al., 2009). In addition to the afore-mentioned motives, the corporates look for the return on investment (ROI) in the agricultural sector. The land deals supported by the country's administration are the excellent deals in respect of asset acquirement. These deals are perceived to provide the investors with long-run benefits. The land deals are the target of the foreign agribusiness entrepreneurs since they are economical (Zoysaq, 2013). Agriculture creates many job opportunities for the hosting African nations. It also provides sustainability, income, development along with food security. In spite of these parameters, FDIs in agriculture have been viewed as the instrument for the technology assistance, maximized produce, nation-building measures, and ensuring the food to domestic markets. Hence, the recipient nations intensely back the FDIs by giving many concessions to investors abroad. This conducive situation in fact magnetizes numerous investments, which will result in more land deals.

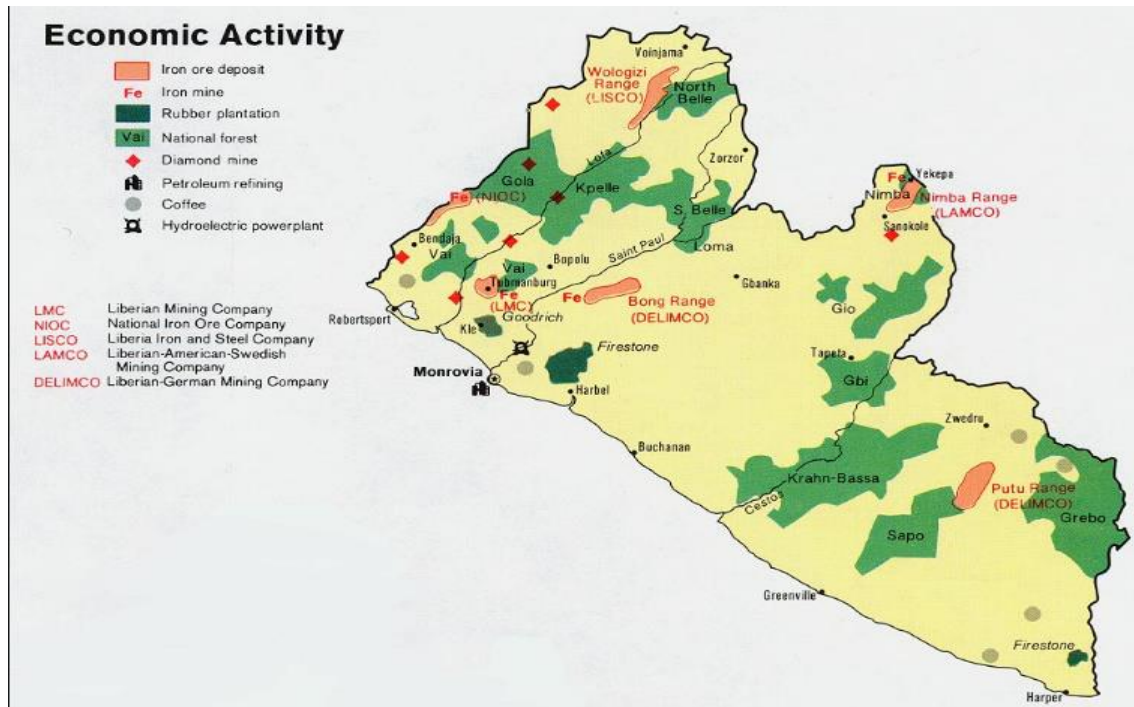
2.4.1 Palm production in Africa

Africa is the native to oil palm wherein the nation's domestic availability for palm oil products have become unreliable owing to the supply side and internal marketing constraints, the subsidies for food aid and commercial imports and so on. In the west African region and other parts of the continent, the consumption of palm oil and other derived products is increasing every day. In many nations of the African continent, there is a significant impact

created by the palm oil sector. In regions such as Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone palm oil industry serves as the major source of income for people wherein oil palm is considered as the source of foreign exchange (Ofosu-Budu & Sarapong, 2013)

2.4.2 Liberia, the Emerging Destination

Figure 1 : Economic activity in Liberia



Source: Adopted from Anon (1973)

Liberia is a small country in West Africa bordered by Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Atlantic Ocean. This country is enriched with many natural resources like rubber, forests, diamond, petroleum, coffee, ores, etc. (Figure 1). Researches have been done to explore other mineral resources like kyanite, barite, uranium, phosphate, and bauxite. Latest oil expeditions along the coast of West Africa, that is Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana recommend that these countries are rich in fossil fuel resources as well. Also, the yearly high precipitation, waterways, and navigable rivers give an edge in respect of hydroelectric projects. In fact, this country is a country enriched with natural resources as rightly pointed out by the International monetary Fund. In spite of these resources and high potential for energy development projects, the country is largely unexplored and the advantages of these resources are delayed on account of weak planning, 14 years of civil war, fragile structure of legal and legislative aspects, and lack of infrastructure. These challenges are the major stumbling blocks in the progressive stride

of this nation. Albeit, the abundant natural resources in Liberia make this nation one of the most targeted destinations of domestic and international investors in the West African continent. Liberia has attracted sizeable FDIs, as this country has gathered FDIs worth USD 16 billion between 2006 and 2011.

2.5 Impact of Large-scale Land Development on Local People

The lives of the people can be socially viable if the people are able to withstand and come back from mental stresses and can provide the ways to live for the offspring (Dheressa, 2013). At the same time, the life will be environmentally viable only if it upholds and optimises the domestic resources, both tangible and intangible resources, thereby creating gross benefits for others' lives. The supporters of land deals point that the governance and the entrepreneurs provide the assurance of new technology and assistance for the agriculture, employment offers and development of national infrastructure, access to clean water, educational institutions, hospitals, and so on. However, in real terms, asset acquisition agreements signed between the entrepreneurs and the country's governance often do not include social investments. But, the entrepreneurs do usually add the estimated social benefits of the projects in their contracts for land deals. Hence, their accomplishment of their assurances can be utilized as a parameter as to whether such promises have materialized.

Many researches recommend that the entrepreneurs are aiming at the nations with fragile land tenure security, even though they target the nations that provide comparatively high levels of entrepreneurial protection (Deininger & Byerlee, 2011). The information from the Land Matrix exhibits an affinity for the entrepreneurs to aim at the poorest nations, and those nations that contribute less to the world food exchanges. These countries would be among the poorest nations with fragile mechanism for the integration into the global economy, hungry and impoverished public and frail land regulatory guidelines. As much as 66% of the land deals found in the Land Matrix are from the nations with high incidence of hunger. The concern for food security gets the significance considering the type of land that goes into acquisition. In several circumstances, these lands will be quality, arable, enriched lands with adequate irrigation capabilities. The entrepreneurs always have an intention to seek lands with high yield gaps, accessibility and sizeable population. Researches indicate that the investors often seek cropland where the yield gap is comparatively high, and where the resources like irrigation, manures, seeds, and sophistication may yield in great amounts. As an instance, asset acquisitions in Mali and Senegal took place in the irrigable lands of the Ségou Region and the

Senegal River valley respectively (Cotula & Polack, 2012). The availability of access routes is the other parameter the investors will look for the option of target area. Land deals mostly occur in areas where there are roads and markets. About 60% the deals aim the areas where the population density is more than 25 persons per square km (Anseeuw et al., 2012). So there will be conflicts and confrontations with local people. Although the data provided by the government suggest the availability of appropriate land, deals are often materialised in the agricultural areas and irrigable lands. Hence, this shakes the basic presumption that the investments focus on underused lands and bring them into utilization. This has a significant bearing on the food security of the local people when the produce is taken out of the host country. Since the FDIs target the international markets, this jeopardises the food security of the country with low per capita, essentially if the food crops that are usually grown in those lands have been sent for the local markets. The net impact on the food security also relies on the revenue generated by the agricultural projects and how this revenue goes into the local system.

Large-scale agricultural land developments can bring forth undesirable effects, essentially in the host countries where there is no efficient administration, rule of law, transparency, or clear land regulation. This can result in relocation of smallholders, lack of grazing lands for cattle farmers, lack of livelihood for the local people, and rundown in the resources. Such situation can lead to conflicts. Also, there is proof of bad environmental effects, especially the pollution of land, water, forests and biodiversity. The researches exhibit that when such effects rise, they result in the disapproval of the project by the local people. This may further lead to occupying the company's land or turmoil like damaging the property. Such opposition will drive the investors to embark on expensive and prolonged legal battles. This will adversely affect the return on investment (ROI). When many researches register the adverse effects of large-scale land developments in developing countries, there is a little proof that it benefits the host country, essentially in short -run and at the domestic perspective. The prominent advantage could be the creation of job opportunities, but there is no guarantee that these jobs can sustain for ever. There are evidences, in many cases, to support the periodical lay-offs and less number of jobs than what was promised before. There is also a key issue related to the quality of the created job and who takes the fruits of such created opportunities, as the top positions will be taken over by the foreigners. In certain cases, even the low-skilled jobs will be occupied by the non-locals. Another attractive benefit of FDI in host countries is providing the technology. In the case of large-scale land development, there is mixed proof

available. Time factor rules this aspect. It will be that the investment is too recent for the technology offer to have taken place or to be observed.

Thus, the researches recommend that in respect of the large-scale land projects in nations where land regulations are fragile, the demerits often outweigh a few merits to the local people, especially in the short-term. This result is likely when the acquired land was used before by local people in a formal or informal way. As a result, acquirement of previously-used land to start new projects should not be done and other type of investment needs to be contemplated. Also from the entrepreneur's view, business models that do not include the acquisition of land are more profitable. If the regulations are legally secure, the risks of adverse impacts like land dispossession, compulsory relocation with no or inadequate compensation, social confrontations are minimized and there are gains for entrepreneurs to bargain properly and ensure that the local people actually take the advantage of the investment with or without land acquisition. In this line of thought, good administration of land tenure and safeguarding the privileges of landholders plus those of entrepreneurs is of utmost significance to make sure the mutual benefits such as revenue and livelihood developments for the local people and a healthy and stable societal setting with less conflict for the entrepreneurs.

2.6 Glimpse on the Issues Related to Golden Veroleum and Sime Darby Palm Plantations

Sime Darby (based in Malaysia) and Golden Veroleum (based in Indonesia) are two of the biggest palm plantations in the country of Liberia. The government has given them the licenses to run their businesses in the western and southeastern parts of Liberia respectively. Sime Darby Plantation operates in Cape Mount, Bomi and Gbapolu Counties in the western part of Liberia bordering Sierra Leone whereas Golden Veroleum runs in Sinoe, Grand Kru and Maryland Counties in the southeastern part of Liberia almost bordering Ivory Coast.

Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum have gotten the rights for over 1.5 million acres of land in Liberia for more than 60 years. The allegation is that the local people in these plantations were not involved while signing those agreements. The local people almost have no knowledge of the information in the agreement and they do not know the impacts of such an agreement.

These companies also have the developmental projects in Liberia such as creation of jobs and infrastructure developments. The local people claim that the agreement between the companies and the government were signed in their absence and only in the presence of the bureaucrats (Evans & Griffiths, 2013). But the agreement documents are legally permissible documents. Such top-to-bottom approach ignores the participation of local people in the proceeding. Hence, the non-involvement of the local people's role causes the tension between the companies and the local community.

2.7 Research Gap

This study will perhaps become the first academic and independent research dealing with the issues in light of large-scale agricultural land development in Liberia since the end of its civil war especially about the palm oil plantations. It seems not to be any prior fullfedge academic or schalorly study on this topic concerning the two palm plantation companies that could serve as secondary material source. The asset acquisition done by Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum for palm plantation in Liberia has precipitated an increasing tension among the local communities (Penikett & Park, 2013). Also, the impact on the ecosystem that these two companies will cause and the distribution of mutual advantages between the local people and the two companies are the core issues in addition to the confrontation that arises out of the sharing of the resources and food security issues (Balachandran et al., 2012). The people in these plantations doubt that the companies have gotten their lands unjustly. Hence, they feel that there is room for another discussion including their privileges. Also, there is a possibility of violation of human rights (Colchester et al., 2013).

Therefore, it is felt that there is a need for an extensive research in this direction to analyse the core issues and other related problems and present the researched facts to the global audience. It is also believed that this study will definitely augment the present knowledge and facts in the research area of large-scale land development projects of this magnitude.

2.8 Summary

The present chapter covered extent literature pertaining to the research study wherein the examination of previous literature led to the identification of the gap for the research. However, the type of methodology adopted for the research and its justifications are provided in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Leedy (1997) defines the term research methodology as the organised process of collection and exploration of information to gain higher knowledge of the research activity. In line with the above-mentioned meaning, this chapter explains the methods used in this research to reach its objectives. To cater to this need, this chapter has been divided into various sections. First section is about the research design detailing the merits of qualitative method as a way to get the responses and perceptions of the respondents participating in the study. Sections 2 and 3 are about research philosophy and research approach respectively. Section 4 deals with target population and sampling size including the sampling method. Section 5 is about data collection techniques especially about the technique used in this research. This section also explains the need for semi-structured interviews in this study and methods for the preparation of the interviews. Section 6 is about the analysis of interview and the final section is the summary of this chapter.

3.2 Research Design

The research design is an important phase in a research to know about the data collection and the constraints like resources and time. Per Easterby-Smith et al. (2002), research design is the process of planning the study including the ways of data collection that can lead to the objectives of the research. For this, an appropriate technique must be opted for collecting the needed information. The study on research approaches (Creswell, 1994; Bell, 1996; Punch, 2005) identifies the research to have two principal approaches, quantitative and qualitative, as the means of primary data collection. Merriam (2009) describes qualitative approach as a method in which the perceptions of many people are considered, which give different meanings based on the experience of respondents and contains non-numerical data (Saunders et al., 2009). Creswell (2011) defines quantitative approach that pertains to the exploration of numerical data. This study aims to probe the researching issue through responding to the open-ended queries and hence a qualitative research is pertinent (Saunders et al., 2012). In order to scrutinise the social phenomenon, a qualitative approach is suitable to comprehend the effects in the society and the way the society reacts (Hancock et al., 2009). As the current research focuses on the large-scale land developments in postwar Liberia, the qualitative research is chosen.

3.3 Research Philosophy

The aim of research philosophy is to collect and scrutinise the primary data. Therefore, identifying the appropriate philosophy is paramount in a research to travel in the right direction. The philosophy also plays its role in understanding the world in light of the research objectives and the manner in which issue can be found (Saunders et al., 2012). In this regard, there are two types of philosophy, namely, positivism and interpretivist (Perry, 1995). The positivism sees the world as an external to individuals and interpretivist sees the objectives of thought as words independent of external factors (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The former takes into account the notions of universal laws and ignores the personal notions. Such approach is considered for quantitative research in respect of the hypotheses and further attempts to identify a correlation between predictor and control (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Hence, the current approach takes interpretivist course that is used for the qualitative method as the knowledge is subjectively perceived.

3.4 Research Approach

The correlation between theory and research can be established using a definite method that was defined by (Saunders et al., 2012). There are two types of approaches in a research - deductive and inductive approaches. Deductive approach formulates a postulation based on previous researches and examines it with a study. This is known as top-down method (Gabriel, 2013; Saunders et al., 2009). Inductive approach creates a hypothesis based on the observations and outcomes through data collection. This is known as bottom-up method (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Per Bryman and Bell (2011), an inductive approach is germane to the qualitative research whereas a deductive approach is for quantitative research. The current research is on large-scale agricultural land developments in Liberia by Golden Veroleum and Sime Darby Palm Plantations. Therefore, inductive approach is the choice.

3.5 Target Population and Sample Size

Finding the target population is important for a research (Gay & Airasian, 2003). The target population is a group of people on whom the researcher does his/her research. In this research, the target population contains the people from the local communities in the two palm plantations who have profound knowledge of the issues in the plantations like local leaders; representatives from the management of the two companies. Moreover, the sample size of this

research is 6. The interviewees are selected through a purposive style of qualitative research method.

3.5.1 Sampling Technique

The selection of sampling technique is based on the research plan, access, and representation (Bryman, 2012). According to Patton (2002), sampling technique is based on four questions – what a researcher wants to explore, why a researcher wants to explore, what sources a researcher considers, and in what way the inferences would be used (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Using the above questions, purposive and convenience sampling method is employed in this research. This kind of sampling would help the researcher to check for the aptness of sampling technique based on the objectives (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). For the present research, samples were selected purposefully to acquire inferences on the interview questions wherein the total number of samples selected was 6 (1 Head of Sustainability at GVL, 1 spokesperson from the Deedo Town in Numopoh District, Sinoe County, 1 Spokesman for Golden Veroleum workers, Kpanyan Town in Numopoh District, Sinoe County, 1 spokesman for people in Butaw Town, Butaw District, Sinoe County and 2 Management staff members at GVL palm plantation in Besnewlu, Tarjuowon District, Sinoe County).

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Data Collection Methods

Data collection is of two types and they are primary and secondary data (Creswell, 1998). This research uses the interview method, which has been utilised as primary data collection technique. The sections below explain the interview in this research and associated procedures.

3.6.2 Interview in this Research

As per McKernan (1996), interview is one of the most effective techniques for gathering the information, since it is conducted directly and it involves direct dialogue between participant and investigator. The method is simple to understand since information is got in a casual chat from one subject to another subject. As per Kumar (1999), the interview is a well-liked method for collecting information from respondents. Similarly, Wragg (1994) opines that interview is categorised into three kinds as semi-structured, structured, and unstructured.

The structured type has pre-set queries; unstructured type has no pre-set queries; and semi-structured contains flexible queries (Yin, 2009; Myers & Newman, 2007; Creswell, 2014; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In this study, semi-structured type is utilised. This method is utilised to understand the impacts of the large-scale agricultural projects in Liberia and views of local people, government officials, and the management of Golden Veroleum and Sime Darby.

3.6.3 Procedures for Preparing for the Interviews

To conduct a successful interview, the process was divided into two phases; one, preparation and selection of interview questions and two, groundwork for holding interviews.

3.7 Analysis of the Interview

The current research presented thematic data analysis where the future steps were conducted. As the first step, information in the form of recordings and the field notes is typed manually. The second step is typing and converting into a Word document of the entire discussions held at the time of interview (Colaizzi, 1978). The third step is the classification of the textual data in accordance with the themes and sub-themes based on the review of literature (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Yet, there remains a logical sequence of research queries and review of literature; information is documented and coded many times. This procedure is done by means of the computer software program such as QSR Nvivo software. This software works as a teaching tool wherein various types of documents are able to be placed in a single destination and are connected together to enable easy retrieval. The evolution of a concept right from its formation can be mapped using Nvivo software (Walsh, 2003).

3.8 Summary

This current chapter has explained the implemented methodology and the field work processes. Moreover, this chapter delineates the motive behind carrying on a qualitative approach to collect and examine the research information. A semi-structured interview was held to have an in-depth comprehension of the respondents' standpoints on large-scale agricultural land development projects in Liberia. These interviews were held over a period of five weeks in Liberia in respect of getting cooperation and abundant and detailed information from the participants. The gathered details are analysed and examined in forthcoming chapters.

CHAPTER IV- RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The present chapter is intended to cover the results of the present research wherein the qualitative research component was used. Ample justifications regarding the research design, approach and philosophy were provided in Chapter 3 wherein in the present chapter, the collected textual data was examined and interpreted so as to acquire better insights about the research topic. The research attempts to explore the perceptions of different entities impacted by the large-scale agricultural land development in post-war Liberia, and hence their responses were manually and thematically analysed.

4.2 Description of the participants

For the present research, 6 participants were recruited for the research whereas their details are as follows:

S. No	Respondent ID	Participant name/ Designation
1	Respondent 1	Head for Sustainability, Golden Veroleum Headquarters in Monrovia Liberia
2	Respondent 2	<i>Mr. Roosevelt Deedo</i> , Spokesman, Deedo Town in Numopoh District, Sinoe County
3	Respondent 3	Spokesman for Golden Veroleum workers, Kpanyan Town in Numopoh District, Sinoe County
4	Respondent 4	<i>Benedict and Teah</i> , spokesmen for people in Butaw Town, Butaw District, Sinoe County
5	Respondent 5 and 6*	2 Management staff members at GVL palm plantation in Besnewlu, Tarjuowon District, Sinoe County

The responses of the two management staff members were combined together since both were interviewed together at the same time.

Though the present research has ethical considerations of not revealing the names of the participants in the research, based on the insistence of the respondents some names have been revealed. One respondent (Respondent 1) has been interviewed on behalf of the management of GVL and two respondents (Respondent 5 and 6) on behalf of the employees at

GVL palm plantation in Besnewlu, Tarjuowon District. However, ‘Respondent 2’ was interviewed on behalf of the Deedo Town in Numopoh District, Sinoe County. ‘Respondent 4’ on behalf of people in Butaw Town, Butaw District, Sinoe County. In addition, Respondent 3 spoke on behalf of Golden Veroleum workers, Kpanyan Town in Numopoh District, Sinoe County.

Figure 2: Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL)



4.3 Thematic analysis

For the present research questions were developed based on the objectives of the research wherein each question corresponds to a theme. The themes for the research are as follows:

- Impact of GVL on water and food security/ food sovereignty
- Large-Scale Mono- Agriculture impacts on Environment
- Negative and Positive impacts on culture and social- economic performances
- Losers and Winners of GVL
- Concession documents between companies and Liberian Government

- Uses of Palm products and Benefits of Palm products and plantation
- Methods to bridge gaps and resolution to companies and people of Liberia

The responses of the participants based on each theme were analysed and are as follows:

4.3.1 Impacts of GVL on water and food security/ food sovereignty

Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5 & 6
-	No safe drinking water	Provided Rice	-	Cultivation lands being grabbed by Sime Darby Plantation

In Liberia people were willing to give their lands to Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantations and in return they expected benefits that are desperately needed by them such as hospitals, schools for educating their children, proper roads and bridges, proper transportation, employment, small farms holdings etc. The locals have the manpower for cultivation and they could not afford other basic needs or livelihoods besides farming on their lands. There are no proper water facilities also for them to drink and water for cultivation as well, therefore, they depend on farming, hunting and fishing to make living. Golden Veroleum provides payment to the people of Kpanyan Town in Sinoe County for every hectare of land that they (Golden Veroleum) cultivate.

No safe drinking water... [Respondent 2]... Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantations gives \$5 for each hectare of land cultivated to the community fund of every community that they are operating in and agreed through the MoU to employ one person per every 5 hectares of land cultivated... [Respondent 3]... towns are being circled by Sime Darby plantation and the locals do not have much land to do farming for themselves within the plantation areas... [Respondent 5 & 6]

4.3.2 Large-Scale Mono- Agriculture impacts on Environment

Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5 & 6
Greater yields lower cost	-	-	Lack of people for the cultivation	Education only on small farm but not on crop rotation

Mono Agriculture makes farming against any form of traditional crops and growing food. Likewise reusing the exact same soil, instead of rotating three or four different crops following a pre-determined cycle, can lead to plant pathogens and diseases. So there should be a need for polyculture for the soil to have a good and excellent fertilization of the soil and nutritious soil too. People of counties where the two companies operate need to be educated on the impact of mono-agriculture. As the people lack of education they need to be educated through Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantations training programs to be considered to work for the company. So it benefits the Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantations and as well as the people. When mono-agriculture being practiced on a large scale of cultivation it is very much needed for them to be educated so they won't be depleting their lands that will make cultivation difficult in the future.

Maintenance and harvesting requirements resulting in greater yields and lower costs... [Respondent 1]... youths were being jailed and there were no people to cultivate their own lands... But this is one of the reasons for the problems today. Most of our people are not well educated to occupy some of those job vacancies that Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantations has so we have many of our people chasing after the unskilled jobs that are scarce... [Respondent 4]... small farm projects were being given to the people but they were not being educated about the need for a change of crops... [Respondent 5 & 6]

4.3.3 Negative and Positive impacts on culture and social- economic performances

Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5 & 6
<p><u>Negative:</u> Destructive behavior involving law enforcement officers</p> <p><u>Positive:</u> Built schools, roads, bridges and established community funding</p>	-	<p><u>Positive:</u> Provided jobs, build schools, allowances to elders, give rice.</p>	<p><u>Negative:</u> Local people being jailed by local Government</p>	<p><u>Positive:</u> Small Farm projects and employment</p>

Within the palm plantations, people undergo many optimistic and undesirable impacts towards the culture needs and as well as their social economic performances including lack of education, culture, gender and religious discrimination, overpopulation, unemployment, and

corruption. But Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantations provided many basic needs for the people but the locals wanted quick measures and instant impacts, which were not forthcoming. The employment process was slow and that alone kills the expectations they have for the improvement of their lives as soon as possible. In most of the places, Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantation has provided the people with proper school for educating children and as well as providing employment for the youth to learn and benefit by meeting their daily needs. Developing small cultivation farms to benefit the local farmers and encouraging them to cultivate their own lands with palm, which will provide opportunity for community and small-scale local industrial palm farm that was promised by Golden Veroleum was not coming forth. Elderly people and children are being provided with allowances (food) and health facilities that they are in need of, but these handouts were not enough.

As these destructive behaviors intensified, the government of Liberia was consulted by us and law enforcement officers intervened and some arrests were made... Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantations has built schools, paved some roads and made bridges within the areas we operate. We have set up a special community funding for development on a percentile arrangement in proportion to the number of hectares of land those local communities give to us... [Respondent 1]...Young people can today work and earn their own money, buy motorbikes and own their own houses... they are building schools, helping to pay teachers' salaries, they give rice and monthly allowances to elders, paramount chiefs, and clan chiefs respectively... [Respondent 3]... The local government has jailed be for 5 days without charges... [Respondent 4]... GVL has agreed to take up many social corporate responsibilities and employ many inhabitants of Tarjuowon... The next project for the socioeconomic development of the locals here is the small farm holder's project where many locals will own their private farms to help them with their livelihood... [Respondent 5 & 6]

4.3.4 Losers and Winners

Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5 & 6
Losers were people of Liberia	Losers were people Deedo in Numopoh District	Winners were GVL and as well as workers at Kpanyan Town in Numopoh District	Losers were the people of Butaw whereas winners are GVL	Winners were GVL and as well as the inhabitants of Tarjuowon

Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantations has promised the locals that they will provide some of their basic needs. But due to certain circumstances, these promises were delayed. But as situation changes, promises are not being kept up, therefore, the local felt they have been played for their lands and they indulge in violence towards the people in Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantations. They felt that they are being fooled and their lands are being grabbed from them. But as a situation revails, it seems that many of the locals people are uneducated and so they were not being employed for work. Though they are in need of jobs but do not have the qualification for most of the jobs that were remaining. For the infratruction development, it was very slow as well and this was also seen as scam from Golden Veroleum. This is all due to the lack of communication between the people and the companies.

These promises were slow in coming as expected, which has frustrated many of the locals and some started to create a problem for GVL... [Respondent 1]... Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantation still want us to give them more land. They are cheating us... [Respondent 2]... Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantation is doing well, they are building schools, helping to pay teachers' salaries, they give rice and monthly allowances to elders, paramount chiefs, and clan chiefs respectively... [Respondent 3]... Every time Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantation wants more land but they cannot satisfy us for the first land we gave them. Want for Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantations to employ people from Butaw and not from other places [Respondent 4]... I told you that I used to make farm, hunt, and fishing, but like many other that are now working with GVL, we don't do those things anymore. We have work that pays about tween time than what our previous livelihood was... [Respondent 5 & 6]

4.3.5 Concession Documents between companies and Liberian Government

Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5 & 6
Promised to employ a number of locals in percentage to the amount of land per hectare we cultivate for palm planting	Promised jobs to town boys, build school, hospital, roads, and bridges	-	People of Butaw want jobs, safe drinking water, roads, clinics, other benefits through social corporate responsibility act.	-

Promises were made by Golden Veroleum on the basis of the needs of the people and as well as for the development needs of the country. The locals were being promised by Golden Veroleum that they will provide employment to everyone in reciprocation to the land they will give to the company. They promised to provide education for children and youth. Training elderly on different cultivation techniques. Health facilities, safe drinking water, water for cultivation process, health centers and clinic facilities like providing hospitals with proper hygiene facilities. Transport facilities with proper roads and bridges. Providing facilities and social corporate responsibility act needs. However, Figure 3 depicts lack of transportation in the region. The workers even struggle for transportation to and from work.

We promised to employ X number of locals in proportion to the amount of land per hectare we will cultivate for the palm planting... [Respondent 1]... Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantation came and recruited few of our town boys and promised that they will give more jobs as time goes by, but up till today zero. The school they promised to build for our children is yet to come. No hospital, no paved road no good bridges... [Respondent 2]... The people of Butaw want jobs, schools, safe drinking water, good roads, clinic and other benefits through social corporate responsibility act. Other communities are benefiting so let the people of Butaw be benefited too... [Respondent 4]

Figure 3: Lack of Infrastructure facilities, Butaw, Sinoe County



4.3.6 Uses of Palm products and Benefits of Palm products and plantation

Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5 & 6
GVL assist palm seed and technical assistance to make palm farm on the small scale and directly sell palm to GVL	-	Cultivation process has been slow and people started to work for GVL and lack in cultivation process by selling land to GVL	-	They gave large farms and in return they did not receive any needs as they were in needed

The locals are being benefited with small scale community farming. They are being assisted with palm seeds for cultivation and are being taught the different techniques needed for their cultivation. Most of the people are ready to sell their other crops run into other employment or income generating activities. As for the locals, the promise of “give more land in exchange for more people to be employed” was a good promise, therefore, they were willing but just to realize that these promises were not forthcoming as promised.

That is if you are interested in making palm farm on the small scale then GVL will assist you with palm seeds and technical assistance, but then as a small farm holder you should sell your palm directly to GVL... [Respondent 1]... The speed of planting and the entire operation of GVL here has be slow, which also has contributed towards the slow employment and everything else that Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantation promised the locals in terms of development... [Respondent 3]... The land that Tarjuowon has given to GVL is just 7,500 hectares and it is like nothing because we have a very large farmland... [Respondent 5 & 6]

4.3.7 Methods to bridge gaps and resolution to companies and people of Liberia

Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5 & 6
Meet compliance from Liberian Government and international regulators like Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO).	Local people are ready to honor and respects landlords and local inhabitant	Other companies like Sinoe Rubber Plantation, Equatorial Palm, CLC logging company, Butaw Palm solve socioeconomic problems	Resolve through RSPO appeasement	Induced with the local government officials

People are very much concern about their land, they think that their lands is being grabbed because they were not getting what they were promised. The mistrust created a serious lack of confidence between the local people and the Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantation as they could not keep up their words. One could say it is due to the unemployment of many of the locals especially the young people in those particulate areas coupled with some miscommunication between the locals and company that tension eroupted. The unskilled jobs were taken fast, leaving only skilled jobs in aplenty and sadly, most of the locals are not educated and qualified enough to occupy those level of jobs to keep up the standard and production capacity of the company. And it also takes some time to build those infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, hand pumps ect that were promised. These delays were seen as breached of promises and the local people felt that they were being cheated and are the losers. The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) which is an international intermediate body for palm production in the world intervened in the Liberian case when the situation got worse between the local, the Liberia Government and Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantation. The locals even wrote letters stating the many problems to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) for Golden Veroleum to play by the international rules and live up to the promises made.

We have met all the compliances from the Liberian government and the international regulators like the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) to resolve most of the problems... [Respondent1] ... We are willing to corporate with Golden Veroleum large-scale palm plantation, but they must honor the MoU and respect our position as the local inhabitants and landlords of this place... [Respondent 2]... There are few other companies here like Sinoe

Rubber Plantation, Equatorial Palm, CLC logging company, Butaw Palm ect.... Therefore, I don't think it is fear for us to say GVL alone should solve all the socioeconomic problems... [Respondent 3]... We wrote letter of complaint to RSPO about the conflict that is why the Liberian government and GVL want us to now resolve this through reconciliation... [Respondent 4]... Some of the locals told us that Sime Darby has bribed the local government officials within the area and the interest of the local people has been suppressed... [Respondent 5 & 6]

4.4 Summary

The present chapter covered the thematic analysis of the data that has been collected among the various participants considered for the research. The responses were examined thematically and were interpreted. However the discussion on the findings of the research is given in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER V- DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The present research attempted to examine the impacts that large scale agricultural development might have on Post-war Liberia. Liberia which is a small West- African nation with a weak economy has a population of about 4.7 million people wherein the same has been undergoing significant transition from war to peace-building after the second civil war (Cook, 2010). Before and after the war, many foreign nations have been expanding their activities in Liberia and have claimed more land from the country through deals signed with the government of the nation. Though there are significant improvements in the revenues that are generated by the Government with respect to these deals, there were problems concerned with such acquisitions. For example, any project that is deemed to acquire the lands of the nation would create specific 'Project Affected Communities (PACs)' (Yousuf, 2012). Agricultural land development in the region tends to create complexities; for the Government, resistance created by the people of the region would hinder the economic development of the nation whereas for the people, such land acquisition and agricultural development by foreign companies create socio-economic inequalities and is the major cause of corruption in the nation (Sola-Martin, 2011). Against this backdrop, it is evident that there is a need to examine the perceptions of people towards the Large-Scale Agricultural Land Development in Liberia wherein a need persists to examine the phenomenon from the lenses of both people of the nation as well as that of the management of the foreign organisations to eliminate personal bias. In this regard, participants were selected from the select villages and towns of Liberia (Numopoh District, Butaw District, Tarjuowon District) and one participant from the select organisation (Golden Veroleum- GVL) which is headquartered in Monrovia Liberia. The responses were coded and the inferences are provided in the next section.

5.2 Summary of findings

The respondents were interviewed on the basis of the themes that examined the impacts of GVL on the nation's development in terms of economic aspects, food security, negative and positive impacts of the land acquisition and development, concession documents, the benefits of manufacturing palm products and the methods to resolve the unrest that lurks within people and the organisation operating in the nation. Firstly, the researcher analysed the theme of food security and sovereignty in the nation and the impact GVL has on the same. It was deemed that

food security in the nation is affected by the organisation wherein it was revealed by the local inhabitants that there is no safe drinking water provided in the region. According to Mensah et al. (2016), it is deemed that the political instability in the nation has led to devastating effects on the food security of Liberia. In the Liberian context, with the plantations expanded in the region the local inhabitants have lost their land and have not been replenished with some other basis of compensation or income in return. For the local farmers, the cash payments provided by organisations operating in Liberia for the destroyed crops were not enough to compensate the loss of livelihood (Lanier et al., 2012; Global Witness, 2017). In addition, a study by Balachandran et al. (2012) revealed that food security increased in the communities that are affected by the Sime Darby concessionaire. It is deemed that the concessionaire Golden Veroleum tends to surpass the economic gains by economic losses to the communities. In addition, the gains that are achieved only inflict better beneficial benefits to specific communities leaving the poor with devastating effects (Global Witness, 2016). Hence, it is discerned that the organisation's presence tends to create water and food insecurity in the nation; however some respondents stated the compensation provided by the company but are still of no great advantages to the inhabitants of the select regions in Liberia.

Figure 4: Local Liberian children in Sinoe County with no access to school



Figure 5: Palm as a mono-crop



When questioned about the impacts of Mono-agriculture on environment and livelihood of people in the region, it was revealed by one of the respondents that Mono-agriculture generates greater yields and reduced costs. However, this response is acquired from the sustainability head of GVL whereas other respondents stated contrasting opinions. Participants other than the head of sustainability at GVL stated the lack of education to have been affecting farmers to undertake mono-cropping; however there are other ill-effects of mono-cropping. In Liberia, bio-fuels were introduced which necessitated mono-cropping to gain phenomenal benefits; however, in spite of the benefits of the high value commercial trees that are planted, there are financial losses incurred to the farmers who adopt subsistence farming. Crop security is not guaranteed with Mono-cropping. Though bio-fuel generation tends to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, the conversion of land areas for mono-cropping affects bio-diversity, which in turn affects the native inhabitants in the future (Topor, 2010). A picture depicting mono-cropping of oil palms is depicted in Figure 5.

The positive and negative impacts of GVL on culture and social- economic performances were examined from the responses of the respondents which revealed the following: the positive effects being the development of infrastructural facilities in the region by the organisation and the provisioning of jobs, education, allowances to the elderly and small projects for local farmers; however, the negative effects discerned are that local farmers and people are imprisoned if they resist towards the developmental activities. According to the report by The Munden Project Ltd (2015), it was revealed that the land acquisition by the

organisations in Liberia led to compensating the local farmers with a considerable sum of more than 1,348,978.94 US Dollars for more than 2100 farmers. Furthermore, the creation of employment opportunities was guaranteed (Friends of the Earth International, 2014) but was failed by the organisation for local workers (Columbia, 2012). However, there were employee respondents who asserted that the organisation has been supporting farmers with small projects; but the inferences from previous reports and studies also reveal that the compensation provided are not beneficial to the local community.

When examined about the winners and losers of the GVL plantations in the select regions of Liberia, it was revealed by almost all respondents that the local people of Liberia were the losers which is associated with the deterioration of the bio-diversity in the region, lack of ample employment to the local people, and lack of good compensation to the farmers. However, some respondents, especially the workers at GVL revealed themselves as winners due to GVL because they have acquired better job opportunities that are way better than traditional occupations that they have performed over years. In addition, the concessionaire between the government and the organisations were towards bringing better economic and social benefits which is revealed from the responses of the participants; however, the previous inferences with respect to the creation of job opportunities and better food security reveals the inability of the companies in serving the native people as well as the governments lacking the strength to take disciplinary actions against these organisations due to bribes and corruption. Further examination of the benefits of palm farming revealed that lack of education to have negative effects on the plantation processes. In addition, respondents who are employees at GVL stated that only a small part is given to these companies and hence has no adverse effects on the livelihood of the local farmers. However, these organisations have not kept their words towards bringing infrastructural facilities to the regions which is revealed in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Lack of transportation facilities for workers as well as roadway infrastructure



When the methods about resolving land acquisition disputes among the local people and companies are examined, it was revealed by the local respondents that organisations should comply with the MoU signed and provide adequate benefits for the people in the region. Some respondents stated that companies bribe government officials which is the reason for the local people not getting any benefits that are agreed during the contract signing between companies and the Government. Hence, a need persists to create an advocacy body which could examine the case in Liberia and provide solutions for both the local people, the companies and the government prevailing in the region.

5.3 Implications for future researches

The present research considered the case of land development in the post war Liberia wherein the responses of participants belonging to specific regions of the nation were acquired and examined. Though the findings of the research are promising, an even more extensive research on the possible factors affecting the behaviour of people in Liberia towards agricultural development by foreign nations. Furthermore, the researcher in the present study is restricted to examine only 6 participants that represented their districts wherein future researches can consider a large population to acquire better consensus.

5.4 Conclusion and recommendations

The present research examined the case of impacts that large scale agricultural development might have on Post-war Liberia. Agricultural development in the considered nation was limited to the expansion of plantations specific to bio-fuels, ingredient and raw material source for industrial food and cosmetics production wherein companies such as GVL have been expanding their business venues in Liberia. However, one implication in such expansion is that these organisations have promised the local inhabitants with employment opportunities, compensations, development of infrastructural facilities and so on, but were not met or very slow in their forthcoming. Participants revealed both positive and negative effects of foreign organisations wherein a need persists to implement advocacy groups which should consider the claims of both local people of Liberia and the investing organisations to resolve these issues. Such groups should consist of local representatives, government officials and personnel from the investing organisations to mitigate bias and provide better solutions towards serving the people, community and protecting the environment.

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Appendix

A1. Interview questions:

1. What impacts do the two large-scale agricultural projects have on water and food security/sovereignty in Liberia?
2. What are some of the impacts that large-scale mono-agriculture have on the environment in Sinoe and Grand Cape Mount Counties?
3. What are some of the negative and positive impacts that these two projects have on the cultural and social-economics performances of the locals that are living in communities that are within these palm plantations?
4. Who are the losers and winners from these two agriculture projects in Liberia?
5. What does the concession documents that was signed between the companies and the Liberian government entail in terms of property, and resource regimes within these two palm plantations?
6. What are the usages of the palm products, and to what extent do the Liberian people directly benefit from these products and the palm plantations?
7. What are the ways forward in terms of bridging the gaps and tying the loose ends in reaching a win-win solution between these two large-scale agriculture companies and the people of Liberia specifically?

A2. Interview transcripts:

The interviews and meetings:

There was no formal questionnaire, but questions that were asked during the semi structured style of interviewing were put directly to the interviewees and participants. Conversations at those meetings and interviews were recorded and those recording are now the primary data for the research.

Transcript of research interviews and meetings:

a) Interview with Mr. Andrew Clutch of Golden Veroleum

This interview was held with Mr. Clutch at Golden Veroleum Headquarters in Monrovia Liberia. He is the head for sustainability. The interview took place November 11th 2015.

Researcher: It has been alleged that your company has been in conflict with the people of Sinoe County in the Southeastern part of Liberia. According to information from some locals living within the plantation areas, your company Golden Veroleum is practicing “land grabbing” or “accumulation by dispossession”. They also alleged that their environment is being destroyed from the large land clearing by your company’s earth moving yellow machines, water bodies (rivers and streams) are being polluted, animals are being killed and the entire biodiversity within the plantation areas is being destroyed. They further said their farm land is being encroached upon without their consent as the inherited legal owner of the land.

How can you respond to these strong claims of the locals?

Mr. Clutch’s Narrative:

Well, first thank you for your time and taking interest into this case as your academic research and hope that this does not have any political undertone. We (Golden Veroleum) came to Liberia to invest and to help Liberia and its people rebuild their country and economy. We are operating within the law and have all legal document to prove that. Our company signed concession agreement with the Liberian Government and we are operating under the law. Yes, it is true that there has been some dispute with the locals pertaining to some dissatisfactions and grievances as might be in any other company, but these are not conflicts. GVL has promised the locals with employment and social corporate benefits and development, but due to some misunderstanding between some individual of Sinoe and us, these promises were slow in coming as expected, which has frustrated many of the locals and some started to create problem for GVL.

We promised to employ X number of locals in proportion to the amount of land per hectare we will cultivate for the palm planting. For example, let say we have been given the go ahead by the Liberian government to clear 380,000 hectares of land within Sinoe and Grand

Kru Counties within our project period, and expect to clear about like 40,000 hectare per year. Our plan is to cultivate at least 220,000 hectares in our operation period. But instead we have had access to about 20 to 30 hectares per year or even less, which is below expectation. This means employment will be slow than expected or promised because we will be clearing less land area than planned and we will not be needing many people to work at such rate. Currently we have less than 5,000 employees in total and we have projected to employed about 44,000 considering our plans and everything else equal. But with the way things ae going slow and the locals are becoming more reluctant of giving us more land to expand our operation, I don't think we are going to achieve that target anytime soon or might even not achieve that.

For the development aspect, GVL is a private profit-making company, therefore, we are not obligated to building roads, bridges etc, but under the social corporate responsibility, we have thought it wise to help in some way. GVL has built schools, paved some roads and made bridges within the areas we operate. We have set up a special community funding for development on a percentile arrangement in proportion to the number of hectares of land those local communities give to us. For example, let say we give \$5 for every hectare cultivated to every community that we are operating in. This means that if community X gives 10,000 hectares of land, that community will be receiving about \$50,000 per year as their community development fund. And besides that, GVL also agreed to walk along with the local farmers that want to become small farm holders. That is if you are interested in making palm farm on the small scale then GVL will assist you with palm seeds and technical assistance, but then as a small farm holder you should sell your palm directly to GVL. There have been about 65 small farms holders listed under this project as socioeconomic supplement to the communities.

All these new offers and ideas came into a memorandum of understanding between some communities and GVL after the locals began expressing their dissatisfactions and grievances. It is true that GVL did not engage the locals from the beginning before starting the clearing of land, which brought us in direct confrontation with the locals. We felt after signing the concession agreement with the Liberian government everything was in place to begin, but unfortunately that was not the case and we regret that.

I will not go into the entire episode of the dispute, but will just give you a summary. GVL was confronted by some locals especially in the Butaw area on grounds of those issues that I have just mentioned previously. The employment was slow, the development and small farms holders project was not coming forth, and some land issues as well. The locals said they

will not give us more land because they were not consulted from the initial stage. They further said that GVL lied to them, therefore, they will ground our operations in their communities. Some of the men went as far as destroying some palm trees that were on nurseries and their reluctance of giving us more land cost us lots of damages because thousands of palms that were on the nurseries were delayed and became overgrown that we could not transfer them to the final planting grounds. As these destructive behaviors intensified, the government of Liberia was consulted by us and law enforcement officers intervened and some arrests were made.

GVL wants to resolve the dispute with the locals and there have been series of meetings so that the case can be settled permanently. Therefore, there was no land grabbing here, but rather a mere dissatisfaction that resulted into a dispute. GVL miscalculated the land entitlement and ownership by the locals from the start and we have realized that. Therefore, besides the legal concession contract sign between the Liberian government and us, we have decided to go into a memorandum of understanding with each community so that we can start from a better footing with mutual respect instead of only dealing with the higherups.

Let us be very objective here because you are doing an academic research and we want you to be neutral, ethical and objective. GVL cannot take up the responsibility of employing everyone in those counties we are operating in neither can we solve all the people's socioeconomic problems, it is just not possible. We are not the Liberian government to do all that, but still we do lots of things for the communities here just to maintain a good working relationship. We have met all the compliances from the Liberian government and the international regulators like the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) to resolve most of the problems.

2) Interview with the people of Deedo Town

Their narrative:

This interview was herd with the people Deedo Town in Numopoh District, Sinoe County on November 26, 2015. The spokesperson for the town was Mr. Roosevelt Deedo. The spokesman, Mr. Roosevelt Deedo insist that his name be reflected in the published version of the research as an advocate for the people of Deedo Town.

Researcher: Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to hear the grieves and grievances of the people of Deedo Town in Numopoh District. What are the issues here pertaining to GVL operations in your district here?

Roosevelt Deedo:

My son, thank you for hearing our cries and coming to hear from us. Golden Veroleum people are wicked. They came here and lied to us and want to steal our land, but I will not allow them to do that. When GVL first came, we welcome them because they promised us good things like development and employment. But when we opened to them and gave them our land, they started lying and treating us like animals.

GVL came and recruited few of our town boys and promised that they will give more jobs as time goes by, but up till today, zero. The school they promised to build for our children is yet to come. No hospital, no paved road no good bridges, but GVL still want us to give them more land. They are cheating us my son. When they go on the field only GVL workers can take the land measurement without anybody else verifying whether they are not stealing more land from us. The boys from the towns too are now protecting their jobs so they are not talking in our interest anymore. GVL is recruiting different people from other places to bring them here to work, but they keep telling us that we should give them more land first before they employ anyone of us again.

As we speak, I have been summoned by the Liberian government through Greenville Court for this same land issue with GVL and I am going there tomorrow. I am telling my town people and my family to pray for me because as we speak there are some people from Butaw that are in jail for this same GVL land grabbing issue. We will not give GVL anymore land except they respect us and live by their promises. They should know that we have family too especially the young ones that are leaving from here to go to school as far as Greenville because of the lack of school here.

You saw the road when you were coming. Do you think this is the kind of road a multi-million-dollar company like GVL should be driving on? See all these little children here, none of them are going to school, there is no clinic here, no safe drinking water and no job for us. But they want us to give them more land. The first land we gave them what have they done for us that will encourage us to give them more land? Where will we make farm and go hunt in the future if we give them all the land? Our children will grow up and they will want to cultivate

the land too so where will they cultivate when they grow up in the future? These are questions we keep asking them and they cannot answer. They want to surround our town with their palm plantation so that we will not have anywhere to even make cassava farm in the future.

You talked about the memorandum of understanding that they are carrying around to the various communities. This idea came in later after GVL started finding it difficult to acquire more land from the people of Sinoe County. I don't even trust the MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) because GVL is not living by the document and secondly, they have lied to us before. Look my son, we just want what is good for us so it will be better if GVL listen to our demands too otherwise we will not give our land. They will have to kill me before getting this land against my will. And not only me, but they must kill the entire town before.

We want employment, we want clinic, we want safe drinking water, we want school, let GVL paved the roads and build those bridges along the main road for the benefit of both of us. GVL told us about social corporate responsibility and small farm holders initiative, but they failed to live up to what they told us in the beginning. We are willing to corporate with GVL, but they must honor the MoU and respect our position as the local inhabitants and landlords of this place. The Liberian government does not own this place, this place is our inherited land so we must be consented before any company can work here or be given land here.

c) The Golden Veroleum workers in Kpanyan Town, Numopoh District, Sinoe County

The third interview was herd with some Golden Veroleum workers at Kpanyan Town in Numopoh District, Sinoe County. From the interview, it seems they were more pro GVL (Golden Veroleum) according to the way their spokesman Pascal Keigbeh gave their narrative. Pascal's name is mentioned here by his consent.

This interview was herd on November 26, 2015.

Their narrative:

Thank you for coming here to find out the actual story about GVL operations here and about the news that there are some problems here. It is true that where ever development goes the locals will always have problems with the company or investors because their lives and livelihoods are often disturbed or interrupted by the company's activities. We are the sons and daughters of Kpanyan Town in Numopoh District and I can tell you that our lives have

improved from 30% to about 90% in terms of socioeconomic improvement. Before GVL could come to Sinoe most of us were doing nothing, no jobs to do. But today I am a field supervisor and earning my own money. I don't have to tell you because you know that the Liberian civil war destroyed everything. We are still recovering from the impact of the War, therefore the coming of GVL really speed up our recovery process. Young people can today work and earn their own money, buy motorbikes, put food on their tables and own their own houses.

It is true that not everybody is benefiting because GVL cannot employ everybody. But this is one of the reasons for the problems today. Most of our people are not well educated to occupy some of those job vacancies that GVL has so we have many of our people chasing after the unskilled jobs that are scarce. These are the facts we are telling our people then they are saying we are taking side with GVL because we have jobs now. That is not true, we are being objective here that's all.

The speed of planting and the entire operation of GVL here has be slow, which also has contributed towards the slow employment and everything else that GVL promised the locals in terms of development, social corporate responsibility and other benefits. Besides, it is not only GVL that operates here in Sinoe. There are few other companies here like Sinoe Rubber Plantation, Equatorial Palm, CLC logging company, Butaw Palm ect. Therefore, I don't think it is fear for us to say GVL alone should solve all the socioeconomic problems.

Just ask any of the locals here whether they want for GVL to leave, they will tell you that they don't want GVL to leave because the company has become our livelihood directly and indirectly. Those that are from this district and not working with GVL can one way or another benefit through those that are working with GVL. Though GVL is not 100% perfect, but today our towns can boast of zinc roof houses and employment that we never had before.

GVL is doing well, they are building schools, helping to pay teachers' salaries, they give rice and monthly allowances to elders, paramount chiefs and clan chiefs respectively. GVL gives \$5 for each hectare of land cultivated to the community fund of every community that they are operating in and agreed through the MoU to employ one person per every 5 hectares of land cultivated. This means if GVL gets the 15,000 hectares they want from Numopoh, there will be about 3,000 people to be employed. But if you checked the hectares cultivated here now is below 3,000 hectares in total. This means GVL cannot employ more people now because

their employment is carried out on an employment per land cultivated basis. Because if there are many hectares then there will be a need to employ people to work on them.

Pertaining to the environmental issues, I think you talked with our sustainability boss in Monrovia, Mr. Clutch. We take into consideration the environment very seriously because we that are from this place and working with GVL will not sit there and allow GVL to destroy our own environment. We just can't be that wicked to ourselves and people. GVL makes sure that there are reserve areas left for hunting, farming, fishing and other livelihood activities. GVL does not clear high forest and national parks. Water bodies and animal hubs are left alone and GVL even encourages hunters to go hunting amongst their palm. The Environmental Protection Agency sends inspectors here every year to assess GVL and there has been no irregularities.

The fourth interview was held in Butaw Town, Butaw District, Sinoe County on November 27, 2015. This is the hot spot of the entire land grabbing conflict between the locals and the government of Liberia/GVL. The spokesman was Benedict and he also insisted that his name be mentioned in the paper as resistance movement against land grabbing and socioeconomic injustice in Butaw.

The narratives of Benedict and Teah:

Thank you for coming my brother! As we speak right now, I am not safe here that is why I keep looking over my shoulders because the Liberian government police are still looking for me to arrest me and take me to jail. Presently I am in the bush hiding from the police. I am hiding because the government arrested and imprison some of my brothers from Butaw here.

The whole conflict started when Golden Veroleum came to Butaw they did not consent us who are the land owners in Butaw. When we confronted GVL, they said they have made agreement with Liberian government and they have the right to plant palm on our land here in Butaw. GVL came here as land grabbers by conniving with the Liberian government and our local authority in Sinoe to steal our land.

Every time GVL wants more land but they cannot satisfy us for the first land we gave them. We want for GVL to employ more people from Butaw and not from other places. GVL is saying we are not educated to the extend to serve as supervisors but they are training other

employees on the job so why can't they recruit people from Butaw and train them on the job too?

The local government has jailed me before for 5 days without charges. Their constant intimidation made me to go into hiding. The local government is looking for me to arrest me and put me into prison again, that is why I am in hiding up till now.

I was working with GVL, but because I helped the Butaw youth that were asking for employment from GVL through a written letter. GVL failed to address the youth's concerns, therefore, the youth started to protest and riot. The youth destroyed some palm trees and the police came and started beating the youth. They beat up one Fred Thompson and jailed him over that until he died in jail. About 17 youths were arrested and imprisoned, and one has died in prison. The government put up an arrest warrant for 22 men including me, that is why I am hiding still.

We wrote letter of complaint to RSPO about the conflict that is why the Liberian government and GVL want us to now resolve this through reconciliation. Therefore, we are willing to resolve this problem too. Because we don't want to be the cause of our people suffering here. Because people are now trying to blame us for obstructing GVL operation, which has slowed down employment as well. But at least our presence is being felt and recognized that we have issues too that need to be addressed before any work can continue here on our land otherwise we will continue to resist GVL. I think GVL knows that what they were doing was not the right process, therefore, they have agreed for the MoU to take effect when we meet to resolve the conflict.

We want GVL to do the right things as a company, we want to live side by side here. The people of Butaw want jobs, schools, safe drinking water, good roads, clinic and other benefits through social corporate responsibility act. Other communities are benefiting so let the people of Butaw be benefited too. We like the coming of GVL, but the fact is they first came with bad intention towards us. They came simply to grab our land because they believe the Liberian government gave them the license to do so. But what they didn't know this land is for the people of Butaw and nobody can take our land without our consent. I think we sent that message loud and clear and hope that GVL and the Liberian government got that and will do the right thing this time around.

This fifth interview was held at GVL palm plantation in Besnewlu, Tarjuowon District, Sinoe County on November 25, 2015. It was held with a cross session of GVL employees that are also inhabitants of Tarjuowon. I talked to Sarvage Klagbor and Victor Manibor. The two men gave their consent for their names to be mentioned.

The narratives of Sarvage and Victor:

Thank you for your visitation here at Besnewlu, Tarjuowon District. This whole GVL and land issue has been politicized and instigated by very few people that are working in government and residing in Monrovia. We that are working with GVL do not have problem, not only because we are getting salary but because GVL is doing well for us and the people that are living here. I used to hunt, set animal traps, fishing and make farm as livelihood, but today I am employed and earning my own money.

There is an MoU and everything is going well here. There are some trouble makers that are listening to those of our brothers that moved to Monrovia to live and work. Few locals here are making more demands for more employments, they want schools, roads, and clinic. But these developments come gradually. Life has changed here a lot, and things are not like before. GVL built school here for our children, I think you saw that beautiful school building on the road while coming here.

The land that Tarjuowon has given to GVL is just 7,500 hectares and it is like nothing because we have a very large farm land. There are many other national and international conflict resolution organizations that have visited us to get the views of the people here that is why the MoU is coming into effect. GVL has agreed to take up many social corporate responsibilities and employ many inhabitants of Tarjuowon. Our community fund is operating because we get \$5 per year for every hectare we have given GVL. The next project for the socioeconomic development of the locals here is the small farm holders project where many locals will own their private farms to help them with their livelihoods.

I told you that I used to make farm, hunt and fishing, but like many other that are now working with GVL, we don't do those things anymore. We have job that pays about hundred times than what our previous livelihood was. Just imagine me and hundreds of other locals owning two to ten hectares of palm farm under the small farm holders program that means we will be earning thousands of dollars each year in addition to our other jobs we have now. We should educate our people about the good things GVL has for us while researcher like you will

be there to make sure that there is a balance between GVL operation and the people's wellbeing.

Sime Darby Plantation:

There were no recordings from Sim Darby because Sim Darby refused to be interviewed after visiting their plantation office in Cape Mount County. The company operates in Cape Mount and Bomi and Gbarpolu Counties respectively. When their offices were visited December 2, 2015, we were able to talk to Mr. Riski and Mr. Johnny by phone and Mr. Riski who was the right man to talk to deliberately declined the interview. It was one of Sime Darby's employee called Morris that help us to track down some locals and workers that were willing to talk to us by giving us their locations. According to Morris and a confirmed secondary source documents viewed December of 2015 at the archives of the Environment Protection Agency of Liberia and the Nation Investment Commission in Monrovia, Liberia, Sime Darby was granted concession in December 18, 2009 to cultivate 200,000 hectares of land for 63 years.

Through that, we managed to talk to some locals and most of them were a kind of afraid to voice out their grievances. But some were courageous enough to talk. We did talk to locals from Kongja Town, Ballah Town, Ciafa Curve and Gbahfu Boh. Most of this towns are being circled by Sime Darby plantation and the locals do not have much land to do farming for themselves within the plantation areas.

Some of the locals told us that Sime Darby has bribed the local government officials within the area and the interest of the local people has been suppressed. The locals are finding it very difficult to get wood from nearby. Wood is the leading energy source for majority of the rural dwellers, which is used for cooking, preserving food and heating. They walk 10 to 20 kilometers out of their village land areas to get wood. Those locals that work with Sime Darby have different narrative. They told us that the company is doing well for them because they have never had such opportunity in their lives before especially to be employed and able to earn their own money. Besides that, they said Sime Darby has built schools, given scholarship (student financial aid) to most of the young people of the counties.

Sime Darby is not only doing palm business in the two counties:

Sime Darby is also in the rubber planting business, which is another section of the agriculture sector of Liberia with high revenue income. There has been series of rioting and

protest at some of Sime Darby's farm where some of their crops were burnt and destroyed by some locals. This protest was intervened by the Liberian government and MoUs between the local communities and Sime Darby were made.



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