

RSPO Intermediary Organization **FINAL REPORT**



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1 General information about the project

1. Reporting Date (<i>refer Annex 4</i>)	31th January 2020
2. Reporting Series (<i>refer Annex 4</i>)	Final Report (12 monthly progresses) ending 31 December 2019, including comments and financial status to be sent to RSPO Secretariat (Reference number: IMO Contract / 003 / Liberia /XI / 2018).
3. Reporting Period (<i>start date – end date</i>)	1 November 2018 -31 December 2019
4. Project Title	Improving Communication and Understanding of the RSPO Standards and Mechanisms and their application in Liberia and at the West Africa Level
5. Project Implementer	Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) P.O. Box 5678, Duarzon Village, Lower Margibi County 1000 Monrovia 10, Liberia
6. Funder	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm (RSPO) Unit A-37-1, Level 37, Tower A, Menara UOA Bangsar, No. 5, Jalan Bangsar Utama 1, 59000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

1.1 Background of the Project

In the last few decades, population growth, poorly regulated and speculative financial flow, food and water insecurity, and climate change -including the search for alternative energy sources – have led to a growing appetite for large scale land acquisitions (or land grab) across Africa. These rapid land transitions from community rights to commercial contract rights– and the lack of commitment on the part of African leaders to foster broader participation and accountability have had adverse effects on southern countries' social, political and economic cohesion and governance. This has also had negative effects such as environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, forced displacement of people, marginalizing women and children, deforestation, destruction of wetlands, loss of pristine biodiversity, and fragmentation of local communities.

In Liberia and across West Africa, customary lands are being awarded to multinational organizations and companies in response to these global transformations. The processes leading to the acquisition of these lands have been confusing and in some instances leading to tension and conflict between host communities and companies. Moreover, many host communities or affected communities by oil palm companies have limited knowledge about these national and international laws and best practices that these oil palm companies should comply with. Often time communities are at disadvantaged because of the limited knowledge to properly negotiate and monitor compliance with best practices has resulted in continuous conflicts. Therefore, this project seeks to improve communication and understanding of the RSPO Standards and Mechanisms among communities, NGOs, CSOs, and government and their application in Liberia and at the West Africa Level to help reduce conflicts.

1.2 Project objectives

1. To create platforms at the national level to train rights-based NGOs and communities affected by Oil palm plantation on how to effectively use the RSPO standards and mechanisms, and how to effectively and efficiently engage with the RSPO so that their concerns and needs are fully taken in.
2. To facilitate information sharing among NGOs, affected communities, and regional partners to increase the pool of actors working to bridge the existing gaps between local communities and oil palm companies in Liberia.

1.3 Project Design, Methodology and Description of Project Community

The project design employs a collaborative approach with relevant government ministries and other national actors. Key government actors were the National Bureau of Concession (NBC) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). Others were the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Independent National Commission on Human Rights and the National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia.

The national level and community training were divided into phases I and II. All training and dissemination of awareness materials were conducted with members of the Multistakeholder Platform (MSP), local county authorities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women and youth groups from Maryland, Grand Kru, Sinoe, Grand Bassa, Cape Mount and Bomi counties. The Multistakeholder Platform (MSP) is the direct representative of the affected communities on oil palm issues. These communities were selected based on their physical proximity to the concession area; and communities that receive immediate benefits from the company.

1.4 Description of Project Counties

Both phases of the training covered the six counties (Maryland, Grand Kru, Sinoe, Grand Bassa, Cape Mount, and Bomi Counties).

Maryland County is located in the Southeast most corner of Liberia and borders the Atlantic ocean to the South; the Cavalla River representing the international border with the Republic of Ivory Coast to the East; Grand Kru County on the West; and River Gee County to the Northwest. The total land area of the County is approximately 5,351 sq km (2,090 sq mi), representing roughly 6% of Liberia's total area. Elevation ranges from sea level along the Atlantic Ocean to 826 ft. (248 m) at Wuluke village (5n-8W). The County has currently seven administrative districts and four electoral districts. The seven County districts are Harper, Pleebo/Sodoken, Karluway #1, Karluway #2, Whojah, Nyonken and Gwelekpoken. There are four electoral districts Barrobo, Karluway, Pleebo/Sodoken and Harper. The County has 15 chiefdoms and 26 clans. Maryland County is situated in the 100 to 120 inches rainfall zone. The annual average rainfall is 101.5 inches. Relative humidity is high and the sunshine hours are favorable for the growth of a variety of crops. Two seasons—rainy and dry—exist in the area¹

Grand Kru County is located along the southern Atlantic Coast of Liberia. The Western boundary is with Sinoe County. To the North is River Gee County and the Eastern boundary is with Maryland County. Grand Kru County has a total land area of 891 square miles or 2298.78 square kilometers. The topography of Grand Kru is generally characterized by two major landforms: coastal plains and rolling hills. There are several hills, plains and valleys and one recognized mountain called Sawleh, in

¹ http://www.mia.gov.lr/doc/Maryland%20CDA_web.pdf

Sinoe is found in the South-eastern region of the Republic of Liberia, which is on the West Coast of Africa. Sinoe is bordered by Grand Gedeh County on the North, by River Cess County on the West, by Grand Kru and River Gee Counties on the East, and by the Atlantic Ocean on the South. Sinoe covers a land area of about 3,861 Square miles (10,000 square kilometers) and has a total coastline of 86 km. The physical features of Sinoe County are about sixty percent lowland with somewhat increasing elevation from the coast. It has some high hills and few mountains and valleys, mainly in Jaedae, Jedepo and Dugbe River Districts on the left bank of the Sinoe River³

Grand Bassa is a county in the west-central portion of Liberia. One of 15 counties that comprise the first-level of administrative division in the nation, it has nine administrative districts with Madam Etweda A. Cooper as Superintendent. Grand Bassa County with Buchanan City as its capital is one of the three original counties that first formed the Republic of Liberia. The two others are Montserrado and Sinoe. It was established in 1833 and, named after Thomas Buchanan, the first Governor of the Commonwealth of Liberia⁴

Grand Cape Mount County is one of the five original counties of Liberia. It is positioned in the southwestern end of Liberia and is bordered in the northeast by Gbarpolu, in the east by Bomi, in the south by the Atlantic Ocean. It is sub-divided into four districts and the Commonwealth, which, for practical purposes, it will be referred to as district in this introduction. According to the 2008 National Population Census, Grand Cape Mount has a population of 127,076 and a total land area of 1,825.09 square miles. The county has a moderate population concentration of 70 persons per square mile. It has an average household size of 5.2 in 2008 as compared to 4.2 in 1984. Lake Piso, one of the largest inland lakes in the world is located in Cape Mount County. The county is potentially viable for tourism as it encompasses the best beaches in Liberia, and it is made up of fertile agricultural land and is rich in gold, diamond, iron ore and may have deposits of oil⁵

Bomi County is situated in the Northwestern region of Liberia and bordered by Gbarpolu County in the North, Grand Cape Mount County in the West, Montserrado County in the East and the Atlantic Ocean in the South. The capital city is Tubmanburg. There are four Administrative Districts (Klay, Dewien, Suehn Mecca and Senjeh), comprising five Chiefdoms and 18 Clans. Bomi County has an area of 755 square miles. Bomi County is generally warm throughout the year. It has two seasons: the rainy season beginning in April and ending in October, and the dry season covering the months of November to March. The average annual rainfall of Bomi County is approximately 80 inches. Bomi County is generally hilly with a few plains and valleys. The County is endowed with ample water resources to supply fish and other livelihood options, including the Atlantic Ocean and the Po, Wlein, Mahei, Lofa, and St. Paul Rivers, among others⁶

² http://www.mia.gov.lr/doc/Grand%20Kru%20CDA_web.pdf

³ <https://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/SinoeCDA.pdf>

⁴ https://www.lisgis.net/pg_img/Grand%20Bassa%20County%20profile.pdf

⁵

<https://www.lisgis.net/county.php?&fd0e78b77a58d689bbb27b3e1c037717=R3JhbmQgQ2FwZSBNb3VudA%3D%3D>

⁶ http://www.mia.gov.lr/doc/Bomi%20CDA_web.pdf

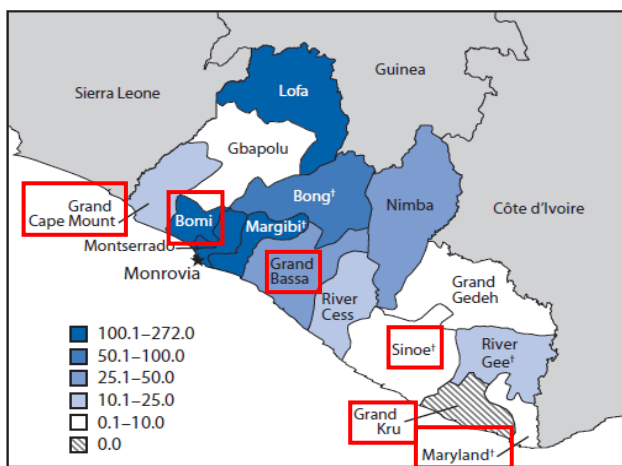


Figure 1 Map of Liberia showing project counties

The purpose of the MSP aligns directly with the RSPO overall project objective, which has to do with resolving conflicts and achieving peace. The twenty (20) members of each MSP in the six counties were selected with a gender consideration that is ten (10) male and ten (10) female in a participatory manner through their local community leaders and community members. The twenty (20) members were selected as participants for the training through their leadership with additional fifteen (15) persons from the local government authority; Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), youth and women groups heads.

Methods of the project delivery include national level and community training; provision of handouts for all the topics covered; Production and dissemination of awareness material, radio campaigns, use of a projector to help participants visualize what was being thought, as well as questions and answers sessions.

Microsoft project professional 2016 and Microsft Excel were used to manage and analyze project data. Microsoft Project is a project management software designed to assist a project manager in developing a schedule, assigning resources to tasks, tracking progress, managing the budget, and analyzing workloads. This software was used to calculate the overall project status and percent complete on each activity.

Microsoft Excel was also used to disaggregate sex data, calculate the percentage of the different categories of participants to produce a visual representation of the data in charts.

2 Final Report

2.1 Project Status Summary

1.1 Schedule status: Overall, are your activities implemented as scheduled?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1.2 If No, please explain	No <input type="text"/>
Project status	% Complete 96%

2.2 Detail description of work progress

No	Result	Activities	Description of work completed	% of completion (against target)
1.	Improved understanding of the RSPO Principles and Standards by NGOs and communities which will lead to a cohesive relationship between communities and oil palm companies	1.1	Project Launch	100%
		1.2	Provide training for NGOs, Government agencies and CSOs at the national level on the standards and principles of the RSPO	100%
		1.3	Provide training for communities on the standards and principles of the RSPO	100%
		1.4	Develop simplify version and print the RSPO standards and principles into fliers for awareness at the national and local level	100%

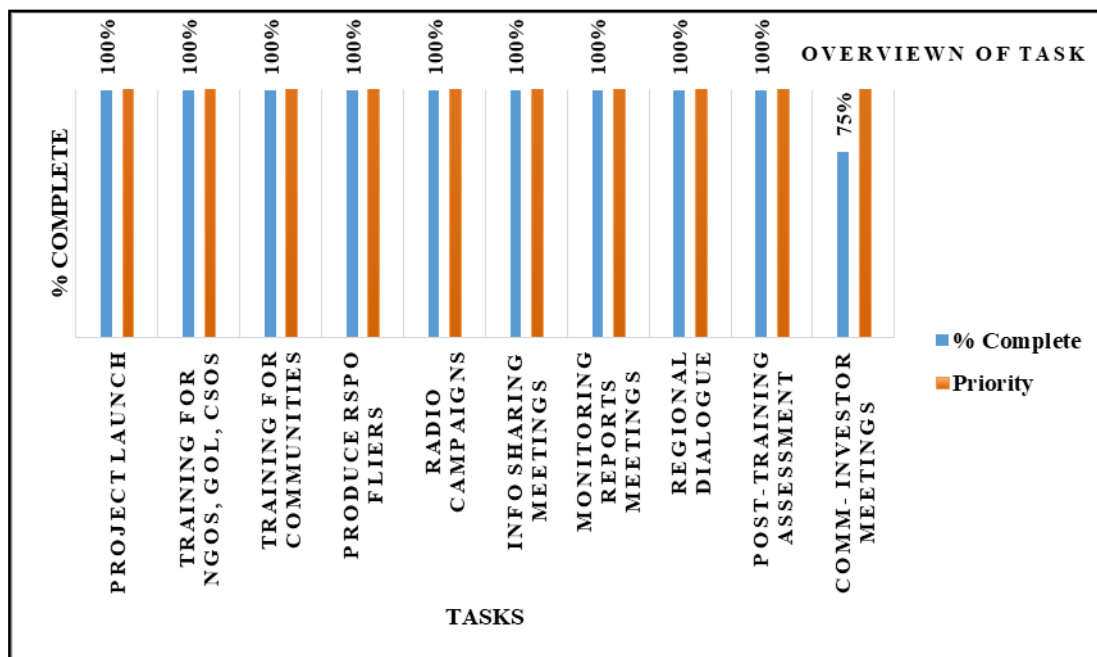


Figure 2 Overview of the task in Project

Figure 2 shows an overview of all completed tasks and incomplete tasks. This figure gives a holistic overview of the project progress over its duration.

2.2.1 Activity 1.1: Project Launch

Figure 2 also shows **Activity 1.1**: The launch of the project was completed on Tuesday, January 15, 2019, at the Royal Hotel in Monrovia. The print and electronic media (Frontpage Africa, Daily Observer, including other media institutions) widely covered the event in Liberia. The event was also covered by the Golden Veroleum Liberia Online News. Hon. Gregory Coleman, the Director of the National Bureau of Concession (NBC), who launched the project, said NBC was concerned about the involvement of communities in the operations of companies in their areas. He stressed the need for oil palm companies to address sustainable livelihood for communities.

Moreover, Mr. Eikplim Dziwornu Agbitor, RSPO Technical for Africa and head of the RSPO delegation said the issue in the Liberian oil palm sector was not that companies were not RSPO-certified and communities did not know about the RSPO, but that each had their understanding of what the principles were and how they could be applied. He said the three major issues characterize conflicts in the oil palm sector in Liberia are communication, land rights, and participation. Mr. James Otto, head of the Community Rights and Corporate Governance Program (CRCGP) at SDI, said during the launch that the project would help communities manage to understand the different approaches and opportunities they have to constructively engage with oil palm companies, seek redress without conflicts and help them to manage their expectations. The project launch was successful and brought together a total of 55 participants from the agricultural sector, print and electronic media, Civil Society Organizations, Government, and communities that are host for oil palm companies. See Sex-disaggregated data (Figure 3).

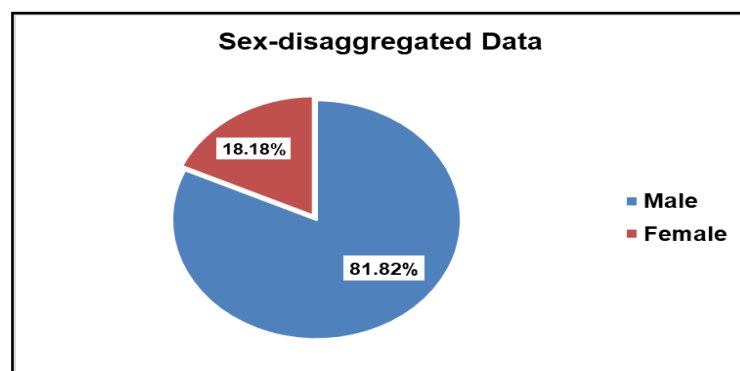


Figure 3 Sex-disaggregated Data

Table 1 shows a total of 55 persons who participated in the project launch. Male was in the majority of 81.82% while female accounted for 18.18%. The result shows a significant gap in gender balance of 63.64%.

2.2.2 Activity 1.2 Training for NGOs, Government agencies and CSOs at the national level on the standards and principles of the RSPO

Figure 2 shows that **Activity 1.2** has been completed 100%. The reason is, as per the approved schedule contained in the agreement, *Appendix 1 Framework & Activities Plan* (see attached); this task should be implemented two times within (three quarters) January to September 2019.

The Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI) along with a team of RSPO delegates conducted the first phase of (**Activity 1.2**) in a three (3) day workshop at Corina Hotel. The workshop started on

January 16 and ended on January 17, 2019 and phase two was conducted from July 18 to 19, 2019 at Corina Hotel, Monrovia. Participants included representatives from government ministries and agencies, civil society organization, heads of various Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs), and representatives from Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL). Purpose of the training was “Trainers of Trainers workshop on the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm (RSPO) Principles and criteria.” Topics covered were: introduction to sustainable palm oil, RSPO 8 Principles and criteria; RSPO Complaints and Appeals Procedures; Role of Intermediary Organization (IMO).

The training brought together a total of forty (42) participants from government, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), community, and Oil palm Company.

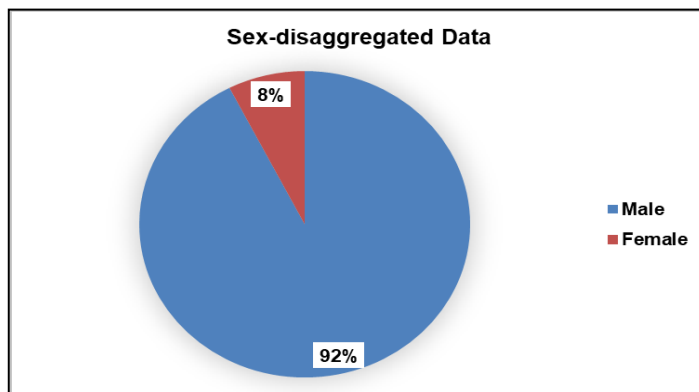


Figure 4 Sex-disaggregated Data

Figure 5 show that male was in the majority of 92% while female accounted for 8% depicting a significant gap in gender balance of 84%.

2.2.3 Activity 1.3 Training for communities on the standards and principles of the RSPO

Activity 1.3 has been completed 100% in two sets of training. The training modules and presentations included “key terms of RSPO Principles & Criteria (P&C), Sustainable Palm Oil and RSPO; RSPO Principles and Criteria (P&C) 2018; Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC); High Conservation Values (HCVs); RSPO Complaint & Appeal Procedure and Dispute Settlement Facility (DSF)”.

2.2.4 Pleebo City, Maryland County RSPO Community Training

Figure 2: indicates that Maryland training has fully been completed. The first phase of the RSPO community training was carried out from February 11-12, 2019 while the second phase was completed from October 22-23, 2019 in Pleebo City, Maryland County with members of the Multi-stakeholder Platform (MSP), called Reliable Partnership for Oil Palm Affected Communities (REPOPAC). Beneficiaries of the training came from the local county authorities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women and youth groups from 10 affected communities namely (Nonpopor, Glolobo, Old Sodoken, New Sodoken, Gbiwigben, Glololu, Cunuken, Cambo, Gbloloken, Bessiken).

The total of four (4) day community training on the standards and principles of the RSPO brought together the total of forty-one (41) participants from affected communities and non-affected communities across Maryland County. Figure 7 shows percentages of different categories of participants and Figure 8 shows the sex-disaggregated data.

As part of the training, the project team provided reading materials for all the topics covered. The training was presented using a projector to help participants visualize what was being thought

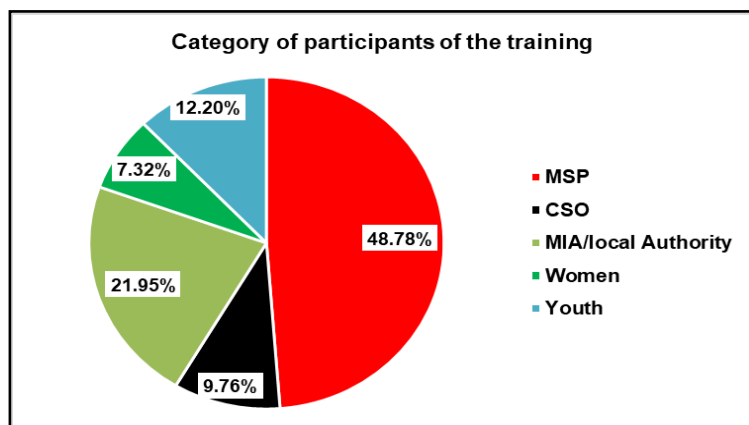


Figure 5 Category of Participants of the training

Figure 7 shows the distribution of the training participants. It depicts that the Multi-stakeholder Platform (MSP) were in the majority of 48.78%. Follow by the local county authorities of 21.95%; while 12.20% accounted for the youth representation and next Civil Society Organization (CSO) of 9.76%. And the least was the women group representation of 7.32%.

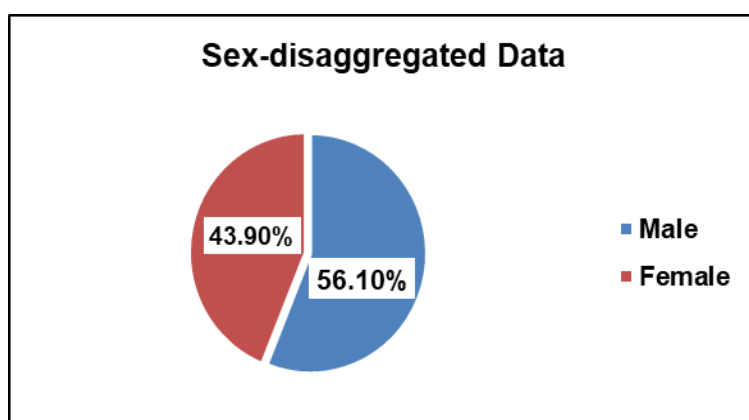


Figure 6 Sex-disaggregated Data

Figure 8 shows the cumulative sex-disaggregated data for both training of 41 participants. The result indicates that male was in the majority of 56.10% while female accounted for 43.90%.

2.2.5 Barclayville, Grand Kru County Training

The first phase of Grand Kru training was conducted from February 13-14, 2019 and the second phase was conducted from October 24-25, 2019 in Barclayville, Grand Kru County with members of the Multi-stakeholder Platform (MSP) called Concession Communities Development Advocacy Committee (COCODAC), local county authorities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women and youth groups from four (4) affected districts, namely (Garraway, Wedabo, Trehno, Poo-River). The total of four (4) day community training on the standards and principles of the RSPO in Barclayville

was held at the Silver Key Hotel and brought together a total of thirty-seven (37) participants from affected communities and non-affected communities across Grand Kru County. Participants included a representative from the superintendent office, clan chiefs, paramount chiefs, and representatives from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women and youth groups. Figure 9 shows percentages of different categories of participants and Figure 10 shows the sex-disaggregated data.

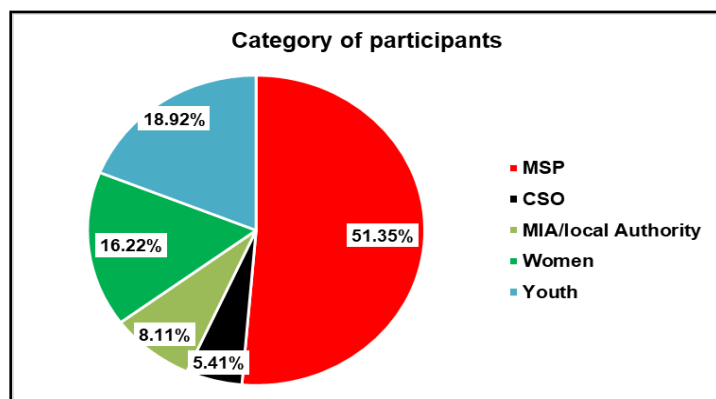


Figure 7 Category of Participants of the training

Figure 9 shows the distribution of the training participants. It indicates that the Multi-stakeholder Platform (MSP) were in the majority of 51.35%; followed by the local county authorities and youth having the same percentage of 13.51%; while women and CSO accounted for 10.81% representation.

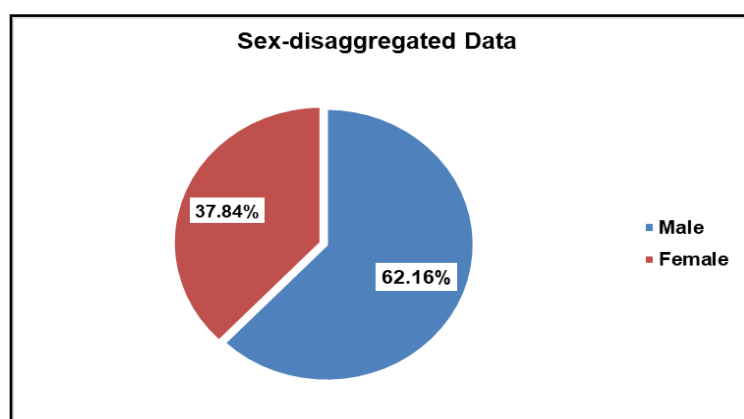


Figure 8 Sex-disaggregated Data

Figure 10 indicates that male was in the majority of 62.16% while female accounted for 37.84% with a gap of 24.32%.

2.2.6 Greenville City, Sinoe County RSPO Community Training

The first phase of Sinoe training was conducted from February 18-19, 2019 and the second phase was from October 28-29, 2019 in Greenville City, Sinoe County. Beneficiaries of the training were the Multi-stakeholder Platform (MSP) called United Communities Initiative (UCI), local county authorities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women and youth groups from four (4) affected districts, namely (Tarjuwon, Butaw, Du-Wolee, Nuomopoh, Nitrian, Tartweh). The total participants of the training were thirty-eight (38) participants from affected communities and non-affected communities across Sinoe County. Participants included clan chiefs, paramount chiefs, and

representatives from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women and youth groups. Figure 11 shows percentages of different categories of participants and Figure 12 shows the sex-disaggregated data.

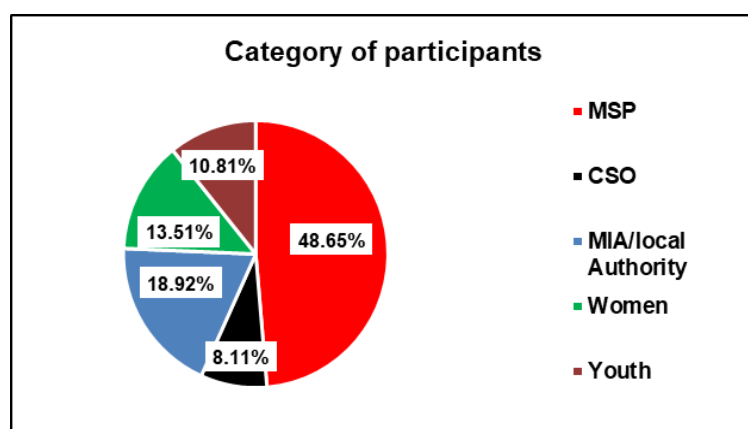


Figure 9 Category of Participants of the training

Figure 11 shows the different categories of participants. It indicates that the Multi-stakeholder Platform (MSP) were in the majority of 48.65%; followed by the local county authorities 18.92% and women accounted for 13.51% with youth 10.81% slightly above CSO 8.11%.

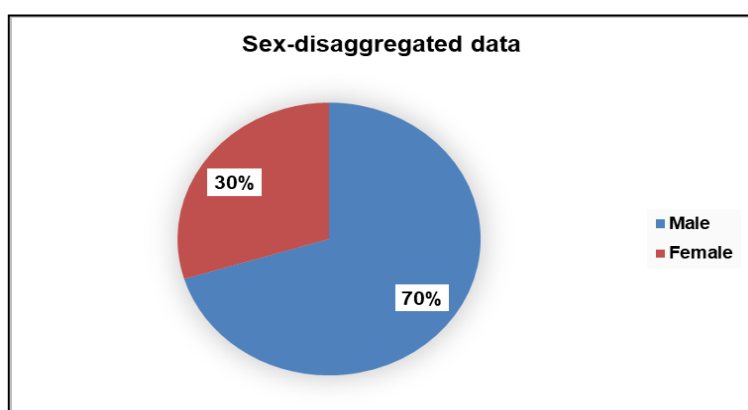


Figure 10 Sex-disaggregated Data

Figure 12 shows that male-dominated with 70.27% while female accounted for 29.73%.

2.2.7 Buchanan City, Grand Bassa County RSPO Community Training

The first phase of the training was done on February 22-23, 2019 and the second training was conducted from October 18-19, 2019. The training brought together members of the Multi-stakeholder Platform (MSP) called Progressive Action for Sustainable Advocacy Development Committee (PASADC), local county authorities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women and youth groups from thirty-three (33) affected communities, namely (Gbar town, Thompson, Geesaye town, Tarloe town, Blayah town, Sammytahn town, Zehmartar town, Kpeh town, Gbennee town, Whessah town, Glaygbo town, Buegborn town, New town, Joe-When town, Gold Maind town, Joe-pue town, Robert town, paye town, Mor town, Kapala town, Dehbar town, Zuukun town, Qwahkpojawn town, Gucyec Tar town, Wredesama town, Tay-Kpelleh town, Morris town, Borbor town, Dehyou town, Gbar town, James town, Main Gate town).

The workshop was attended by forty (40) participants from affected communities and non-affected communities across Grand Bassa County. Figure 13 shows percentages of different categories of participants and Figure 14 shows the sex-disaggregated data.

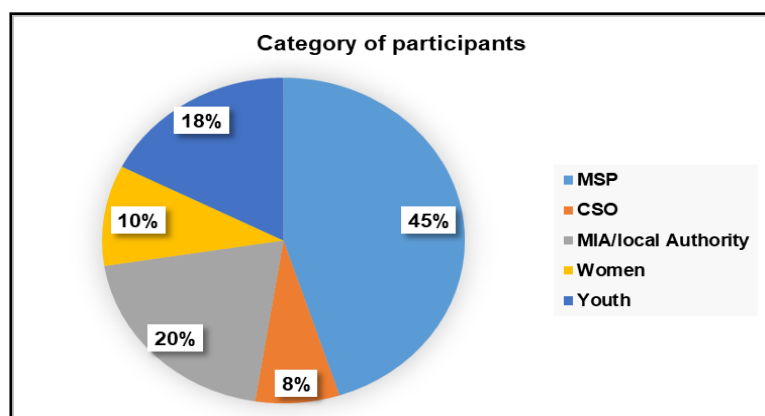


Figure 11 Category of Participants of the training

Figure 13 depicts that the Multi-stakeholder Platform (MSP) were in the majority with 45% followed by the local county authorities 20 % and women 10% while CSO accounted for 7% representation.

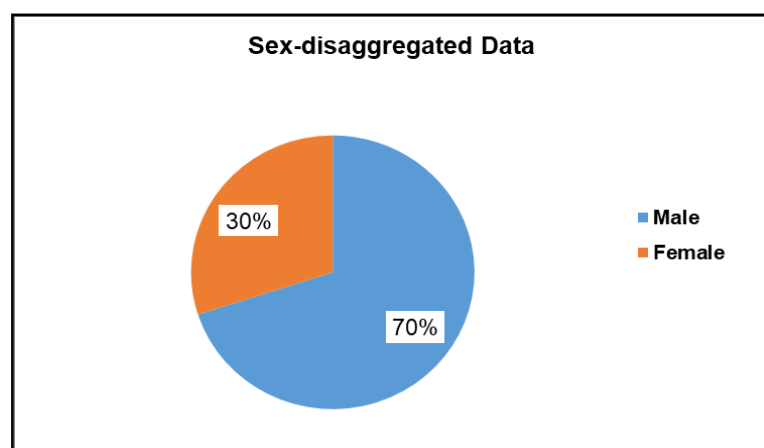


Figure 12 Sex-disaggregated Data

Figure 13 shows that male-dominated with 70% while female accounted for 30%.

2.2.8 Bomi and Cape Mount Counties cluster Training

The first phase of the joint training was conducted from February 26-27, 2019 and the second phase was conducted from 16-17, 2019 with members of the Multi-stakeholder Platforms (MSP) called Senjeh Action for Peace Advocacy and Development (SAPAD), Project Affected Communities (PAC), and the Zodia Land Management Committee (ZLMC). Also, the local county authorities, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women and youth groups from thirty-eight (38) affected communities including Gorbala Clan, Klay district, Bomi: Male ma town, Golodee Lasana town; Zeppeh Clan, Senjeh District, Bomi: Varngbey town, Brown village, Family town, Gbah Jahket town, Goluson town, Dorma town, Beh Sao town, Gaya Hill, Moore town, Wealitai town, Sonila town, karmo Village and **Manoah Clan**: Beafinie town, Zamian town, Klay mantua town, Gbaisumon town, Bornon village. In Madina Township, Lower Garwula District, Cape Mount County, the following communities are affected: Timbo town, Damah town, Senii town, Sengamah town, Johnson town, Lain town, Dendewea town, Becca town, Kenema town, Kaylia town, Kon town, Nimba town,

Ballah town, Gondeh town, Madina # 2, Siaffa Keh, Gbah Foboi, Gon Zodua, Falie town. There was a total of thirty-eight (39) participants from affected communities which include the clan chiefs, paramount chiefs, and representatives from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women and youth groups. Figure 11 shows percentages of different categories of participants and Figure 12 shows the sex-disaggregated data.

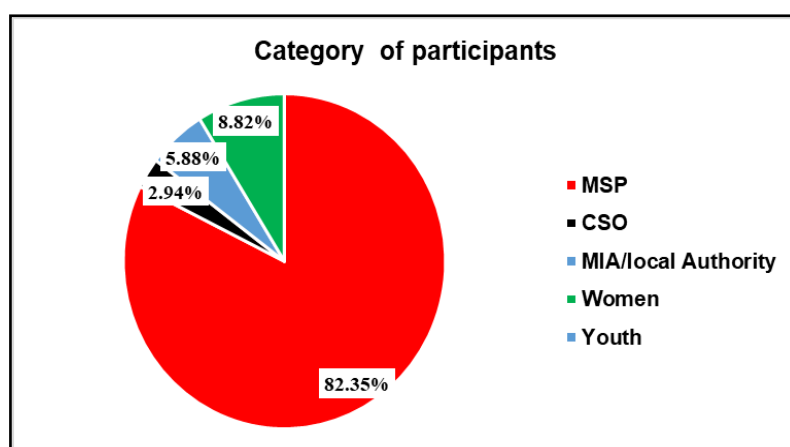


Figure 13 Category of Participants of the training

Figure 15 shows the distribution of the training participants. It depicts that the Multistakeholder Platforms (MSP) dominated with 82.35%. This is due to bringing the three MSPs together into one cluster. Subsequently, the other categories fall far below the MSP, as indicated in the chart above.

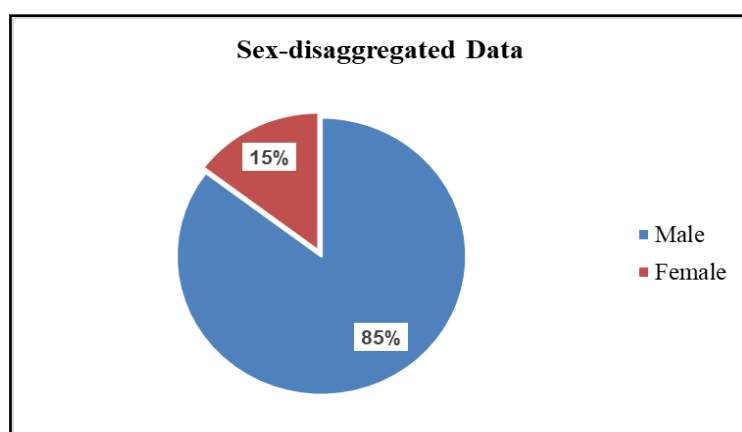


Figure 14 Sex-disaggregated Data

Figure 16 shows that male was in the majority of 85% while female accounted for 15%.

During the community training, an analysis of the project beneficiaries Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) was conducted with the project beneficiaries especially the Multi-stakeholder Platform members. The overall objective of SWOT Analysis was to analyze the beneficiaries' strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats that they faced. Moreover, It is important to provide the needed information both for the RSPO and SDI and to use this information to plan future engagements but mainly use the information to work with the especially the MSPs and other community members by sustaining them, to minimize the threats, and take the greatest possible advantage of opportunities available to them in future projects to make our communities viable and resilient. Though SWOT Analysis should be conducted at the startup of the

project, but was conducted at the end to inform future projects and as a form of end evaluation of the project's impact. Find below the results of the SWOT Analysis conducted with all the MSPs (Table 4)

2.2.9 SWOT Analysis of Project beneficiaries

<p><u>Strength</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to hold regular community meetings • Space to engage with the concessions companies • Awareness of support on social and environmental sustainability • Rights to customary land ownership • Governance structure and legalization of their structures • Training opportunities provided and available from CSOs and other actors • Annual convention of the MSPS 	<p><u>Weakness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coordination/collaboration between the MSP and local leaders • Lack of mobility, financial supports, and office space • Poor communication opportunity to share information and reach out to other MSPs • Limited information due to lack of communication opportunities • Poor attendance during regular meetings • Personal interest, lack of trust • Lack of collective decision making
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition by Government, CSOs and NGOs • Trainings (community empowerment) • Annual MSPs conventions • New communication channels amongst MSPs • Information to engage with companies in a responsible and sustainable manner 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Companies failure to consult with MSPs on issues affecting communities • Political influence • Corruption • Rule and divide method • Companies unwillingness to attend agreed monthly community meetings • Failure to comply with the concession agreement. • Poor link between MSP/GOV./ companies

2.2.10 Activity 1.4 Develop simplify version and print the RSPO standards and principles into fliers for awareness at the national and local level

This activity has successfully been completed against it priority target according to the schedule indicated in the workplan attached, *Appendix 1 Framework & Activities Plan*. One thousand five hundred (1,500) pieces of fliers of different kinds (posters, bumper stickers, Pull-Up banners) with messages of the RSPO 8 Principles and Criteria and Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) have already been printed. Distribution of these awareness materials is already ongoing at both the national level and local levels at different meetings, workshops and training.

2.3 Detail description of work progress

No	Result	Activities	Description of work completed	% of completion (against target)
2.	Compliance to national and international laws and best practices (FPIC, HCV and HCS principles, and UN Business and Human Rights Principles) by oil palm companies	2.1	Organize and facilitate national level stakeholders' information sharing meetings	100%
		2.2	Organize and facilitate one direct community - investor meetings	75%
		2.3	Organize national level peer review meetings on monitoring reports	100%
		2.4	Conduct quarterly radio campaigns nationally and locally on prospects and challenges within the oil palm sector	100%
3.	Increased actors working to bridge the existing gaps between local communities and oil palm companies	3.1	Participate in Regional dialogue on improving communications and relations of oil palm companies in West Africa	100%
		3.2	Work with community leaders and interest groups (women and youth) to directly participate in community negotiations with oil palm companies	100%
		3.3	Support direct community participation in the national interpretation of the RSPO Principles and standards in Liberia	100%
		3.4	Conduct Post Training Assessment in project communities	100%

2.4 Organize and facilitate national level stakeholders' information sharing meetings

There were total of three meetings held under this activity. The first was conducted on August 23, 2019; the second on September 18, 2019 and the last on October 3, 2019; all at the Corina Hotel in Sinkor, Monrovia. The aim of the meeting was to facilitate information sharing among NGOs and affected communities to assess compliance to national and international laws and best practices (FPIC, HCS and HCV principles and UN Business and Human Rights principles) by oil palm companies. Several important pieces of information such companies compliance to FPIC, achievements of the MSPs, challenges; and ways forward were shared by the Multi-stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) called Reliable Partnership for Oil Palm Affected Communities (REPOPAC) Maryland county; Concession Communities Development Advocacy Committee (COCODAC), Grand Kru County; United Communities Initiative (UCI), Sinoe County; Progressive Action for Sustainable Advocacy Development Committee (PASADC) Grand Bassa County; Senjeh Action for Peace Advocacy and Development (SAPAD) Bomi County; Project Affected Communities (PAC), and the Zodua Land Management Committee (ZLMC) of Cape Mount County. Detailed information can be found in the different presentations and in the challenge and concern section of the report. Also, the National Bureau of Concession (NBC), National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia (NOPPOL), and the Independent National Commission Human Rights (INCHR) also presented essential information. The meeting brought together the total of forty-five (45) participants from affected communities which include the clan chiefs, paramount chiefs, and representatives from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), women and youth groups. Figure 17 shows percentages of different categories of participants and Figure 18 shows the sex-disaggregated data.

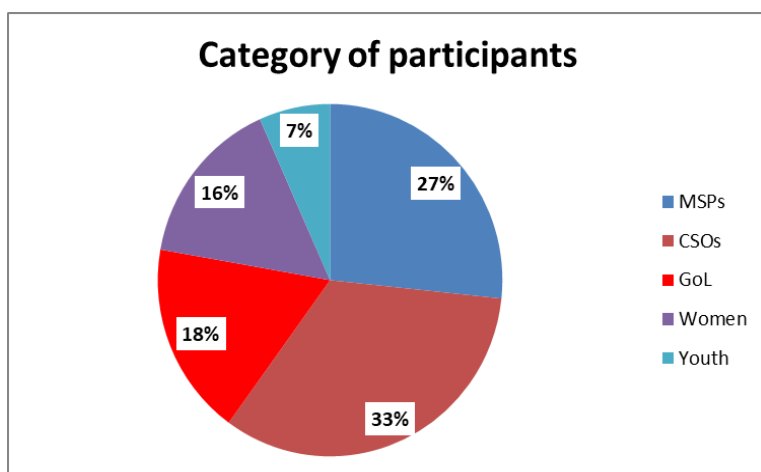


Figure 15 Category of Participants of the training

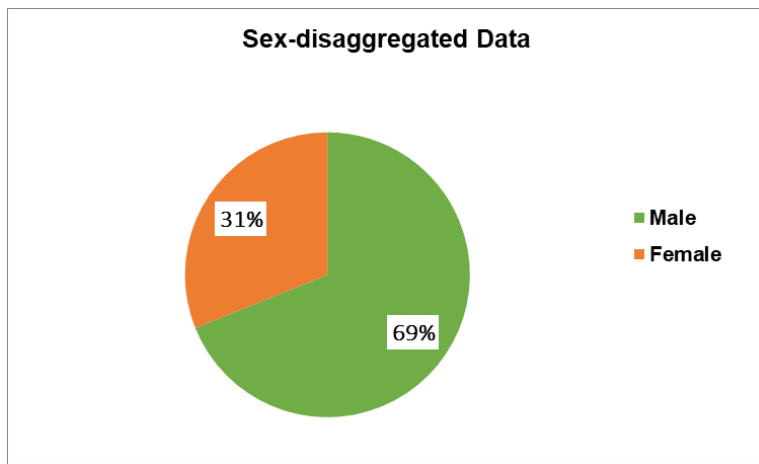


Figure 16 Sex-disaggregated Data

Figure 17 shows the distribution of the training participants. It depicts that CSOs dominated with 33%, MSPs came next with 27%, and third GoL 18% and women and youth fell far below the MSPs and CSOs.

2.5 Organize and facilitate one direct community - investor meetings

A one day face to face dialogue was held on on September 21, 2019 in Grand Bassa County between Gbenee Town, Joegbahn Clan, Grand Bassa County and the Equatorial Palm Oil (EPO). The purpose of the meeting was to hear the concerns of the five aggrieved communities; document their concerns in a form and manner that it is presentable to EPO; and Select delegates from the communities that will present their concerns to EPO. The meeting was organized by the aggrieved untied community and facilitated by SDI. This group was putted together by the five aggrieved communities affected by EPO concession activities. Also, the dialogue aimed to discuss issues surrounding the companies' compliance to provision in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and sharing information related to compliance to national and international laws such as (FPIC, HCV, HCS, etc).

The meeting resulted in the an improved community and company relationship that at least companies and communities members shall have the space to dialogue on issues of compliance and sharing information related to the operations of oil palm company. This is graded at 75 percent as we thought at bringing the entire county together will not show the needed impact and or output so narrow this down to one community in which we saw the need to improve engagement between the communities and GVL.

2.6 Organize national level peer review meetings on monitoring reports

This event was conducted from July 3-4, 2019 at the Corina Hotel Tubman Boulevard, Monrovia. The two-day meeting aimed at national level stakeholders present on their monitoring tools and share experiences on the (positive, negative, challenges, and prospects) associated with compliance in the oil palm sector. The meeting brought together 55 participants especially from national level CSOs and relevant government agencies. The Environmental Protection Agency presented on its various monitoring tools especially the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). Mr. Edward G. Wingbah, Asst. Manager, County Coordination who presented on behalf of EPA said, the monitoring process as indicated in Part III Section 24 of the EMPL is intended to ensure that environmental mitigations measures enshrined in the ESIA - project planning, design and decision-making are fully implemented. Because of its numerous impacts, the oil palm industry is monitored by the EPA

quarterly and annually. Quarterly monitoring is carried out by environmental inspectors while annual monitoring is done by the central office. Details of EPA monitoring tools can be found in the presentation.

There were presentations also done by Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), national Bureau of Concession (NBC), Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR), Friends of Frabanie International, and Volunteers to Support Int'l Efforts in Developing Africa (VOSIEDA), and Timby (this is My Backyard) with details in their presentations available. Figure 19 shows percentages of different categories of participants and Figure 20 shows the sex-disaggregated data.

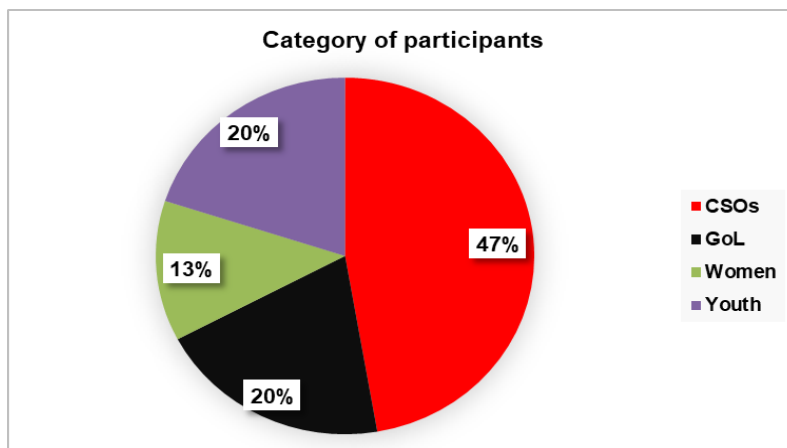


Figure 17 Category of Participants of the training

Figure 19 shows the distribution of the training participants with CSOs dominated with 47%, with GoL and Youth equivalent to 20% and being the least of 13%.

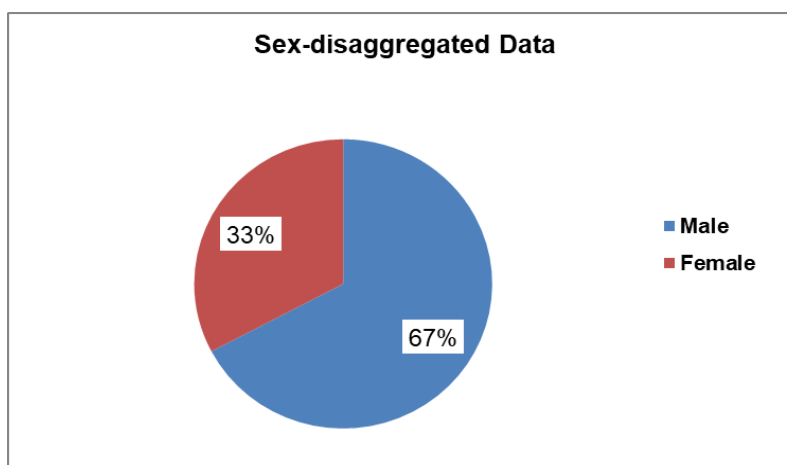


Figure 18 Sex-disaggregated Data

Figure 20 shows that male was in the majority of 67% while female accounted for 33% with a gender gap of 34%.

2.7 Conduct quarterly radio campaigns nationally and locally on prospects and challenges within the oil palm sector

Conduct quarterly radio campaigns nationally and locally on prospects and challenges within the oil palm sector is 80% complete, as indicated in (figure 4 above). As per the approved schedule (see attached), this activity should be implemented three times in March, June and September 2019.

In implementing this activity, several radio campaigns have been ongoing since the inception of the community training from February 11-12, 2019 in Pleebo, Maryland County. During the training, the Voice of Pleebo FM 93.5 MHz was invited to cover the training. The Project Officer, Richard N. Sam was interviewed as well as participants. These recordings were also aired in the evening on Voice of Pleebo FM 93.5 MHz and relied in counties and Monrovia.

Also on February 19, 2019, a live interview was conducted at the Youth Center in Greenville, Sinoe County during the community training.

At the national level, on March 18, 2019, the Prime Morning Drive (PMD)/Live program on the Prime Communications Network, Inc hosted Richard N. Sam, Project Officer for an hour appearance in the studio to talk about the achievements, prospects, and challenges of the RSPO project. During these talk shows, the discussion was based on a brief overview of the project-title, objectives, activities, expected outcomes, duration, geographical scope; implementation of Project activities, and project launch.

2.8 Participate in Regional dialogue on improving communications and relations of oil palm companies in West Africa

Figure 20 shows percentages of different categories of participants and Figure 21 shows the sex-disaggregated data.

The two-day regional oil palm dialogue from November 27-28, 2019, at the Corina Hotel, Tubman Boulevard, Sinkor-Monrovia, has been completed successfully. The conference brought together participants from Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Liberia.

The conference sought to draw lessons learned and strategies used by different actors across West Africa to protect people, the planet while promoting economic growth and development, identify gaps in the current approaches and strategies to address non-compliance to international laws and standards, and increase collaboration and build a network of actors to help achieve sustainable palm oil production while promoting economic growth and development.

At the end of the dialogue, the delegates came out with a declaration outlining some challenges, and ways to address them. According to the declaration, some countries in the region are initiating reforms to increase financial flow through investment to address poor governance, and management of natural resources, including land and forests. The group observed also that despite the reforms, land acquisition by oil palm companies is often characterized by lack of respect for the rights of local communities.

The delegates in their declaration notes with emphasis that community rights should be at the center of natural resource governance and management, especially those related to land lease agreements.

Delegates also want to ensure that oil palm companies respect the collective rights of customary land owners and users and operate in a way that enables communities to secure benefits from their resource; ensure access to information through robust monitoring and reporting of oil palm

companies' compliance to national laws, and international standards as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, and ensure that women and other marginalized people have their rights respected, including access and equal participation in natural resource management with specific focus on land.

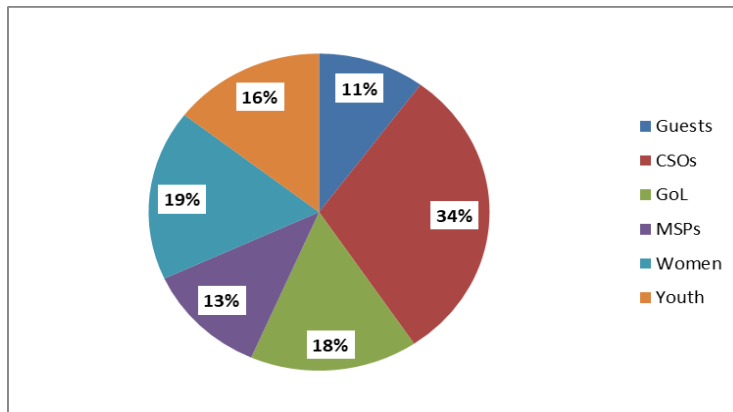


Figure 19 Category of Participants of the training

Figure 20 shows the distribution of the training participants with CSOs in majority with 34% followed by women and third happens to be GoL and Youth equivalent to 16%.

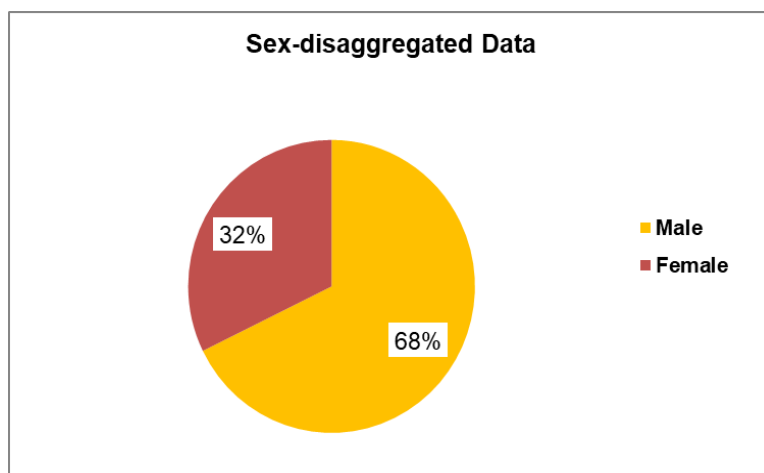


Figure 20 Sex-disaggregated Data

Figure 21 shows that male was in the majority of 68% while female accounted for 32% with a gender gap of 36%.

2.9 Work with community leaders and interest groups (women and youth) to directly participate in community negotiations with oil palm companies

Work with community leaders and interest groups (women and youth) to directly participate in community negotiations with oil palm companies is 100% complete because it is directly linked to Activity 2.2 Organize and facilitate one direct community - investor meetings and subsequent activities in the project. Therefore, Activity 3.2: has a start to start dependency, which means, it is be completed when most of its preceding tasks are implemented. Therefore communities have been involved in series of meetings with companies relating to rights and benefits spelled put in the MoU.

2.10 Support direct community participation in the national interpretation of the RSPO Principles and standards in Liberia

Support direct community participation in the national interpretation of the RSPO Principles and standards in Liberia has been completed 100%. In line with completing this activity, the RSPO P&C Roadshow & National Interpretation Kickoff Event was conducted in Monrovia, Liberia on March 12, 2019, at the Golden Gate Hotel. The event brought together participants from the Oil Palm Technical Working Group (OPTWG) Secretariat, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and National and International organizations, two members each of the Multistakeholder Platform (MSP) from the six counties (Maryland, Grand Kru, Sinoe, Grand Bassa, Bomi and Cape Mount). Importantly, the purpose of the workshop was to present RSPO Principles and Criteria (P&C) 2018 to the Liberian stakeholders, and explain the major changes and their implications for sustainable palm oil production in the country; to kick-start discussions on a possible National Interpretation of P&C 2018. Moreover, through all our nation level meetings such as the information sharing meeting and monitoring reports meetings, national level training with the representation of community members, the NI process was part of the agenda where communities made their inputs and were to the NI meetings by CSOs for possible consideration.

2.11 Conduct Post Training Assessment in project communities

Conduct Post Training Assessment in project communities is 100% complete, as indicated in (figure 2 above). This activity has two phases (baseline survey and impact assessment). Both phases have been completed. These surveys were conducted on the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) of Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) Principles and Criteria in the four project counties in the Southeastern part of Liberia from January 10-31, 2019 and the post-assessment was conducted from December 5-20, 2019 in the same counties. The communities were randomly selected and couples of closed and open-ended questions were asked through household survey and Focus Group Discussion (FGP).

3 Is there any deviation from the original plan/target?

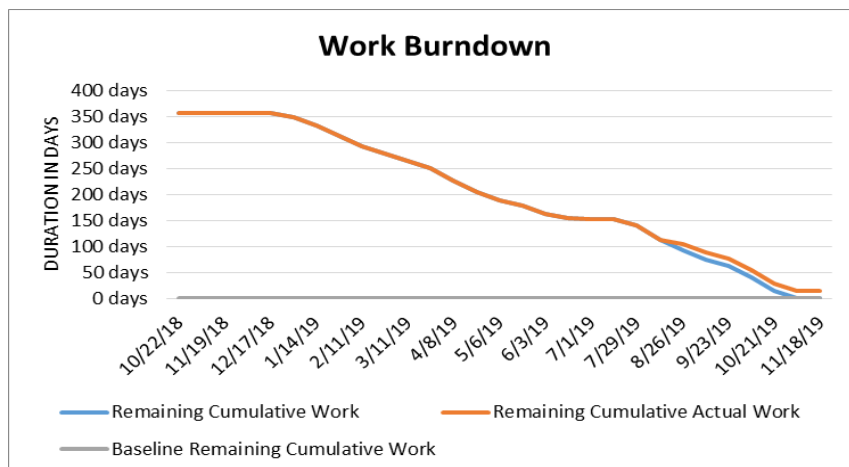


Figure 21 Work Burndown

Figure 22 shows no deviation from the original plan/target. The Remaining Cumulative Work line is not steeper than the Remaining Cumulative Actual Work line in the project. This means the project is not late or has not deviated from the original plan and has successfully completed all the tasks. In the instance where Remaining Cumulative Work line is steeper than Remaining Cumulative Actual Work, then the project may be late or has deviated; since this not the case, there is no implication to the oversll plan or target.

4 Challenges faced during the project

The challenges remain the same throughout the project implementation. Below are the challenges encountered.

- Bad road condition, especially during the rainy season, may slow project implementation
- The low educational level of the Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) members may slow the learning and understanding of the RSPO Standards and Principles.
- Members of the MSP are also working with the company which may sometimes hinder effective advocacy and campaign.
- MSPs are unable to meet periodically to plan and coordinate due to the low financial capacity

5 Participants' Concerns and Comments

During the two phases of training and troubleshooting of the RSPO principles held in the counties and events held at the national level, several lessons have been captured based on concerns and comments from participants which include:

- Training participants said that there is limited transparency of the company due to limited provision of information by the companies.
- The MSPs and other participants said the companies did not follow the right FPIC process. Moreover, FPIC is a continuous process but companies do not engage communities as appropriate.
- It was reported that the companies do not follow the right negotiation process since community representatives have limited in negotiation and fair deal.
- Affected communities are interested in Smallholder palm oil production, but there is no smallholder scheme yet. They want to know more about the Mechanisms to promote Smallholders program.
- Large acquisitions of land by concessionaires have resulted in no lands for community members; community wants to know the way forward to address this problem?
- What alternative livelihoods can be provided since no availability of farming lands?
- There were natural palms that community members depended on for food and to generate income, but with the acquisition of lands by concessionaires, almost all are lost; are there alternatives?
- Community members are being accused of palm theft when seen with locally made palm oil? This is becoming a growing concern.
- Participants requested capacity building in conflict resolution through Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) supported by the National Bureau of Concession (NBC).
- Participants of the training also recommended that community should form part of policy formulation that affects them.
- The MSP recommended that the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) should support its by-laws formulation and article of incorporation.

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

The overall objective of this project is to improve communication and understanding of the RSPO Standard and mechanisms and their application in Liberia and at the West Africa Level. Through the training of rights-based NGOs and communities affected by Oil palm plantation on how to effectively use the RSPO standards and mechanisms, and how to effectively and efficiently engage to help reduce palm oil-related conflicts.

Results of the training and community responses indicate that the training was necessary because participants expressed lots of interests and even wished for more training of a sort. The training modules and materials were simplified to the understanding of the participants, which raised their interests in learning more.

Moreover, based on the feedback and concerns of the participants such as “the training is good but why are you people bringing it a little late to us” suggests that community members need more education and awareness and should be more engaged with the RSPO Standards and Mechanisms and other International laws.

Results of the training and discussion of contemporary issues such as transparency, communication, land rights, FPIC, community representation & consultations, Grievance/disputes, HCVs (socio-cultural), compensation, and Contribution to local development indicate that there is limited transparency from company relating to useful information. Also companies are not in compliance with the Free Prior and Informed Consent.

There is a still need for more community awareness and promotion and implementation of the RSPO Smallholder Scheme and training of updated principles. Importantly, I would like to refer to the SWOT Analysis; RSPO should focus on making communities more resilient by enhancing their strengths and maximizing opportunities identified during the project; while reducing the threats and helping them to overcome their weaknesses.

Date: **January 31, 2020**

Prepared by: **Richard N. Sam**

Designation: **Community Rights and Corporate Governance Program (CRCGP), Project Officer**

Signature:

