

Monitoring project: FPIC (Free Prior and Informed Consent), Sinoe, Liberia

Context

Commercial-scale oil palm development is relatively new in Liberia and is a key component of the Poverty Reduction Strategy of the Liberian Government. This strategy encourages direct investment in the agricultural sector and investments to build the economies in the counties of the country through employment and stimulation of the local economies. In this context, the Liberian Government has granted concessions for oil palm plantations to several companies.

All these companies have made commitments to sustainable practices, including compliance to FPIC. Although, they have been the subject of complaints made either by communities or NGOs, specifically alleging FPIC violations. Investigations into these allegations have proven to be challenging. In at least one case, separate investigations into the same complaint have yielded very different conclusions. A more structured and sustained program of verification and monitoring is required to help companies and other stakeholders understand the actual conditions on the ground, including the complexities of implementing FPIC with largely impoverished communities in a post-conflict context, which includes forced abandonment of towns and tribal lands during the war.

Kumacaya is an innovation enabling companies to invest in civil society in order to monitor what is happening on the ground (in their supply chains and or own plantations), and to verify that their NDPE¹ commitments are being delivered where they most count. The idea is to work with Civil Society Organisations and experts to collect field data to provide real-time information. As an independent monitoring and verification system, Kumacaya collaborates with local people who are located at the source of the supply chain, who are well placed to identify compliance and areas of improvement.

Topic

Kumacaya has identified a high demand from both companies and campaigning organisations, for an independent source of information regarding Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). In particular, there is a need to show companies the impact of their work on communities who are linked to or affected by their operations on the ground.

Companies around the world including all TFT members have made specific commitments to the FPIC principle in their NDPE policies, but it is widely acknowledged that application of the principle on the ground is highly variable between contexts.

This weak application can be attributed to:

- local level resistance due to established operational practices that are hard to change
- historical and traditional rights which are diverse and complex
- complexity faced on the ground with different socioeconomic groups, political frameworks and historical/cultural contexts, which can make standardisation difficult
- company capacity constraints and the need for training of local field staff
- established operational practices taken from different operating contexts that are hard to change
- lack of familiarity among counterparts in the process (community representatives, NGOs) with FPIC principles and practices

Whatever factors are most important in any one situation, it is currently very challenging for company heads to know where the highest risks of failure are present. A well-structured verification and monitoring process can provide better visibility and identify gaps in understanding and practice, internally and externally, which would allow companies and other stakeholders to mitigate risks and implement improvements or corrective actions.

¹ No deforestation, no peat & no exploitation

In order to begin to address this information gap, Kumacaya is initiating broad scale monitoring in Liberia on the degree of FPIC application related to (i) new land acquisition and development, as well as (2) company-community relations including conflict management.

Objective

The objective of this Kumacaya monitoring project on FPIC will target data collection to identify factors suggesting good FPIC application in land negotiations and solid community relations programmes. It will also look for weak FPIC application and weak or deficient grievance management systems.

Questions that will be answered but not exclusively:

- Was FPIC process done? Did this process respect the FPIC?
- Was it done properly?
 - If not, what are the gaps and obstacles?
 - If yes, are communities around the palm plantations happy about this process and outcomes?

Location

This Kumacaya monitoring project will take place in: **Sinoe county in Liberia**

Requirement

This is a monitoring project and the expectation is to have regular reporting throughout the monitoring period on all aspect of application of FPIC.

Deadline

Application should be submitted at liberia@kumacaya.org until 2018, November 2nd

