
Communities in West and Central Africa are Determined to Put a Stop to Oil Palm Plantations Expansion

For decades, the palm oil industry has been targeting countries in West and Central Africa for their expansion plans. But their plans have not yet materialized and the expansion has not been as companies were expecting it to be. Strong community resistance has been a key factor in the companies' failed attempts to occupy more of the land that governments had promised to set aside for their industrial plantations.

Grassroots organizations, community groups and activists from the region have been coming together since 2013—in Cameroon, Gabon, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast—to share experiences of the devastating impacts that this monoculture model has on their livelihoods and wellbeing. To better organize and resist this invasion, they created the Informal Alliance Against the Expansion of Industrial Oil Palm Plantations in West and Central Africa.

Some important aspects of this resistance is the support of communities reclaiming their lands; the collective sharing and learning about the tactics companies use for imposing and expanding their plantations; the commitment to ensure safe spaces for women to discuss the specific impacts that industrial oil palm plantations have on their lives; and women's involvement in these struggles and in the Alliance.

In May 2022, Alliance members met again and released a declaration to keep breaking the silence of the many abuses around industrial plantations and to reaffirm their strong commitment to resist their expansion in defence of their territories and lives.

Let's unite in disseminating their messages widely and loudly!

STOP LAND GRABS FOR MONOCULTURE PLANTATIONS IN AFRICA AND THE WORLD!

From 22 to 29 May 2022 in Aboisso, Côte d'Ivoire, we – community members, activists, and land and human rights defenders from West and Central Africa-- gathered for a meeting of an informal alliance formed to fight against industrial monocultures where we discussed the impacts of plantations on people's daily lives.

The objective of the gathering was for those involved in these struggles and for those who support them to understand the innovative strategies that corporations use to grab the lands of communities. The gathering was also an opportunity for us to evaluate the impacts of COVID 19 on our struggles and to share information and strategies to stop the expansion of monoculture plantations in Africa.

During the gathering, community leaders and activists from across Central and West Africa shared vivid testimonies about the various violations taking place in their communities, leading to the following decisions by the Alliance members:

- We will boycott the RSPO by ceasing all links between our organisations and this certification

body

- We will promote food sovereignty in all our territories
- We will fight against the expansion of oil palm plantations
- We will recover the lands taken from communities by multinational corporations and governments

These decisions are based on the experiences of the citizens and populations living around and in the areas of monoculture plantations. Today it is very clear that these populations are experiencing enormous difficulties in meeting their primary food needs because land is increasingly scarce and has been seized for the monoculture plantations of agro-industrial companies.

Women, girls and children in these plantation areas experience the most profound injustices and inequalities. Their dignity is undermined and they face daily exploitation.

Women workers on these plantations are silently subjected to the most extreme humiliations, from impossible palm nut collection quotas to demands for sexual favours by company security guards who accuse them of stealing fallen palm fruits.

We demand an end to the moral torture of our daughters and sisters!

We stand in solidarity with those communities struggling for their lands and natural resources, to whom promises are always made but never kept!

We stand in solidarity with those communities that are intimidated every day by agribusiness companies and we stand in solidarity against the divisive strategies used by these companies!

Countries in Central Africa, West Africa and around the world are suffering the same abuses and harassment.

We will break the silence and denounce all the various forms of land, water, forest and other natural resource grabbing and the violations suffered and experienced around agro-industrial plantations, and we will continue to encourage the creation and mobilisation of collectives and groups to stop these abuses and speak with one voice against them.

These lands are ours; we must preserve and defend them!

Our lands, the future of our children!
Our lands, our offices!
Give us back our land!

Aboisso, 29 May 2022

Alliance members:

Réseau des Acteurs du Développement Durable (RADD) - Cameroon

Struggle to Economize our Future Environment (SEFE) - Cameroon

Synergie Nationale des Paysans et Riverains du Cameroun (SYNAPARCAM) – Cameroon

Centre des Droits de l'Homme et du Développement (CDHD) – Congo-Brazzaville

Concertation Nationale des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles du Congo (CNOP)- Congo-Brazzaville

Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement (JVE) – Côte d'Ivoire

Réseau des Femmes Braves (REFEB) – Côte d'Ivoire
Confédération Paysanne du Congo – DR Congo
Réseau d'information et d'appui aux ONG (RIAO-RDC) - DR Congo
MUYISSI-Environment – Gabon
Young Volunteers for the Environment (YVE) – Ghana
Natural Resource Women's Platform – Liberia
Joegbahn Land Protection Organization – Liberia
ERA/Community Forest Watch – Nigeria
Women's Network Against Rural Plantations Injustice (WONARPI)– Sierra Leone
Malen Land Owners' Alliance (MALOA) – Sierra Leone
Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF) – Sierra Leone
Bujumba Sustainability Development Association (BUSDA) – Uganda
GRAIN – International
WRM – International