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Global Greengrants Fund Reporting Guidelines

This form must be completed within one year of the date of the Award Letter. Please send reports to your recommending advisor and grantreports@greengrants.org. The questions below are intended to help us understand how you used the funds and what kinds of change or outcomes you have seen so far. Please feel free to include any additional information.

Organization Name: Sierra Leone Land Alliance

Advisor Name: Esther Finda Kande

Date of Report: December 2023

Grant Number: 2023-8077

Grant Amount: \$5,000.00

1. Please describe how you used the support from Global Greengrants Fund, providing examples whenever possible (2 pages maximum).

The Sierra Leone Land Alliance convened a one-day dialogue Dubbed Community Barray Tok on a project supported by Global Green Grants titled: ***Securing land and resource rights and improving governance in Koinadugu district of Sierra Leone*** on 18th September, 2023, at the Koinadugu district council hall in Kabala Town. The dialogue brought together more than 50 participants from forest sector and commodity supply chain stakeholders, Police officers, Section chief and village headmen, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, NGOs, governments, and non-governmental and community-based groupings. Participants represented a broad diversity of professional expertise and experience relevant to the design and implementation of deforestation-free commitments in Indonesia and globally. The objective of the dialogue was to establish a multistakeholder platform as a social accountability mechanism through a '**Community Barray Tok**' dialogue session in Koinadugu district of Sierra Leone.

- To organize media campaigns and community awareness raising on the effect of deforestation and timber logging in the fight against climate change in Koinadugu of Sierra Leone

The Barray Tok was chaired by the Country Director of Amnesty International who doubles as Chairman for the Sierra Leone Land Alliance. In his opening remarks, he recounted how deforestation has been and continue to be a serious human rights issues in Sierra Leone and Koinadugu district is no exception, pointing out that if modalities are not put in place to check the operations of miming companies all our forests will be destroyed by foreign nationals and government officials will take the responsibilities. He lauded the organizers for coming up with such initiatives bringing together district stakeholders to chat the way forward gearing towards addressing illegal logging and deforestation in the district.

The Deputy Chief Administrative officer of the Koinadugu district council Mr. Aminu Sandy lamented on the issue of timber logging and the rate at which it is been conducted in the

district. He narrated government policies that are in place and the district council committee on land and the environment strategies to work with registered companies in the district to regulate their operations. However, he gave some of the challenges they are confronted with companies such as mining in areas that are not allocated to them, payment of mining lease agreement to communities that own their land, illegal detention of citizens by the police especially land rights advocates, destruction of the roads by timber trucks etc.

The Director of the Sierra Leone Land Alliance gave a rundown about the enacted Customary Land Rights Act 2022 key among he said, the new Land Rights Act recognizes four categories of land ownership: private, customary, public, and government. The law stipulates that communities will be responsible for: self-identifying and defining their boundaries, establishing a local land management body, and managing community land and natural resources – all through the active inclusion of women, youth, elders, and minorities.

The law demonstrates that Sierra Leone Land Alliance policy advocacy campaign was largely successful. The document as a whole represents a historic opportunity for the nation by presenting guidelines for the legislature to write and approve land laws that will define and secure the land rights of all Sierra Leoneans, paving the road for sustainable growth, community harmony, and equitable investment.

Beyond specific policy reforms, participants noted that clarifying land tenure is perhaps the most fundamental policy adjustment needed. Despite the recent enactment of the new land law regarding customary land rights, recognition of rights remains weak. Part of the problem is that community land use is not mapped when potentially overlapping concessions are allocated, so community land is difficult to incorporate during spatial planning processes. Although spatial planning is underway, the process is immensely complex and is taking a long time, during which tenure uncertainty prevails. Further, no agency is mandated to resolve land conflicts, meaning that these are left to the courts to settle. Decisions might result in imprisonment of individuals convicted of wrongdoing, but this approach does not resolve underlying issues.

2. Who benefitted from these activities and how? Please be specific if beneficiaries include women, men, youth, indigenous peoples, etc. (1 page maximum):

The frontline beneficiaries of the project are Government officials to include police officers, district council representatives and traditional leaders, more importantly, local indigenous people and civil society groups in Koinadugu district. They were provided with relevant information on the environment and ways they can participate in the protection of their forests including tips on how to work with security forces when dealing with timber loggers. It must be known that timber logging is a serious environmental threat in the district. Participants represented a broad diversity of professional expertise and experience relevant to the design and implementation of deforestation-free commitments in Koinadugu district.

The dialogue serves as a platform for open discussions with stakeholders in the district as civil society actors on the environment shared their concerns over the rapid conversion to agriculture. Expanding agriculture, due to increased demand and shifts in diet toward greater meat consumption, is responsible for most of the district's deforestation. In addition, agricultural products, such as soy and palm oil, are used in an ever-increasing list of products, from animal feed to lipstick to biofuels. Rising demand has created incentives to convert forests to farmland and ranch land. Once a forest is lost to agriculture, it is usually gone forever—along with many of the plants and animals that once lived there. Hence our dialogue session helped community stakeholders to stop damaging the environment and resort to reforestation and land restoration initiatives.

Secondly, fires are a natural and beneficial element of many forest landscapes, but they are problematic when they occur in the wrong place, at the wrong frequency, or at the wrong severity. Climate change and wildfires also mutually reinforce each other, and the fires burning today are bigger, more intense, and longer lasting than before. Each year, hundreds of acres of forest are destroyed or degraded by fire. Fire is often used to clear land for other purposes like planting crops. These fires not only alter the structure and composition of forests, but they can open up forests to invasive species, threaten biological diversity, alter water cycles and soil fertility, and destroy the livelihoods of the people who live in and around the forests. All the participants agreed to urge local government officials should come up with fire prevention regulation which should be strictly enforced.

Lastly, community residents and civil society groups made a commitment to monitor their forest for poachers and illegal timber loggers who encroached on their forest to destroy them and asserted that they will serve as forest watchers in order to halt deforestation.

3. Changes or outcomes based on your work (2 pages maximum):

a. What was the most significant change you saw as a result of this funding?

The dialogue with local authorities in Koinadugu district triggered conversation on timber logging and deforestation and a commitment to address it using policy engagements and community participation. As an offshoot of the engagement, they formed a Forest Watch Group that will be charged with the responsibility of working with the district council officials as well as traditional authorities to halt deforestation and timber logging in the district.

The Forest Watch Group is now playing key role in engaging communities around the Wara-Wara hills which serves as a reserve for supplying water in the district. This group on a routine basis deploy their members around the hills to ensure that illegal activities are prevented and culprits arrested and taken to the police. This measure has helped immensely to protect the hill and its surrounding.

b. Did the funding help improve environmental conditions? If yes, please provide any examples and evidence of this change.

The funding has helped the Sierra Leone Land Alliance to organize the first dialogue session on deforestation and timber logging in the district. This is no way a small venture even the funding

is small but it has enabled us to increase our visibility as an organization working on the environment. As mentioned above, the dialogue session has fostered cooperation and collaboration in the fight against environmental destruction and timber logging. As indicated earlier, the participants formed Forest Watch Group to halt deforestation.

This project also encouraged a well-structured community engagement with civil society organizations, local council officials, Paramount chief, and the law enforcement agencies by pushing for a stop on illegal timber cutting and the protection the forest.

- c. Did the funding help strengthen your organization? If yes, please provide any examples and evidence of this change.

The funding created an opportunity for the Sierra Leone Land Alliance to design a forest component as an intervention area to tackle land degradation and forest restoration initiative in Sierra Leone. The funding also facilitated our organization to work with local civil society groups and government officials on environmental awareness raising activities and policy advocacy issues.

- d. Did the funding help increase community involvement or awareness? If yes, please provide any examples and evidence of this change.

The Customary Land Rights Act 2022 incorporates a number of important clauses that provide strong recognition and protection to customary land claims. The recognition of customary land ownership and the recognition of customary land rights as equal to private land rights. This means that there is no longer a two-tier system of land ownership where private land rights are held higher than customary ownership. This recognition of communities' rights to own their land effectively empowers a large percentage of Sierra Leone's population in Koinadugu district, not only as right bearers but land owners. Such a shift carries significant political and economic weight, as it encourages citizens to have more of a stake in society as this was made known to the people by the Global Green Grant support to the Sierra Leone Land Alliance.

The new Land Rights Act 2022 recognizes four categories of land ownership: private, customary, public, and government. The Act stipulates that communities will be responsible for: self-identifying and defining their boundaries, establishing a local land management body, and managing community land and natural resources – all through the active inclusion of women, youth, elders, and minorities.

- e. Did the funding help increase the involvement of women or increased the number of women in leadership roles? If yes, please provide any examples and evidence of this change.

A key component of the Community Barray Tok on the environment in Koinadugu was the involvement of senior government officials especially female police personnel including Assistant Superintendent of Police Madam Princes Conteh and other prominent section chiefs all of whom were women. In fact, they are part of the Forest Watch Group. Of the 7-man executive 3 are women.

- f. Did the funding help your organization impact policy? If yes, please provide any examples and evidence of this change.

Respecting and protecting human rights, especially the rights of Indigenous Peoples and other rural rightsholders, is an obligation for the Sierra Leone Land Alliance and an effective, equitable and cost-efficient conservation strategy that should be applied to all efforts to safeguard nature. The strong, direct dependence of Indigenous Peoples and other rural rightsholders on nature renders them disproportionately vulnerable to the negative effects of biodiversity loss, climate change, and human rights abuses that result from “fortress conservation”, meaning exclusionary practices intended to protect biodiversity. Against this backdrop, The Sierra Leone Land Alliance has a policy on zero timber logging in all its operational areas which through this funding from Global Green Grants has positioned us to push on this direction.

- g. Did the funding help your organization influence the media? If yes, please provide any examples and evidence of this change.

The funding gave us the opportunity to move a crew from Freetown to Koinadugu district which is about one hundred and seventy kilometer stretch just to cover the event that was later aired and played on national television known as Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation-SLBC. This initiative has cemented our working relationship also with Radio Bintumani in Kabala town as our volunteers are invited to participate in their biweekly environmental hour programs.

- h. Please tell us of any additional evidence of change that you see as a result of this funding.

The dialogue brought together actors from different sectors, many of whom had competing or conflicting objectives and approaches. Coordination among all the stakeholders, let alone within civil society actors, was difficult. The dialogue would have been more impactful had these competing interests been more clearly mapped from the outset to anticipate areas of potential disagreement. This is essential for creating the right conditions so that even if consensus cannot be achieved, compromises can be agreed.

4. Did Global Greengrants Fund’s support help your organization gain access to spaces for advocacy or decision-making (i.e. meetings, conferences, forums, networks, hearings)? If so, please note if this specifically increased access for women, indigenous peoples, or youth. (1 page maximum)

The Community Barray Tok on the Environment in Kabala Town was part of a wider ongoing program of research and advocacy activities to improve land and investment governance. Sierra Leone Land Alliance will keep working with chiefs and trained community representatives to foster greater internal discussion and organisation so that communities are better prepared and empowered to become protagonists for change.

However, most investors have little or no incentive to participate in dialogues that may mean making compromises in a community’s favour. Successful initiatives like the Community Barray Tok will remain isolated and hard to scale up unless community–investor dialogues are systemized in law. Sierra Leone Land Alliance and partners will continue to advocate for law reforms, such as improved legal frameworks for investment procedures that have robust criteria for consultation, consent and benefit sharing.

5. Has Global Greengrants Fund’s support helped you gain access to any additional funding or support?

The funding has positioned us with good working relationship with district stakeholders and local community residents helping them to have their say at the decision-making process in the district. This is a very good foundation that attract like minded donors to help us in our net zone campaign on deforestation.

6. Were there any external changes in the political, social or environmental context that made your work easier or harder? (1 page maximum)

Not really.

7. What were the most important lessons you learned from this grant? Did these lessons change any of your organization's strategies? Please provide examples. (1 page maximum)

Power imbalances were observed between actors at all levels taking part in the dialogue, including within and between communities. Those with greater education or influence often tried to sway outcomes in their favour. This can have a discouraging effect on communities and highlights the crucial importance of bringing in independent legal support for communities and a neutral facilitator to oversee the dialogue process.

Sierra Leone's Customary Land Rights Act 2022 is largely a progressive policy that seeks to transfer land ownership from the State to the People, with provisions to protect the customary land rights of rural Sierra Leoneans. Sierra Leone Land Alliance's policy advocacy campaign contributed to this outcome in a number of ways. Throughout these efforts, SLLA saw significant successes, but also faced many challenges, setbacks, and mistakes. From this experience, five main lessons can be gleaned:

Generating and making use of empirical evidence significantly strengthened SLLA's advocacy campaign and propositions. SLLA's policy advocacy campaign was directly informed by several years of research on community land protection and land reforms and resource governance. This gave the organisation and its advocacy efforts legitimacy in the eyes of policymakers and government officials. This subsequently led to a seat at the policy debate table where SLLA was able to further input to and critique decisions affecting the district as it relates to the environment and land reforms.

Enabling community members to speak directly to policymakers was important in highlighting grassroots realities and emphasizing concerns that needed to be addressed. During the Community Barray Tok dialogue participants directly addressed the district council officials and traditional leaders and their views were formally recorded. As the direct constituents of the multistakeholder platform, community leaders and members were able to present their opinions openly and honestly.

Mobilizing wider civil society advocacy efforts rather than acting alone increased the visibility of the policy advocacy campaign. SLLA reached out to other civil society organizations, student groups, and traditional leaders. This led to greater attention to the timber logging situation and natural resource governance issues and advocacy for the recognition of community land rights and the fight against deforestation, climate change and timber logging.

Engaging the public through the use of popular media channels helped promote public debate, added momentum, and put pressure on policymakers. SLLA made use of radio discussions to debate key activities of mining companies especially Leadway and other subsidiary Chinese companies that are destroying the environment in Koinadugu district. This created critical spaces for public dialogue and accountability.

Maintaining direct lines of communication with the traditional leaders, district council officials and civil society leaders helped mitigate serious conflicts that arose from advocacy efforts. The public policy advocacy and media campaigns provided a venue to diffuse tense situations and engage in constructive dialogue when other actions threatened to derail the larger process.

8. Please provide Global Greengrants Fund with copies of any print, digital, written, or visual media that were funded by this grant. We also appreciate any other forms of media, including but not limited to videos, press articles, publications, and photographs that document your work. Global Greengrants Fund assumes permission to share any of this media with our community. Please indicate if you prefer we not share this information or if you would like the media to be credited in a specific way.
9. Please provide a brief financial summary of how the grant funds were used. A simple statement by budget line item is all we request. Actual copies of receipts are not required but if requested by your recommending Advisor, please be prepared to include all receipts with this report.