



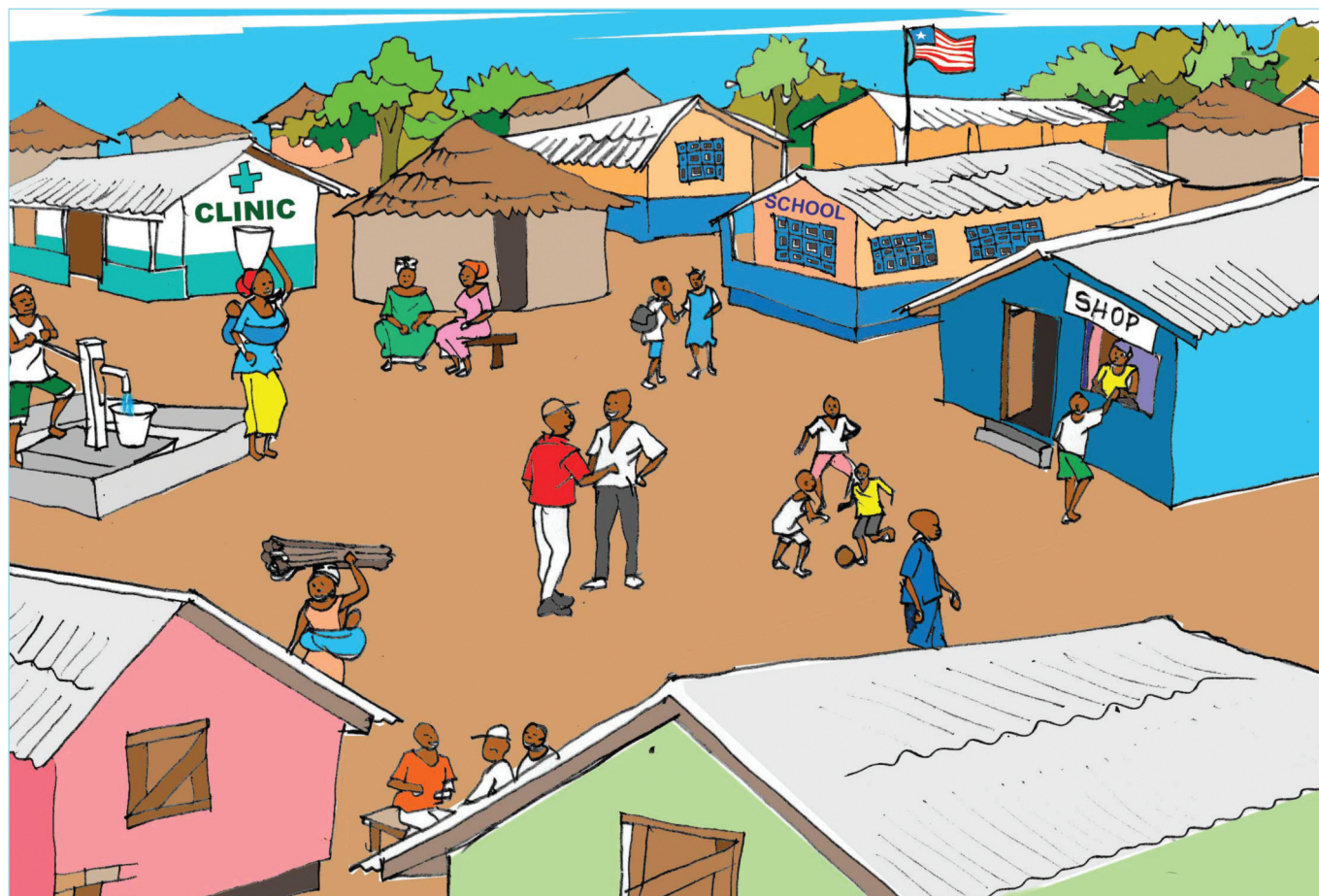
# Community Guide

Protecting Community Lands and Resources

The Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) & Namati

2013 Liberia





# Community Guide: Protecting Community Lands and Resources

The Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) & Namati

2013 Liberia

## Contents

Introduction	3
1. Ground rules	4
2. Overview of the process	6
3. Your rights to land and natural resources	8
4. How to setup an Interim Coordinating Committee	10
5. How to harmonize your boundaries with your neighbors	12
6. How to solve land conflicts when harmonizing your boundaries	14
7. How to sign boundary Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) with your neighbors	16
8. How to develop community by-laws	19
9. How to create community by-laws for leadership and decision-making	22
10. How to develop a land and natural resources management plan	24
11. How to form a Land Governance Council	27
12. How to implement your by-laws and make sure all agreed boundaries are respected	29
13. How to interact with outside companies and investors	31
Sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)	33

**Authors:** Ali Kaba, Gaurav Madan, Rowena Geddeh, Silas Siakor, James Otto, Rachael Knight. **Organization:** Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) & Namati. **Acknowledgements:** This report is published with generous financial support from the Norwegian Refugee Council, UKaid from the Department for International Development and Open Society Foundations. The authors are also grateful to Kate Richardson, Jacob Hilton, and the people of Rivercess County. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of any of our donors. **Illustrations:** © Leslie Lumeh, [www.leslielumeh.com](http://www.leslielumeh.com). **Design:** [www.onehemisphere.se](http://www.onehemisphere.se)



# Introduction

The Government of Liberia is in the process of drafting new land laws that give people ownership rights over their customary lands. This guide teaches communities how to go through the process of getting papers (deeds) for your land. We suggest that as a community you follow and complete the steps in this guide before going to the government to apply for a deed.

The process of getting papers for your community's customary lands may be long and involve a lot of work. Your community will have to hold many meetings and make a lot of decisions. The end result of doing all of the work explained in this guide will be both papers for your land and a more organized, more united, and more peaceful community ready to develop and grow.

This guide is designed to be used by communities at the clan level. However, you can define your community in the way you think is best to document your customary lands and manage your land and natural resources.

The guide is put together so that you can read it and know what to do for every step of the process. We suggest that you first read the whole guide all the way to the end to get an idea of all of the steps, and then carefully go through each step and do the work.

It may be best to read this guide out loud in a big community meeting with representatives from all towns and groups (elders, leaders, youth, women, strangers), so that everyone understands the entire process. If your whole community is not fully involved – if certain people are excluded or if you allow powerful people to control the process – then your community will be heading for problems in the future.

On the next page are some ground rules that will help make the process easier to complete.

**Good luck!** As encouragement, here is what one person in Rivercess said about how this process changed his community:

This project is the best thing to happen in our history. Imagine: now we know our boundaries; we know our resources; we know our rules, and they are written down for everyone to see and know; people are attending clan meetings; and our clan feels stronger together. This has never happened before! Now it is easy for us to organize and ask the government [and investors] for things we want or refuse things we don't want in our community. — **Community member in Jowein Clan, Rivercess County**



# 1 Ground rules





# 1

## Ground rules

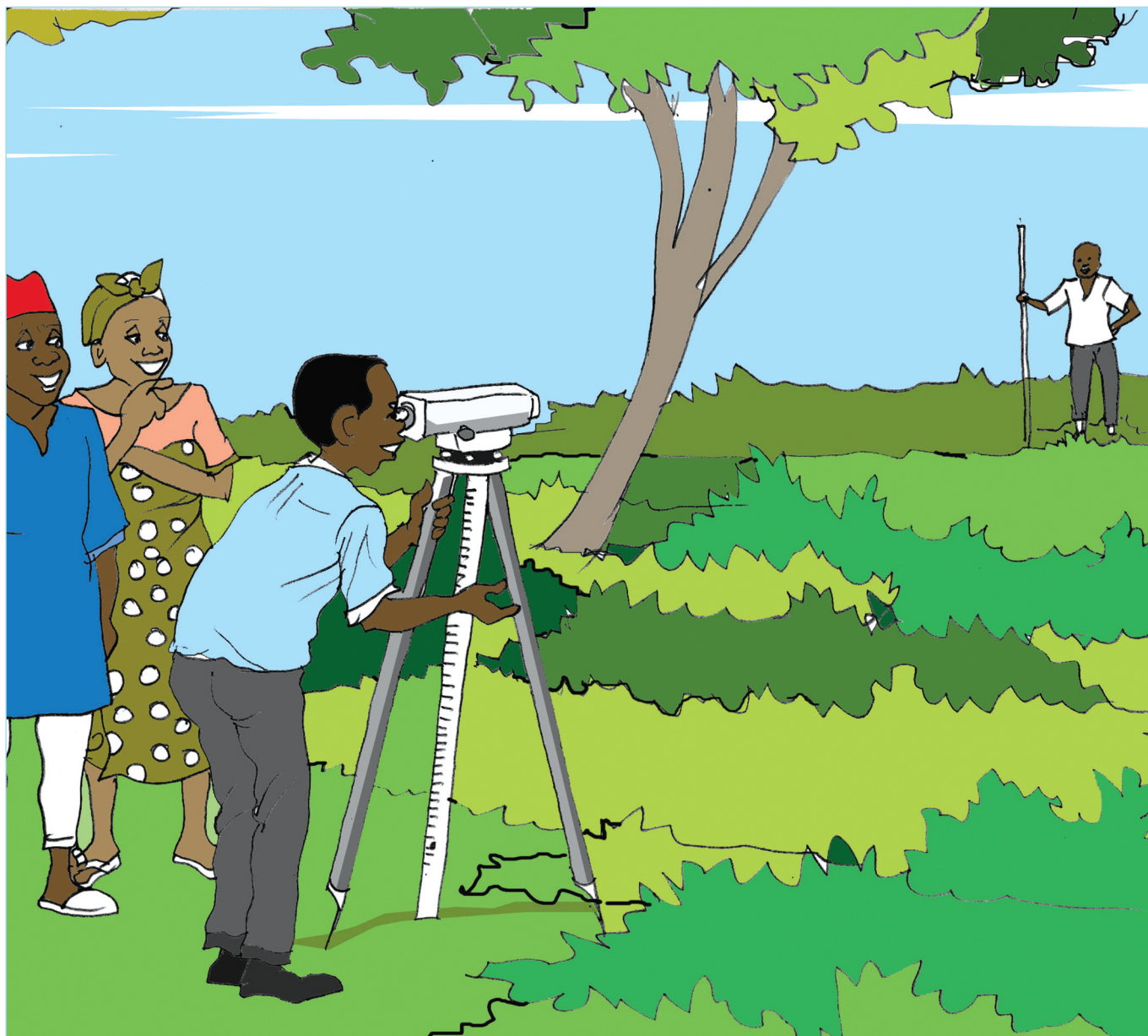
**Ground rules.** Before you begin, your community should sit down together and agree on your own ground rules for how you will complete the process. Your community can make whatever rules you want to help you work together. However, some important ground rules to guide the process include:

- **Do everything out in the open.** Nothing should be done in the corner or by a few people acting alone.
- **Keep in mind the long-term peace you want for your community.** Going through the land documentation process can bring up conflict and disagreements. Solving disputes in a peaceful way will help your community complete the process and create lasting peace.
- **Men and elders, community leaders, youth, women, and even strangers who live in your community should all be part of this process.** Make sure that all people who use community resources are actively included in the process. For example, the hunters, the women who fish, the traditional herbalists, and the young people who cut palm should all be included and have their voices heard. If certain people are not included they may challenge what you have done later on, causing confusion.
- **Make sure all the towns in your community are represented and actively take part in the process.**
- **Make time for people to fully discuss everything and make changes when necessary.**
- **Listen to, consider and respect everyone's ideas and opinions.** It is important that people feel free to speak and that their ideas are listened to. Make sure you listen to people who do not always speak the loudest or are the most powerful in the community like women, strangers, and minorities, because they may have good ideas about how to best manage your community's land and natural resources.
- **Include elected and customary leaders so they can help move the process forward.** Elected and customary leaders may be able to bring people together and help solve disputes that come up. If elected and customary leaders are not included, the process may be harder to complete.
- **Make sure that your elected and customary leaders work together with your community, but do not make all the decisions by themselves.** Your leaders are there to support your community to complete this process together as a group, not to control the process on their own.
- **Don't do this process in a hurry.** Take your own time on each step to make sure everyone understands what you are doing and agrees with it. It is better to go slow and do each step properly than move fast and have confusion at the end.
- **Make decisions that are in the whole community's best interest.** Do not let people living outside of your community in Monrovia or elsewhere stop you from making the best decisions for your community.
- **Resolve disagreements peacefully.** If there are any disagreements when you are doing these activities, stop and discuss the disagreement and reach an agreement before you move forward. If you can't agree, put it on the agenda for the next meeting to give people time to think about it.
- **Ask for help when you need it.** If you get stuck in the process, ask your community animator or your local, trusted NGO for help.



# 2

## Overview of the process







## Overview of the process

**Overview of the process.** This is an overview of the steps your community can take to apply for a paper (deed) for your community lands. It is important that you have the participation of the entire community, including each town in the clan.

1. **Define your community.** You can decide to do the community land documentation process as a section, town, clan, chiefdom, or whatever unit everyone together thinks is best. When making this decision, think about the land and natural resources you are claiming and want to protect, especially shared areas used by everyone. Think about how everyone will peacefully take part, hold meetings, and work together. Remember, everyone living in the area – women, youth, elders, strangers, and minorities – should take part in the process and have their land rights respected.
2. **Make sure your whole community participates.** Hold big community meetings regularly, including people from every family, women, elders, youth, strangers, and community leaders.
3. **Elect or select an Interim Coordinating Committee to lead the process.** Make sure your community's Interim Coordinating Committee includes youth, women, elders, different groups, and residents of each town.
4. **Draw a map of your community's lands and natural resources.** Divide into groups of women, youth, and elders and have each group draw a map of your community. Discuss each map and then combine them into one big map everyone agrees on.
5. **Agree on the boundaries of your community with your neighbors.** Sit with your neighbors and discuss where the boundaries of your lands are until you come to a peaceful agreement.
6. **Document the agreed boundaries.** After agreeing on your boundaries with your neighbors, plant boundary markers (like big rocks or soap trees). Sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with all of your neighbors at a big community ceremony to create a paper record of your agreement.
7. **Write community by-laws (rules) and a land and natural resources management plan.** As a community, discuss your rules for how you will use and manage your lands and natural resources today and in the future for your children and your children's children. To do this:
  - **Start by writing down your community by-laws and land and natural resources management plan at the most local level.** If your community is seeking a deed at the clan level, each town should meet, discuss and write down all of the existing rules in their towns. The idea is to first go through the process at the most local level and then bring all the local level ideas to the larger community.
  - **Put all the town rules together and then discuss and agree on your by-laws (rules) at the clan level.** At a community-wide meeting, present all the towns' rules and see what everyone can agree to. Continue to hold meetings until the community can agree on a final list of rules.
  - **Before adopting your by-laws, check with a trusted NGO or government official to make sure your by-laws do not go against Liberian law.**
  - **Formally adopt your by-laws** in a ceremony attended by everyone in your community.
8. **Elect a Land Governance Council.** After your community has formally adopted your by-laws and land and natural resources management plan, hold a big community meeting and elect a Land Governance Council that will manage your community's land and natural resources. Your Land Governance Council should include women, youth, elders, and members from all towns or areas of your community.
9. **GPS (map) your community land.** Once the community has harmonized all of its boundaries and agreed on its by-laws, work with a trusted NGO to take GPS measurements and make a (satellite) map of your lands.
10. **Apply for your papers (deed) from government.** This process is being decided on right now by the Liberian Government. Work with your trusted NGO to apply for your papers.

**Because the boundary harmonization and by-laws both take many months to complete successfully, your community should work on both processes at the same time.**

# 3

## Your rights to land and natural resources



### What is Land?

- Where we live
- The place where we build our homes
- The earth we farm and plant crops
- Our ancestors' home or place where they lived
- Where our forefathers are buried
- Our children's future home
- Our community/town/village
  - the place where we all live together

### What are Natural Resources?

- Land
- Water and water sources
- Animals we hunt and use for our livelihoods
- Medicines we gather in the forest
- Minerals in the ground (gold, diamonds, iron ore)
- Life trees and things that come from the forest
- Materials we use to build our homes
  - sticks, rattan, thatch, mud, rocks, sand





## Your rights to land and natural resources

### Your legal rights to land and natural resources

1. The Government of Liberia is in the process of drafting new land laws that give people ownership rights over their community lands. The **National Land Rights Policy of 2013** says:
  - **Communities own their customary lands with or without a deed.**
  - **Customary land rights are equal in every way to private land rights.**
  - Each community will “self-identify” and define its own membership, which must represent all community members, including women, youth, and minorities
  - Communities will be issued a deed for their customary lands **in the name of the community.**
  - Communities will define their own boundaries with their neighbors through the active participation of elders, youth, women, minorities and local authorities.
  - Communities will create their own land governance and management systems. Management of customary land will be under the control of community members who will represent the entire community, including women, youth, and minorities.
2. **The Constitution of Liberia says all Liberians can own land. Liberians can own land in two ways:**
  - **By being a member of a community and holding land according to custom or tradition.** The Community Rights Law and the National Land Rights Policy define customary land as *owned* by the communities living on it – whether or not there is any formal document or paper.
  - **By buying, receiving or requesting a specific piece of land** and following traditional or government processes. For example:
    - The owner of the land gives land to a family member or another Liberian and legally documents this handover.
    - The owner of the land leaves the land when he or she dies to a surviving husband/wife or children.
    - Buying and surveying land through a legal process and getting a deed from Government.
    - Buying land from someone who already owns the land and getting the deed in your name.
3. **Land ownership does not extend to the minerals beneath and on the ground, but it does include forests and all forest resources.**
  - The Constitution of Liberia says that the government has ownership over the resources beneath and on the ground (iron ore, diamonds, gold).
  - The Community Rights Law says, “Communities own the forest resources on their customary lands” and “Forested or partially-forested land that communities claim as theirs is recognized by the law as *actually owned by communities.*”
4. **If the government wants to take your land, it must have a good reason “in the public interest” to do so and must give you fair payment for your land. This is called eminent domain. This is true even if you don’t have a deed.**

### Discussion questions:

- How do you depend on your community’s natural resources to live?
- What resources are plenty and what resources are hard to see? Was it always this way? What changed?
- What rights do you have to your land according to your traditions?
- Who makes decisions about land and natural resources in your community?
- Who protects your land?
- What laws do you know about that help you protect your land?



# 4

## How to setup an Interim Coordinating Committee





# 4

## How to setup an Interim Coordinating Committee

### What is an Interim Coordinating Committee?

An Interim Coordinating Committee is a group of community members elected or selected by the community to be responsible for mobilizing people to attend land meetings, spreading the word about land business, and making sure that each step in the land documentation process is done properly. **The Interim Coordinating Committee's role is to support the community to successfully complete the community land documentation process.** It should only exist until the Land Governance Council is elected and working.

### How should the Interim Coordinating Committee be setup?

Your community should sit together and:

- Decide how the Interim Coordinating Committee should be established. Hold a big community-wide meeting to make this decision.
- Agree on the roles and responsibilities of the Interim Coordinating Committee.
- Agree on rules about how the Interim Coordinating Committee will work by itself and how it will work with the community.
- Create clear rules about how your community will change the Interim Coordinating Committee if it is not working properly or not doing what the community believes is in its best interest.
- Decide on what will happen to the Interim Coordinating Committee once the Land Governance Council is elected.

### Who should be on the Interim Coordinating Committee?

- You may decide to elect or select different members of the community, including community leaders, to be a part of the Interim Coordinating Committee. It is very important that the Interim Coordinating Committee represents the entire community, including women, youth, elders, and different groups within the community.
- Each town should be represented by at least one town man or woman. The more people you include from all parts of your community, the easier it will be to make sure everyone's voices are heard.

### What positions should be part of the Interim Coordinating Committee?

- Your community can decide which positions you want on the Interim Coordinating Committee. Some positions can include: Chairperson, Co-Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. Choose people who are trusted and honest and who will work for the best interests of the entire community.
- Make sure that the whole community takes part in the election or selection process and sets the rules for how the Interim Coordinating Committee will work.

### Discussion questions:

- What type of people do you want on your Interim Coordinating Committee? What qualities should they have?
- Why is it important to have different types of community members on your Interim Coordinating Committee?
- How can your community make sure that your Interim Coordinating Committee represents your entire community?
- What rules will help make sure the Interim Coordinating Committee is working in your community's best interest?
- What kinds of responsibilities will your Interim Coordinating Committee have?
- How will the Interim Coordinating Committee work with the larger community as a whole?  
How often will it report back to the rest of the community?
- What should happen if the Interim Coordinating Committee is not acting in your community's best interest?
- How will you deal with Interim Coordinating Committee members who are not working properly?

# 5

## How to harmonize your boundaries with your neighbors



**What is boundary harmonization?** Boundary harmonization is the process by which neighboring communities agree on the limits where their community's land stops and their neighbors' land begins. This process can be long and challenging, so it is important that your community is patient, thoughtful and focused on the larger goal of documenting your community's land. The process of harmonizing your boundaries includes the following steps:



# 5

## How to harmonize your boundaries with your neighbors

### Steps to harmonize your boundaries

**1. Draw maps of your community.** Call a community-wide meeting and organize people into three groups – women, youth and elders. Be sure to include traditional leaders who know the history of the community. Have each group draw its own map of the community that shows:

- All boundaries and boundary markers like roads, creeks, rivers, and hills
- All villages, towns, and roads
- All neighboring towns on your boundaries and the clans to which those towns belong
- All buildings – schools, clinics, churches, mosques, and town halls
- All natural resources – forests, rivers, lakes, caves, thatch and rattan areas, palm bushes, medicinal plants
- All reserve areas and concessions
- All sacred places – forbidden places, men's bushes, women's bushes, and others
- All other resources you think are important in your community

Each group should then go back to the big meeting and present their maps. After all the maps have been presented, combine them into one final map that everyone agrees shows the community in the best way. Make sure that everything on each group's map is included in the final map.

**2. Identify your community's boundaries and all "hotspots."** Looking at your map, discuss your boundaries and try to have everyone agree on where they think the community's boundaries are. Mark all "hotspots" (areas of possible boundary disputes).

**3. Decide on ways to end any disagreements you may have with your neighbors.** Remember: sometimes it is better to discuss and agree to gain peace and get papers for your community than to try to claim all the land and remain in conflict and without papers.

**4. Select a boundary team.** Select a team to meet with your neighbors to discuss your community's boundaries. It is good to have traditional leaders, youth, women, elders, community animators, and one or two Interim Committee members on the boundary team. You can add to or change your boundary team each time you meet your neighbors to discuss boundaries. You may want to choose people who know the area well and have good relationships with your neighbors. **Your community should make clear rules about what the boundary team can agree to on its own and what the team must bring back to the whole community to discuss and agree together.**

**5. Meet your neighbors to discuss boundaries.** Your boundary team should then go meet with your neighbors to agree on the boundaries. Sometimes this is easy and will take one day, and sometimes it will take many months. If you cannot agree, leave the discussion for the day and give everyone time to think – do not force a decision if people are not ready to agree.

**6. Resolve conflicts.** Keep going back to discuss your boundaries with your neighbors until you both agree. The next chapter explains different ways your community can peacefully solve boundary conflicts.

**7. Come to community agreement.** Once the boundary team has agreed with your neighbors, the team should share these boundary agreements in a community-wide meeting. It is important that everyone in both communities is aware of the agreed boundaries and accepts them. If not, people may cause confusion during the MOU signing ceremony. If the community does not accept the agreed boundaries, the boundary team should go back and negotiate the boundaries again.

**8. Sign MOUs with your neighbors.** Once you have reached an agreement that the community accepts, sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with your neighbor(s). Make sure that many people from both communities are there for the signing ceremony. How to do this is explained later in this guide.

**9. Mark the boundaries of your land.** Mark all of the agreed boundaries with traditional markers such as trees (soap, kola, cotton, or other), stones, or other permanent natural landmarks. Make sure all community leaders are there for the planting or marking and that everyone is involved in the activity.

### Discussion questions:

- Who are the neighbors that border your community? What history do you have with these neighbors? What do you share with them?
- Do you know where your land stops and where your neighbor's land begins?
- How did the boundary of your land get to be at that spot? What is the story of this boundary?
- Has your community's land area gotten bigger or smaller over time? How has it changed?
- Do you have a marker at each boundary point? If you had a marker that is now gone, what happened?
- Do you have any conflicts at these borders? What are these conflicts about?
- Has your community ever tried to solve these conflicts? What happened?

## 6

## How to solve land conflicts when harmonizing your boundaries



A land conflict can be an **internal conflict** (within a family, group, or community) or an **external conflict** (between different individuals, families, groups, communities or the government).



# 6

## How to solve land conflicts when harmonizing your boundaries

### Some causes of land and natural resource conflict:

1. **Encroachment:** When people cross into another clan's or town's lands by planting crops or life trees.
2. **Differences in government and traditional boundaries:** When a town was originally part of one clan, but because of changes in boundaries, it now falls in another clan.
3. **Family ownership:** When people who founded a town feel they have more rights than others in the town.
4. **People moving and settling in other places:** When there is a large movement of people between towns, there may be competition for resources and land.
5. **Misuse of shared areas:** When individuals are not following agreed rules for a shared resource area.
6. **Foreign concessions:** When land is given to an outside company without community consent.
7. **Finding valuable resources:** When minerals or other valuable things are discovered in the area, competition over land may increase.

### Who can be involved in solving land disputes?

- It is best to get a **few local leaders together** to listen to and help discuss a dispute, as each local leader may have different opinions, ideas, and ways to try to solve the problem.
- You may have good results when each side of a conflict brings **elders, women and youth** to discuss the conflict. Each group may have different points of view that connect the past with the present. Elders can explain how things were before and youth can explain how things are now. Together, they may be able to solve conflicts with their neighbors more quickly than a group of only elders.

### Strategies to solve boundary conflicts

- **Go to the physical site of the conflict.** You may get better results when you take the discussion right to the disputed boundary site. If you go and see the boundary, it may be easier to reach an agreement about where the boundary should be.
- **Use mediation.** Mediation is a process where both sides talk through the conflict with the help of a neutral person who does not support either side.
- **Use modern and traditional ways together.** You may want to bring together traditional leaders and also look at copies of modern laws like the Constitution of Liberia to help inform your decisions.
- **Go back to the history of the boundary.** One good way of finding a solution is for both sides to take time and tell their history of why they think the boundary is where it is. Look for places where the stories have points in common and then look at the points that are different and find a solution.

### Solutions to boundary conflicts may include:

- **Agree to own the disputed land together.** Some communities may choose to share the disputed land. In all documents, communities should clearly write that the disputed land is now shared and belongs to both communities.
- **Divide the land down the middle.** Communities may decide to agree to divide the disputed land evenly down the middle.
- **Let disputed towns or villages choose their preference.** When there is confusion because of differences between traditional and state boundaries, the disputed towns should decide where they feel they belong. They should meet with both clans and decide on a solution that is best for everyone.

### Discussion questions:

- How does your community solve conflicts? Who is responsible for helping to solve conflicts? Who else sometimes helps solve conflicts?
- What are the common conflicts about land in your area? Who is involved in these conflicts?
- What are the main causes of the conflicts? (Resources? Tradition? Life trees? Family interest? Land? Power?)
- How long have these conflicts been there? Why have they not been solved?
- What efforts have you made to solve or manage the conflicts? When was the last try made to solve the conflicts? What happened?
- How do you usually solve land disputes? How can you solve land disputes better? What ways have worked in the past?
- What does your community have to gain if you successfully settle your boundary disputes? What will you lose if you don't settle the disputes?



# 7

## How to sign boundary Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) with your neighbors



### What is an MOU?

After your community agrees on your boundaries with your neighbors, it is important that you and your neighbors document the agreement in a ceremony attended by many members of both communities. This document is called a Memorandum of Understanding or MOU. An MOU is an agreement between two or more parties. All boundary MOUs should be signed between **ONLY TWO** communities. If your community has four boundaries with four different neighbors, you should discuss, agree and sign four different MOUs. You can decide to sign each MOU one at a time **OR** you can have a big MOU-signing ceremony and sign all your MOUs at once. At the end of this guide is a sample MOU you can use to create an MOU for your community.



# 7

## How to sign boundary Memorandums of Understandings (MOUs) with your neighbors

### How to develop and agree to an MOU

1. **Identify and agree on your boundaries with your neighbors.**
2. **Develop a MOU-signing ceremony plan.** To make sure that the ceremony is fine, develop a plan to:
  - Make sure community leaders and members attend the signing ceremony.
  - Honor and involve local leaders, including government and traditional leaders and plan what role they will play in the ceremony.
  - Deal with any last-minute conflicts that may come up during the signing ceremony.
  - Host attending guests. Will you feed and house them? If so, how?
  - Decide how all costs and responsibilities will be shared.
3. **Write a Draft MOU.** Once the boundaries have been fully agreed by both communities, a draft MOU should be filled out by selected community representatives before the signing. This draft should:
  - List all the towns in each community;
  - List all the towns lying on both sides of the shared boundary;
  - Clearly describe with words and pictures the borders between the two communities with reference to nearby towns/villages or other markers. List what markers will clearly show the boundary; and
  - List all the community leaders and representatives that will sign the MOU.
4. **Share the draft MOU with your community and make sure everyone agrees.** The majority of the community should agree with the harmonized boundaries. Record your community's decision: list all people present, what they agreed to, and how they decided.
5. **Schedule the MOU signing ceremony.** After your community has agreed, inform the neighboring community and agree together on a time and place to hold the signing ceremony. Remember that there may be last-minute conflicts that come up and make the ceremony take longer than planned.
6. **Invite everyone to the MOU signing ceremony.** All adult members in both communities should be invited to attend and witness the ceremony.
7. **Identify and invite the people who will sign the MOU and be witnesses at the ceremony.** These people may include: community leaders, paramount chiefs, clan chiefs, town chiefs, elders, women, and youth leaders of the towns along the boundaries. You can have as many people as you want sign the MOU as witnesses – there is no limit!
8. **Start the process early.** The host community should send representatives to the towns on the boundary a few days before the signing ceremony to make sure everyone knows about and attends the ceremony.
9. **Fill in the MOU documents.** On the morning of the MOU signing ceremony, the representatives of **both communities** should sit together and fill in the MOU documents – **without the signatures**. These MOU documents will then be read out loud during the signing ceremony.
  - Use the sample MOU at the end of this guide as a starting point. Add any new sections or sentences you think are needed to make it clear.
  - Write down exactly what boundaries have been agreed. Clearly describe the physical landmarks that mark the agreed boundaries. For example: "The boundary is marked by soap trees we have planted as proof of our agreements."

## 10. Hold the MOU signing ceremony.

- Make sure everyone you have invited is present and willing to participate, including your leaders.
- Assign at least one person to write down the minutes of what is happening.
- Allow time for leaders to make speeches if they feel called to speak.
- Read the MOU out loud. Have leaders or people on the boundary teams explain publicly why the boundaries were agreed to in this way.
- Be ready to address last-minute challenges – ask trusted leaders to help solve any disagreements.
- Once the MOU has been read out loud and no one disagrees, call people up to sign the MOU as witnesses. Everyone attending the ceremony can write down their names and add them to the MOU.
- You can end the MOU signing ceremony with a celebration of your harmonized boundaries!



### Discussion questions:

- How will you make sure respected community leaders come to the MOU signing ceremony?
- What will you do to make sure as many community members as possible will come to the MOU signing ceremony? How will you tell people in your community about it? How long before the MOU signing ceremony will you send letters around your community inviting people?
- Who will sign the MOU for your community? Which community leaders, women, and youth will you invite to sign for your community?
- How will your community share the costs of the MOU signing ceremony? Who will prepare the food? Where will your guests stay?
- What will you do if people not involved in the land documentation process cause confusion and oppose the ceremony?
- How will you solve last-minute disagreements about where the boundaries are?





## How to develop community by-laws



**What are community by-laws?** By-laws are the rules that your community has agreed that say how your community functions, how community members act, and how your leaders make decisions. Your community already has rules, traditions, and practices that your community has been living by over time. By-laws are simply these rules written down and agreed upon. Writing and discussing your rules as a community will help improve how you use your land, how you manage your natural resources, and how your community lives together.



## How to develop community by-laws

Your community should write your by-laws in the way that is best for you, but you can put your by-laws in three main sections:

**1. Rules about community leadership.** This section can include rules about:

- How your leaders are elected
- Leaders' roles and responsibilities
- What decisions leaders can make on their own and what decisions they need to consult the community about
- How leaders can be removed from power
- How to make sure your leaders are doing their jobs, and other rules related to leadership

See Chapter 9 for more information about these rules.

**2. Rules about community land and natural resources.** Your by-laws should include a land and natural resources management plan that sets out rules for:

- How your community will use its resources today so that they stay for future generations
- How your community will grow and develop in the future
- How your community will share its resources with each other and with outsiders

See Chapter 10 on how to best write a land and natural resources management plan.

### Here are some questions to get you thinking about by-laws about land ownership and inheritance in your community:

- Can someone who has moved into the community from somewhere else plant life trees if they are married to someone in the community? Is it the same for men and women?
- Can someone who has moved into the community from somewhere else plant life trees if they are not married to a member of the community? Is it the same for men and women?
- Can a woman from another community whose husband has died inherit and own the land?
- Can a man from another community whose wife has died inherit and own the land?
- Can a Liberian use land in your community without living in any of the towns?

**3. Any other rules you think are important to make sure your community is well organized.** For example, you might include in your by-laws rules about inheriting land, respecting others, strangers' rights and responsibilities, and how to keep your community peaceful and without confusion.

### Important Rules for Writing Your Community By-Laws

Before you start writing down and discussing your community by-laws, remember these five important rules:

- 1. Involve everyone. Your by-laws (rules) should be agreed by the entire community, not just a small group of people.** All meetings should involve and be open to all community members, including women, youth, elders, traditional leaders and strangers.
- 2. Publicly announce every by-laws meeting** in every town in your community.
- 3. Decide on how you will agree on your by-laws.** Before you start to talk about your community rules, decide: how you will deal with disagreements, how you will talk about all your rules, and how you will agree on a final draft – by voting or agreement from everyone?
- 4. Keep records of all meetings.** Write down the names of everyone who attends each meeting, what was discussed, and what decisions were made
- 5. Make sure your rules do not violate national law.** You can make any rule you want for your community as long as it does not go against the Liberian Constitution and other national and international laws. Make sure your rules respect all community members' rights.





## How to Write Your Community By-laws

1. **Collect all rules that are currently being used in your community.** Ask each town to sit together as a town and discuss and write down all the rules that town members live by. It may help to have groups of youth, women, and elders sit separately and each make their own draft before coming together, combining all the rules into one big list, and writing out a full first draft of the town's rules.
2. **Put all town rules together at the clan level.** Separate the rules that all towns have in common from those rules that are different. All the rules that are the same (that everyone agrees on) make up the **1st draft** of your community by-laws.
3. **Present the 1st draft to the whole community.** Present the first draft of your by-laws to the entire community in a meeting that includes male and female representatives of every town. Read the first draft out loud line-by-line, and clearly explain what each rule means. See what everyone can easily agree to. If you come to a rule that not everyone agrees with, skip it, and discuss the rule at the end.
4. **Add any missing rules.** Go back and discuss all of the different town rules that not everyone could agree on. Discuss whether to include some of them in your community by-laws. Remember old rules that worked well in the past and could be included. Then, think about the rules that may be missing about what community members and leaders can and cannot do, how to protect your resources for future generations, and what more is necessary to make sure your community grows and develops. Discuss these questions and add rules that people agree are necessary. This list of rules is the **2nd draft** of your by-laws.
5. **Send the 2nd draft out to towns.** Ask each town to discuss the second draft. The towns should then mark which rules they agree with and which rules they do not agree with. If a town wants to add new rules or change the words of a rule, they should write down how they think the rules should be changed.

6. **At the clan level, collect each town's suggestions and again agree on what to include or not.** Again separate all the rules that all towns agree with from the rules they do not agree with. Discuss all the rules where there is still disagreement. When you agree on a rule, add it to the by-laws. This is now the 3rd draft of your community's by-laws.

**Do these steps until you feel that you have a 3rd draft of your community by-laws that everyone in the community agrees to and accepts.**

**Make sure your by-laws have a rule that says you will review them every year.** Your by-laws are a "living document." This means they can change as your community changes.

7. **Check to make sure your 3rd draft does not violate the Liberian Constitution.** Once your community has a complete 3rd draft, ask a lawyer or NGO with legal knowledge to review your third draft to make sure none of your rules go against Liberian law. Make any necessary changes. This is now the final draft of your community's by-laws.
8. **Formally adopt your by-laws.** All male and female adults living in your community should be at the meeting or ceremony to adopt the final draft of your by-laws. Keep good record of this vote: write down the names of every community member who was present and voted, which town each person came from, the date you voted, and where the vote was held. Once you adopt your by-laws, you can celebrate!

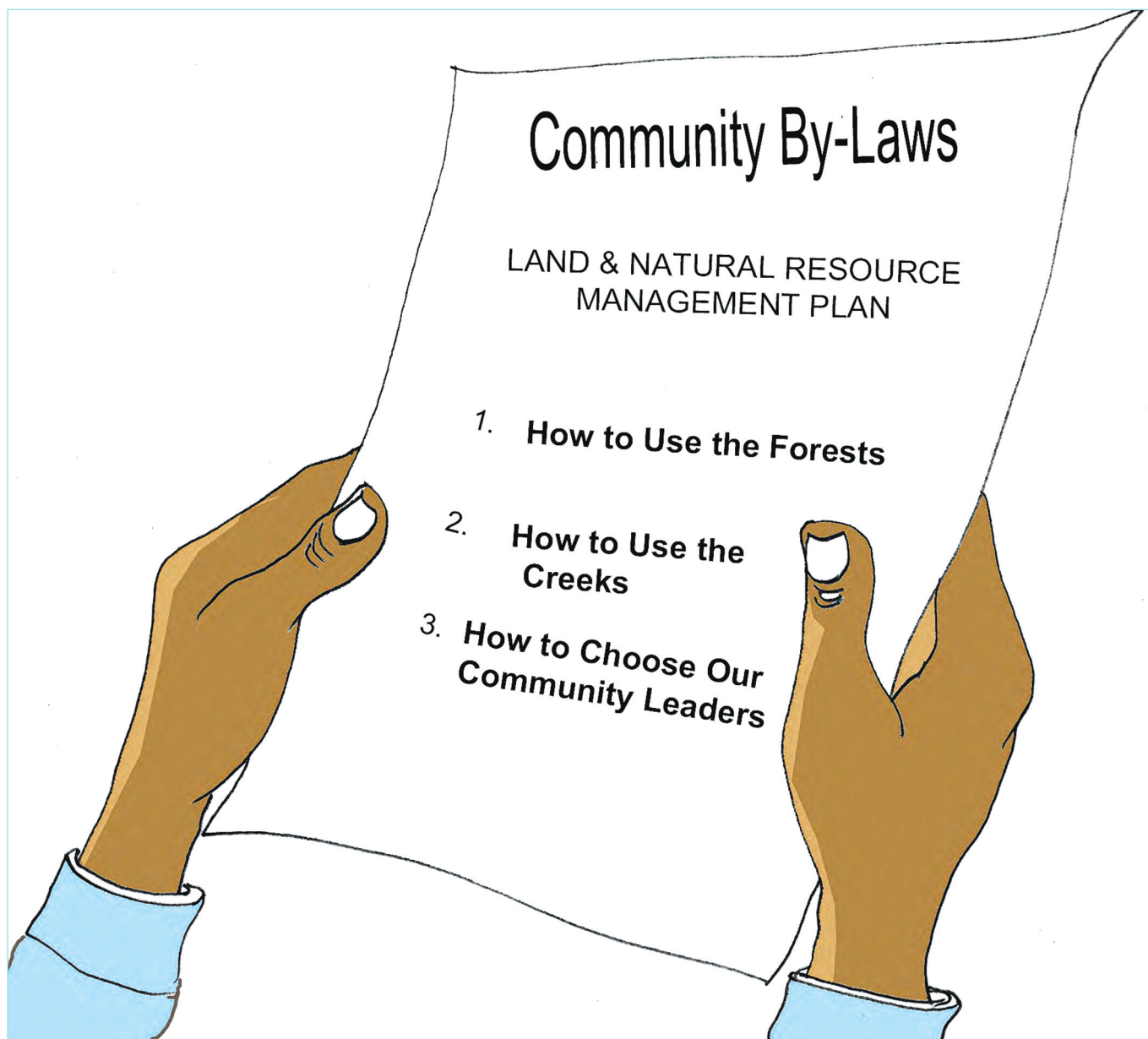
**It is strongly suggested that you adopt your rules by consensus – 100% agreement by all.** This is important because if many community members disagree with the rules, this may cause conflict and confusion in the community. It is better to discuss a rule until everyone agrees. If people cannot agree on a rule, then that rule should not be included in your by-laws.

### Discussion questions:

- How will you make sure the entire community is part of the process to write the by-laws?
- How will you make sure each town participates in the process to write the by-laws?
- What will you do if people cannot agree on a rule? Who will mediate disputes about new, old or existing rules?
- How will your community come to agreement on rules – by majority vote or by 100% agreement?

## 9

## How to create community by-laws for leadership and decision-making



To make sure everyone in your community works together, it will help to create by-laws (rules) about what type of leaders you want, and how your leaders and community members will make decisions together. This is called “community governance.” Good governance rules will help make sure community members and leaders know their roles and responsibilities.





## How to create community by-laws for leadership and decision-making

Your community should think about and discuss what kinds of leaders you want to help govern the land and natural resources. Make sure that your by-laws include rules that explain:

**1. How your community will choose leaders.** Set clear rules about how leaders can be put into power and how they can be removed if they are acting corruptly. Discuss and decide:

- How your community will select its leaders – through elections or through selection? What rules will be there about the election or selection process?
- What qualities should community leaders have? What behavior would prevent someone from being a leader?
- Can one person serve in more than one kind of leadership role?
- How long can someone serve as a leader?
- Are there any bad behaviors that can get a leader removed from office? How will leaders acting badly be removed from office?

**2. How decisions should be made by the whole community.**

Your community should agree on which decisions leaders can make and which decisions they must bring to the whole community to decide together. To do this:

- List all the decisions that must be made by the whole community (major decisions)
- List the decisions that your leaders can make by themselves on behalf of the community (minor decisions).
- List all decisions that need a vote and all decisions where everyone must agree by consensus (100% agreement).

- List the decisions that can be left to specific groups (women's groups, youth groups, hunters).
- Decide how to keep records about all decisions that are made.
- Decide when and how often your leaders must meet with the community.

**3. How your leaders will work.** Your community should agree on how your leaders will perform their roles and responsibilities. Create rules to make sure that your leaders:

- Work for the community in an open way, not in secret.
- Inform the whole community about important things happening in your community.
- Do a good job managing your community's land and natural resources (for now and for the community's future needs).
- Share with the community all decisions they make and information they receive from outside the community.
- Fairly and openly manage community money (raised from collecting fines and from taxes on outsiders' use of community land and resources) in a way that helps the community grow and develop.

**4. How to bring a complaint against a leader or disagree with a leader's decision.** To make sure that leaders act in a way that people agree with, your community's by-laws should clearly say:

- How someone can bring a complaint if they are not happy with how a leader is acting or with decisions he or she has made.
- Who a complaint should be made to.
- How a complaint will be investigated and decided upon.
- What can a leader do that will have him or her removed.

### Discussion questions:

- What are the leadership positions in our community? What can each leader do and not do?
- For how long can someone be in a leadership position? Should there be time limits?
- How do different leaders in our community work together? Do they work well together? How can different leaders work together so it helps the community move forward?
- What qualities do we want our leaders to have?
- How do we make decisions in our community right now? How do we want to make decisions from now on? Which decisions should be made by the entire community all together? Which decisions should be made by our leaders? Which decisions should the leaders make together with the community?
- How can we make sure our community leaders represent our entire community and act in our community's best interests? What can we do if our leaders make decisions that do not benefit the whole community?
- How can people make complaints about leaders? What happens once a complaint is made?

## How to develop a land and natural resources management plan



**What is a land and natural resources management plan?** A land and natural resources management plan is a community-wide plan for how your community will use your land and natural resources today and in the future. Your land and natural resources management plan should list all of your community's natural resources and all agreed community rules for using these resources. It should also explain what actions community members can take to protect your natural resources to make sure that they stay for your children and your children's children. It is best if your community's land and natural resources management plan is part of your community by-laws, so that all of your rules are in one document.



### What should you include in your land and natural resources management plan?

- A map that shows where all of your community's natural resources are located
- A list of your community's natural resources and all of the ways you use each resource
- All of your community's rules about using and protecting your lands and natural resources
- A zoning plan for your community that shows how your community will grow and develop

### How to draft a land and natural resources management plan

It is best to make your land and natural resources management plan a section of your by-laws and work on it as part of the by-laws process. As explained in Chapter 8, do these activities **first at the town (or local) level**. Do each step first in groups of youth, women, and men/elders. The process should include as many people in your community as possible.

**1. Make a map of your community.** Groups of elders, women, and youth should meet in separate groups and draw a map of your community that includes:

- All the towns/sections in your community
- All forest areas
- All major creeks, rivers, swamps and waterfalls in your community
- All areas where you find rattan, thatch, palm bush, rocks, sand or special mineral resources
- Places where wild animals live
- Any large caves, sacred bushes and other special or traditional areas
- All areas where you make your farms or plant life trees
- All roads, schools, clinics, churches and cemeteries
- Any areas where you plan to allow investment
- Any reserve areas you want to set aside to use in the future
- Anything else important to your community

After each group has drawn its map, present your maps to the larger group, discuss them, and then combine them into one big map that shows everything.

**2. Write down all of your community's rules about each of these resources.** Look at the map and make a list of all of the natural resources in your community. Then, as a group, go through this list and discuss all of your community's existing rules about how to use or manage each resource. Talk about:

- How each natural resource is important to people's lives and how your community uses and benefits from each resource.
- How people used each natural resource before, long back.
- How people use each natural resources now, today.
- What rules your community has now about each natural resources. Why do you have each rule?
- Who is in charge of managing each resource and making sure the rules are followed.

Discuss which rules you want to keep, and which rules need to change. Write down all of the rules you will keep. For rules that your community wants to change, discuss how your community can use and manage each resource to make sure it will be there for future generations who need it.

**3. Make a zoning plan.** Plan for your community's growth and development over time. Think and plan for the future. Where will future houses, government projects, reserve forests, and sacred areas be? After discussing how you want your community to grow and develop, draw **a map of how your community will look in the future**. This is called a "zoning plan."

To draw your zoning plan, gather in groups of women, youth, and elders at the clan level and talk about:

- Towns: If a town grows, in which area should it grow? Where will people build their homes?
- Farm land: List all towns and draw where people in each town will farm now and in the future.
- Forest reserves: Which forest areas will you keep as reserves for tomorrow?
- Natural resources: Where should people hunt, fish, and gather thatch and rattan in the future? If someone wants to do pit-sawing or logging, where should they go, and where should they not go?
- Other land: Where will you build schools, roads, and clinics in the future? If an investor arrives asking for five hectares and offers to pay rent, will you allow them to do their business? If yes, where?

4. **Create new rules you need to manage your lands and resources well and to make sure that people follow your new zoning plan.** Add these new rules to the list of your old rules. Make a final list of your land and natural resources management rules.

5. **Make sure that everyone in the community agrees with your zoning plan and rules for land and natural resources management.** Call a big community meeting. Make sure that:

- Everyone agrees on what is listed in your map of how things are right now

- Everyone agrees on the rules of how to manage your land and natural resources
- Everyone agrees on your zoning plan (your map of the future)

**Remember: Keep discussing all your rules and your zoning plan until everyone agrees.**

6. **Adopt your land and natural resources management plan.** Everyone in your community, including women, should be at the meeting to adopt the land and natural resources management plan. If you draft your land and natural resources management plan as part of your by-laws, you can adopt these rules together in the same meeting/ceremony.



#### Discussion questions:

- What natural resources do you use and benefit from in your community?
- What resources are plenty and which are hard to see?
- What do you use these resources for?
- What would you do if these resources finished?
- What resources will you need to protect for future generations?
- How does your community take good care of these resources to make sure they stay for your children?
- What agreements about using forests, rivers, and creeks do you already have with neighboring communities?
- What will you do if your neighbors' activities cause problems in your community?  
For example, if your neighbor is dirtying the river upstream that flows in your community?
- How will you protect your resources and still allow people to hunt, fish, and cut palm?
- What resources will you allow people in your community to use without asking?  
What resources must community members ask to use?
- What resources will you allow people from outside of your community to use without asking?  
What resources must outsiders ask to use?
- Will you ask people to pay a fee to use any resources?



# 11

## How to form a Land Governance Council

**What is a Land Governance Council?** A Land Governance Council is a committee made up of people from all different groups in your community (elders, youth, women, representatives from all towns), which will be responsible for taking care of your community's land and natural resources. The Land Governance Council should be elected by the entire community in a big vote taken by everyone in the community, including women.

### What will the Land Governance Council do?

The Land Governance Council will work with community leaders to:

- Lead your community in managing your lands and natural resources.
- Make sure that everyone is following the by-laws and land and natural resource management plan.
- Represent your community at meetings with outsiders – small-scale miners or pit sawyers, investors, companies, and government officials.
- Help run community meetings about the use of community lands and natural resources.
- Coordinate other land and natural resource management tasks that the community thinks they should.

To make sure your Land Governance Council runs smoothly, your community's by-laws should clearly set out:

- What Council members are responsible and are not responsible for and exactly what their role is.
- What decisions the Land Governance Council can make on its own and what decisions it must bring to the whole community for discussion and decision.
- How often elections will be held for positions on the Land Governance Council, and how long members can serve on the Council.
- What behaviors are grounds for a Council member to be removed from his or her position.

Remember, community members have the right to tell their leaders what to do and what not to do - your Land Governance Council represents the entire community. **The Council has a duty to make decisions that benefit the whole community's needs and interests.**

### Who should be on the Land Governance Council?

The community should decide what kinds of people and positions will be on the Council. Your Council should:

- Include representation from all towns in the clan.
- Include men, women, youth, and elders and all other groups in the community.
- Be made up of honest, responsible and reliable people who are permanent residents of the community.
- Be made up of people you trust to manage any money paid to the community for use of its lands and natural resources.

### Electing or selecting your Land Governance Council

Once you decide on the kinds of people you want to serve on your Land Governance Council, come together in a big community meeting at which all towns are represented. Try to have everyone in your community, including women, come for the election.

List all the officer positions on the Land Governance Council that you have agreed upon as a community. For example: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Speaker, and members. Your community can have as many people as you think best on the Council. Registration of candidates should begin at least one week before the election. **You can hold your elections in any way that you decide is best, but make sure they are fair, open, and give everyone a chance to have a say.** Here is one way of holding elections:

### Elect council members at the town level, and officers at the clan level

1. Decide how many representatives should come from each town in your clan.
2. Hold town-level meetings to elect representatives to be on the clan's Land Governance Council.
3. Hold a clan-wide meeting to elect the officer positions (the Land Governance Council Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, etc.) from among the elected town representatives.

# 11

## How to form a Land Governance Council

Make sure the election is done fairly and openly, with the participation of everyone in the community, including women. If the Council is elected by a small group of people meeting alone in a corner, it will cause confusion later. One family or group may dominate the Council and hold all the power. **If elections are done badly, then your community should call for a new election.**

**Watchdog groups:** Communities may want to set up a "Citizens' Committee" or "Watchdog Group" of two people from each town in the clan whose job it is to watch the Land Governance Council and make sure it is making decisions that benefit the community, managing money fairly and openly, and making sure everyone is following all the community by-laws.

### How will the Land Governance Council relate to other community leaders?

Establish your Land Governance Council so it does not create problems between community leaders. To help with this, you may want to include existing community leaders who are interested in being on the Council. Your community should sit together and decide how the Land Governance Council and your other leaders will share power and make decisions together.

### Discussion questions:

- What qualities do you want in your community leaders?
- How long should members of the Land Governance Council serve?
- How often will you have new elections or selection for the Land Governance Council?
- How will you make sure the Land Governance Council represents the whole community's interests? Including, women, youth, elders, hunters, pit-sawyers, fisher people, etc.?
- How will you try to include other community leaders on the Land Governance Council without letting them control it completely?
- How will the Land Governance Council work with your community as a whole?
- What will happen to the Interim Coordinating Committee when the Land Governance Council is elected?



# 12

## How to implement your by-laws and make sure all agreed boundaries are respected



**How to make sure that your by-laws are implemented and working?** After your community has agreed on your by-laws and land and natural resources management plan, you should make sure people are following the rules that everyone agreed to. You should watch to make sure that your by-laws are:

- **Respected:** People are following the rules your community agreed on.
- **Implemented:** Your community and community leaders are putting all of your agreed rules into practice, not just some of them.
- **Enforced:** When people break the rules, the penalties are handed out the same for everyone in the community.
- **Revisited every year:** Once a year, your community should sit together and go over your by-laws to add, change, or remove rules as necessary to support community progress.

# 12

## How to implement your by-laws and make sure all agreed boundaries are respected

You should also make sure that your leaders and Land Governance Council are:

- Collecting, managing and using the fines and taxes attached to your by-laws (rules) properly and fairly.
- Listening to people's suggestions for how to better manage community lands and natural resources.
- Bringing major decisions to the entire community for group discussion and decision.

If you are having challenges enforcing your by-laws you can call community-wide meetings to discuss the problems, have traditional and government leaders hear complaints, or ask a trusted NGO for advice.

### How to make sure boundaries hold

After you have agreed to your boundaries and signed MOUs with your neighbors, everyone should respect the boundaries. To help make sure that your agreed boundaries hold:

- Meet with your neighbors at least once every six months to discuss the boundaries and make sure everyone still agrees. If any conflicts come up, try to peacefully solve them together.
- Make sure that the boundary markers you planted are permanent and that everyone can clearly see them and is aware of them.

- When neighboring community members want to use your land, see what your by-laws say about how to give land out. Meet with the people who are asking to use your land, and based on your by-laws, discuss whether land should be given or not.
- Individuals and towns that fall along agreed boundaries should monitor activities that might cross over the agreed boundaries, such as farming, pit-sawing, logging, and mining and regularly report to the entire community if the boundary near them is being respected.
- Over time your community may decide to hold ceremonies at your boundary markers to celebrate the agreed boundary and peace with your neighbors.

If an individual or group is challenging or crossing over an agreed boundary without permission, your community should work together with your neighbors to solve the issue peacefully. To solve problems about previously agreed boundaries:

- Refer to the MOU you signed with your neighbors and your community by-laws.
- Go over these documents with your neighbors and find a peaceful solution everyone can agree with.
- Refer to Chapter 6 of this guide on how to peacefully solve land conflicts.
- Work with your community animators and your local peace-building committee to solve disputes.

### Discussion questions:

- Is your Land Governance Council working to make sure that everyone is following your agreed rules for land and natural resources use?
- If people break the rules, are the by-laws being enforced the same way for everyone?
- Is the money collected from fines being used as your community planned in your by-laws and land and natural resources management plan?
- Can people make complaints about things they do not agree with? Are complaints listened to?
- Are there any rules that need to be added, changed or removed?
- If there are challenges to agreed boundaries, are these challenges coming from people living in the area or from people living outside (Monrovia or USA)?
- What is causing the challenges to the agreed boundary? Is it a new problem, or is an old conflict coming up again because it was never resolved fully?



# 13

## How to interact with outside companies and investors



As the owners of your customary lands, your community as a whole can decide how outside companies and investors can use your land. **Remember: no one person is the owner of the land – not the Chiefs, not the Elders, not the Land Governance Council.** Any decisions about whether to sell or lease community land to outside companies should be made by the whole community together as a group.

Your by-laws and land and natural resources management plan will guide how you can talk to outside companies and investors. Look at your by-laws to see what they say about what decisions your leaders can make on their own and what decisions must be made by the community as a whole. Your land and natural resources management plan should explain how you want your community to grow. When a company or investor comes to your community, think about your own plans for your community's development. **You have the right to tell a company or an investor what they can and cannot do in your community.**

# 13

## How to interact with outside companies and investors

### Outside companies and investors

Investors may come to your community to ask you to share your lands with them for logging, mining, or agricultural plantation activities. Investors may come representing a big company, or one investor may come looking for land for his or her own private business. If a company or investor comes:

- **Discuss the request as a group.** The entire community (including community leaders, elders, women, youth and the Land Governance Council) should meet many times among themselves to discuss the investor/company's plans.
- **As a community, ask yourselves important questions.** Take time to hear what everyone thinks. Make sure you hear from the youth, elders, women, hunters, miners, fisher-people, businesswomen, and people who cut palm.
- **Check to make sure the company/investor has met government standards.** Before the community signs any papers, the community should ask relevant government officials (District Commissioners, Superintendents, Representatives, FDA, Ministry of Agriculture, etc.) if the company is legally operating in Liberia and in your community.
- **Ask important questions about how much money the investor expects to make.** What are the investors' plans and activities? What is the overall value of their investment in your community and what are they promising to do for your community?
- **Ask how the investment will impact community livelihoods and the environment.** Your community should think carefully about what will be gained and lost by letting an outside company into your community. Who will be affected by the investment? How will the investment affect people's farmland, water, hunting areas, fishing areas, and thatch areas?

- **Talk to neighbors who already have investors operating in their community.** Ask your neighbors how things have changed in their community since the investor came. Have things have gotten better or worse? Also talk to a trusted NGO that has information about the type of investment coming to your community.
- **Consult your by-laws.** Look at your by-laws and land and natural resources management plan and see what you have already agreed on about allowing investors/companies on your land. Ask questions like:
  - **Where are investors allowed to do their business?** Where are they not allowed to go? What kinds of payments and benefits will you ask them for if you agree to share your land with them?
  - **How has your community decided to make decisions about investors?** Will you decide by majority vote (more than half of the community agrees), or consensus (everyone agrees)? Make sure you follow the rules you have already agreed on.
- **Be ready to ask and negotiate for what you want.** If you agree to let an investor/company use your land, your community should be ready to ask for what you want. Think about the long-term vision you have of your community. Remember that the investor will be making money every year. Instead of a one-time payment of a school or a road, ask the investor to compensate your community for sharing your land with them in the form of *monthly or yearly rental payments or as a shareholder* (in addition to asking them to help create roads and jobs in the community). Contact an NGO you trust and get their advice on how to do this.
- **Get all agreements in writing! After you have negotiated with the investors, get a formal, binding, legal contract signed and witnessed.** If you are signing a social agreement, make sure you say when you want the company to build the roads, bridges, schools, clinics, etc. you have asked for. Do not try to do this on your own. Get help from an NGO you trust, and ask the NGO to bring a lawyer to make sure that a fair contract agreement is made.

**Make sure you take time and don't rush any decision to sign away your land. Hold as many meetings as you need and make sure that the whole community is aware of what is happening every step of the way!**

### Discussion questions:

- How will you make decisions about investors and companies?
- If an investor or company asks you to sign an MOU or other document, how will you decide whether to sign it? Will you sign it on the first day? Will you discuss the agreement over time?
- What land are you willing to lease to outsiders? What land are you not willing to give to outsiders?
- What will you do if your community has decided not to give certain lands away to outsiders, but your leaders agree to give this land away to an investor?
- How will you make sure an outside company or investor is treating your community fairly?
- What will you decide to do if an investment promises to bring money and jobs to the community, but will also pollute the environment and damage your water, forest, and other resources?



# Sample Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

## Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

between

The community of

and

The community of

Signed on

WHEREAS we, residents of \_\_\_\_\_ (name of county) and the Republic of Liberia seek to secure our existing lands rights by documenting our customary land claims; and

WHEREAS we believe that land-and natural resources-related conflict or insecurity will hinder our community development, interfere with our livelihoods and family survival, and impede the full prospering of our local communities; and

WHEREAS we seek to avoid future land- and natural resources-related conflicts and to clarify all community boundaries so as to be able to independently seek documentation of our respective community lands, and

WHEREAS Our local leaders including town chiefs, elders, Clan and Paramount Chiefs have endorsed these efforts and expressed support for our actions;

NOW, THEREFORE we together agree to clearly and finally establish the boundaries between our communities, and to desist from any further boundary conflicts concerning this area. To this end, we hereby declare:

**1. This MOU is documenting the boundary between**

**community, which includes these towns: (list ALL towns in clan)**

**and**

**community, which includes these towns: (list ALL towns in clan)**

2. Any new towns that may form within this particular geographic location are included in this agreement. No matter how these communities grow (either in population density or number of towns), these boundaries will always apply to all towns within our communities.

3. The current, existing towns along this boundary have agreed to respect the boundary. These towns are:

.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

located within the community of .....  
and

.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....

located within the community of ..... .

4. The boundary is described by the following evidence and markers: .....

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5. Draw a sketch map of the boundaries here:

6. These boundaries will be permanent and undisputed. Should a boundary disagreement arise, this signed and witnessed agreement will be referenced to resolve the dispute. The communities signing this agreement pledge to peacefully and quickly settle all boundary disputes related to this agreement, using mediation and other non-violent methods of dispute resolution.
7. This MOU makes clear for all future generations where the boundary is between \_\_\_\_\_ Clan and \_\_\_\_\_ Clan, and to provide proof that we agreed with one another about this decision, so that there will be no future challenges to this boundary.
8. Should an individual family or member of one of the communities plant crops or life trees or build a house or other structure across the agreed boundary, the community that such individual or family belongs to will be responsible for condemning this action and taking proactive measures to re-establish the boundaries as agreed.
9. The communities that are signatories to this agreement will use these boundaries when applying for their deeds. Furthermore, if and when either community applies for their lands to be surveyed, these boundaries will be the ones recorded and measured.
10. The parties have agreed that copies of this MOU shall be deposited with the District Commissioner, Land Commissioner and County Superintendent of the contracting parties, as well as with any other relevant government officials.
11. This boundary agreement was witnessed and signed by the following chiefs, elders, government officials, and community members on this day of \_\_\_\_\_ 201 \_\_\_\_ :

Name	Title and Community Affiliation	Signature
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		
15.		
16.		
17.		
18.		
19.		
20.		

Feel free to add as many signatures of witnesses as your community feels is necessary.





**The Sustainable Development Institute (SDI)** works to transform decision-making processes in relation to natural resources and to promote equity in the sharing of benefits derived from natural resource management in Liberia. The organization's vision is a Liberia in which natural resource management is guided by the principles of sustainability and good governance and benefits all Liberians. Its activities cover a range of crosscutting issues including governance and management, the environment, state and corporate social responsibility, economic and social justice for rural populations, and the democratic participation of ordinary people in government management of natural resources. The organization received the Goldman Environmental Prize (the world's largest prize honouring grassroots environmentalists for outstanding environmental achievements) in 2006.

[www.sdiliberia.org](http://www.sdiliberia.org)



**Namati** is an international organization dedicated to advancing the field of legal empowerment and to strengthening people's capacity to exercise and defend their rights. In partnership with civil society organizations and governments, Namati develops, implements, and evaluates legal empowerment strategies that address five urgent global challenges: delivering quality legal aid at scale; protecting community land rights; closing the enforcement gap in environmental law; fulfilling the right to citizenship; and ensuring that essential services like healthcare and education are accountable to local communities. Namati's Community Land Protection Program supports communities to follow national land documentation laws to protect their customary and indigenous land claims. The Program promotes an integrated community land documentation model that both supports communities to defend and protect their lands and natural resources as well as to leverage community land documentation processes to galvanize positive intra-community change. To this end, Namati's Community Land Protection Program:

- Works in partnership with national and local CSOs to support community land protection efforts;
- Supports governments to enact and implement legislation promoting community land documentation; and
- Advocates for increased global emphasis on protections for community land and natural resource rights.

[www.namati.org](http://www.namati.org)