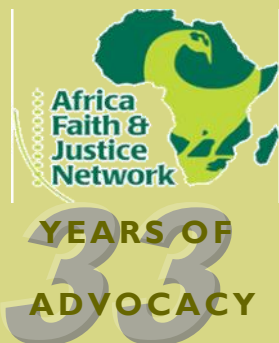


A PUBLICATION OF THE



## We Have Increased in Number, But Has Our Land Increased?

### Land Grabbing Awareness and Prevention Campaign in Ghana's Volta Region

#### MISSION STATEMENT

The Africa Faith and Justice Network, inspired by the Gospel and informed by Catholic Social Teaching, seeks to educate and advocate for just relations with Africa and to work in partnership with African peoples as they engage in the struggle for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

#### A BRIEF HISTORY

Moved to action by their personal experiences in Africa, three Catholic missionary congregations namely the Missionaries of Africa, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritains), and the Society of African Missions, founded the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) in 1983 to transform United States policy towards Africa and her people. Since that time, membership has grown and remains committed in faith to advocate in Washington, DC for U.S. relations with Africa that foster justice and peace, and to educate the public across the United States on the truth about Africa.

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the *Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate U.S.A*

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*Presbyterian Mission Agency.*

The *Africa Faith & Justice Network* (AFJN) team just concluded an unprecedented land grab prevention and awareness campaign in several villages and one very large high school in Ghana's Volta region. During this time, we reached millions of people through radio shows on three local FM stations. The panel discussion for the shows was in a combination of four languages: Ewe, Ntrubo, Akan (Twi) and English. The shows were held in collaboration with the *Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development* (ECASARD). The relevance of our message is rooted in facts, stories of victims of land grabbing and our competent team of three traditional chiefs, one policy analyst and three passionate land activists. In Ghana people urged us to make our campaign national.



*Town Hall meeting in Kunda /Krachi East Distric Volta Region*

#### Town Hall Meetings

In addition to spreading our message via three live radio shows, we went from

village to village in Ghana's Volta region, particularly those at risk or already victims of land grabbing, to get the word out. We educated people about the immediate and long term threats of land grabbing to their livelihood, finances, food security, national security, access to water and seed sovereignty. Town hall meetings are very efficient not only in informing the leaders; learning together as a community adds another layer of prevention against any authoritarian or greedy chief deciding to lease the community land without the consent of the people. Many attendees of our town hall meetings display a wide range of emotions, from tears of sadness to words of sympathy to visible signs of anger, especially when our team members who were victims of Herakles Farms land grabbing gave personal accounts of what happened to them.

### What is a land grab?

The International Land Coalition members who gathered in Tirana, Albania from May 24-26, 2011 defined land grab as the "acquisitions or concessions that are one or more of the following:

- i) In violation of human rights, particularly the equal rights of women;
- (ii) not based on Free, Prior and Informed Consent of the affected land-users;
- (iii) not based on a thorough assessment, or are in disregard of social, economic and environmental impacts, including the way they are gendered;
- (iv) not based on transparent contracts that specify clear and binding commitments about activities, employment and benefits sharing, and;
- (v) not based on effective democratic planning, independent oversight and meaningful participation."

### Brewaniase Town Hall Meeting at Truboman Senior High School / Kwanta South District

On March 4<sup>th</sup> we held awareness meetings in the morning and night at Ntrubo Senior High in Brewaniase where we screened documentaries on land grabbing. The later gathering ended past 11:00 pm because students wanted to see more documentaries on the subject. Over 800 students attended the morning event and over 400 attended the evening event. Screening documentary films is one of the methods we utilize in hopes of enhancing our campaign because it gives a face to the victims of land grab.



## Obanda Town Hall Meeting in Kwanta South District

On March 5<sup>th</sup> we held a meeting with the people of Obanda. When Chief Ben Atomey from Tamale village explained to them what happened to him and other land owners when Herakles Farms lied to them, they were not only surprised and sympathetic; they were sad about the deliberate effort by a Ghanaian, Mr. Nicholas Fato, to help the company get hold of these families' resources. I saw tears in the eyes of men and women and found myself struggling to keep my own eyes dry. We hope to reach out to the paramount chief to reinforce our message. This village is one of those at extreme risk of land grabbing. In fact, the chief told us that they have an enormous area of land which would be very attractive to land grabbing investors. They thanked us for the advance notice on what is taking place around them. The participants thanked us for reaching out to them, saying they were "very enlightened."



## Kunda Town Hall Meeting in Krachi East District

On March 6<sup>th</sup> we held a town hall meeting for the people of Darmabin, Adumadum and Kunda villages. The gathering followed their Independence Day parade put on by local students from three primary schools and one high school. We chose to visit these communities because their land had already been surveyed, and they have been waiting for the broker to come back with the lease to be signed. At the end of the meeting we were told by the local chiefs and the local district assembly representative that the information we provided enlightened them, and they now "know what to say when the investor's broker comes back." The broker's name is Mr. Nicholas Fato, the same man who brokered the land grab deal between 86 families in Brewaniase and the U.S.-based agribusiness Herakles Farms. This concession is now owned by a British agribusiness called Volta Red which recently acquired land in the nearby village of Dodofie.



### Visit to a Community Leader in Darmabin Village in Krachi east District

On our way back we paid a visit to an elderly man and an opinion leader in Darmabin, Mr. Kramo Odugbe. This is a community where not too long ago its traditional leader, Chief Dekyewura II, was removed from power after the youth and other chiefs opposed him for attempting to lease community land without their consent. Today the community has an interim traditional leader, Chief Oboanya II. Unfortunately, he recently leased “about 1400 acres” (566.5 Hectares) of farm land to Mr. Orson Mawumenyo Amuis without the consent of eight of the ten clans of the chieftaincy. The land is located in Kpelema/ Krachi East District in Ghana’s Volta Region. The lease is “for twenty years and for Thirty Eight Ghana Cedis (GHC 38.000.00) signed on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 .” The yearly rent is said to be “Five Ghana Cedis (GHC 5.00) subject to revision after the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) year of the term hereby granted.” AFJN showed the lease to a lawyer who confirmed these terms do not add up. He suggested that if nothing else, a judge could either cancel the lease or rule that it is only good for just five years on the grounds of lack of clarity of essential terms. Leaders of the eight clans opposed to the lease brought the matter to the district and there they were asked to bring it to a higher level; however, they lack the means to do so. In the meantime, Mr. Amuis has brought tools on site and is ready to begin farming.

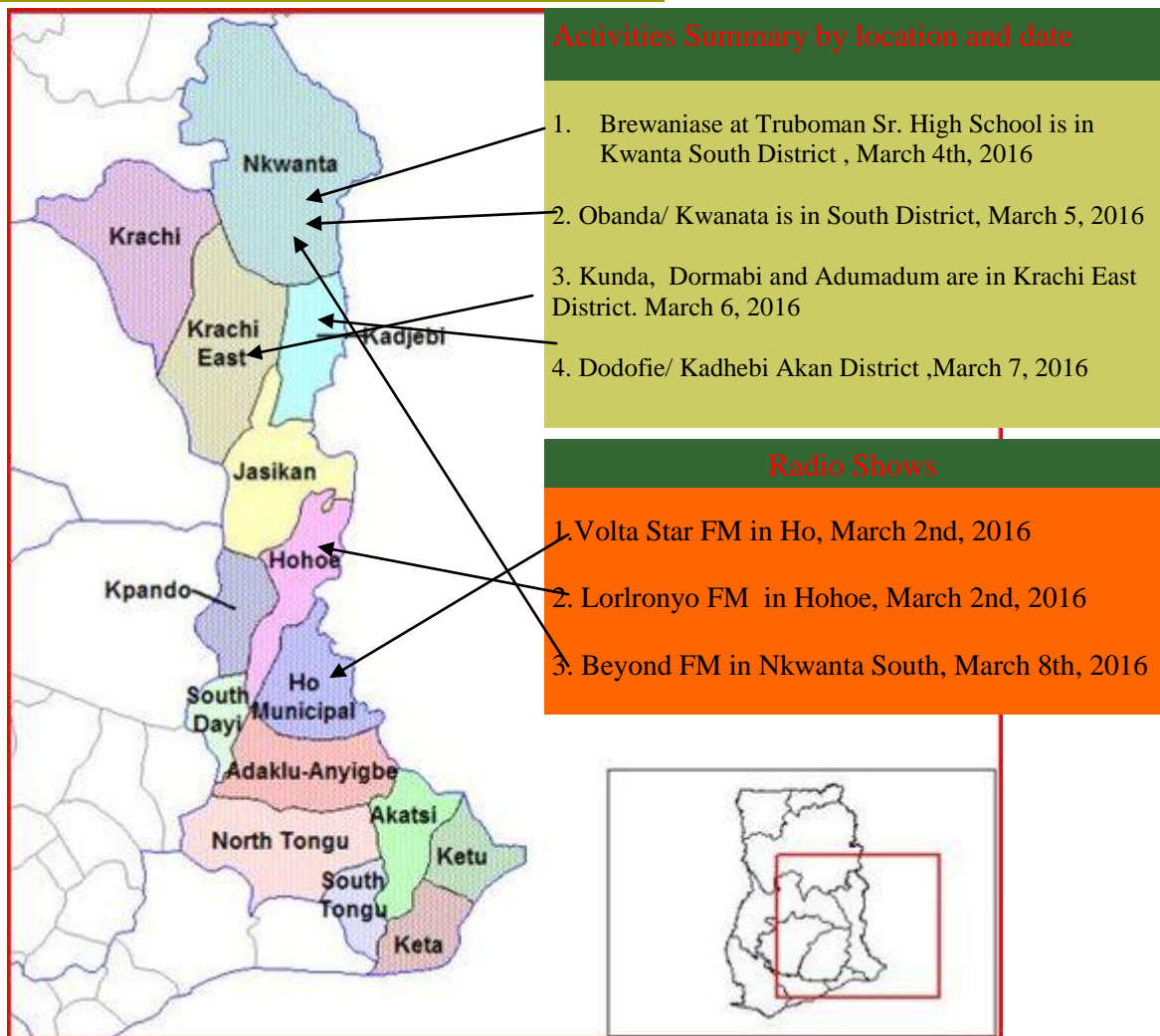


### Dodofie Town Hall Meeting in Kadjebi Akan District

On March 7<sup>th</sup> we held town hall meetings in Dodofie where land has recently been leased; yet, because the paramount chief was not present, we did not get details of the deal. We were, however, informed that the lease was signed by the British company Volta Red who bought the land grabbed by the U.S.-based Herakles Farms when it was unable to pay its dues to land owners, among other issues. The people of Dodofie who attended the town hall meeting, including male and female chiefs, expressed that they wished they had known what we told them before the lease was signed. They told us that “there will be no more land added to the recently leased concession”.



## Volta Region Map: Know the places we visited by District



## Follow Up

Where needed we plan face-to-face meetings and will continue to make phone calls to follow up with the leaders of these communities where we held town hall meetings. Regarding Darmabin, we submitted a formal referral for legal assistance request to the *Environmental Defender Law Center* (EDLC) which assists pro bono communities with these kinds of matters. For Kunda and Adumadum, we plan to reinforce the message about the threat of land grabbing as well as encourage responsible investment, community consent before leasing of land and female participation in the decision-making process. Finally, we plan to purchase more air time from the local radio station for the rebroadcast of the shows we made to ensure more people hear the message.

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