

MISSION



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.

38
YEARS OF
EDUCATION AND
ADVOCACY

Land Grab Awareness Campaign Ghana: For Systemic Change, Prevention & Advocacy for Those Living in Poverty and the Powerless

**Project Funded with Grants from:
The Missionaries of Africa and The Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities**

A BRIEF HISTORY

Moved to action by personal experiences in Africa, three Catholic missionary congregations namely the Missionaries of Africa, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritans), and the Society of African Missions, founded the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) in 1983 to transform United States (U.S.) 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 U.S. on the truth about Africa.

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Stated Project Purpose and Location

To empower leaders and local communities in Ghana's Volta and Upper-West regions to address the issues of mining and large-scale land acquisition (land grabbing) by multinationals including: the dislocation of families, prevention of environmental pollution, the communal ownership of seeds, and protection of biodiversity threatened by mono-cropping culture and reckless use of poisonous chemicals.

Project Background

The ongoing massive leasing of Africa's farmland to sovereign countries and foreign multinationals under the pretexts of investing, creating jobs, and ensuring food security for Africans, is nothing other than Land Grabbing. Social Justice Organizations and scholars continue to sound the alarm that this is another form of colonization, raising the concerns of African people because of its devastating

impact affecting already vulnerable farmers and carrying generational social, economic, political and geopolitical harm. It is established that the rush to acquire farmland in developing countries is motivated by many factors including: profit, the increasing need for biofuel, food exports, and also financial land speculation on the true value.

Stated Outcomes

1. Build and strengthen the capacity and network of civil society groups, traditional and opinion leaders.
2. Equip participants with knowledge, tools, and values associated with the promotion of integral human development, human dignity, and the common good through training workshops in social analysis and advocacy rooted in Catholic Social Teaching.
3. Educate and raise awareness to empower the community to take action by ways of Town Hall meetings.
4. Accompany the community to practice and carryout hands-on activities addressing the issues mentioned in the goals to ensure practical and concrete results of the project.
5. Amplify the message; educate more people by way of media/local radio

The Lack of Prior and Informed Consent

The secretary of the landowners association told Africa Faith and Justice Network that the lease signed between Brewaniase Families of Asukokoo Zongo, Krenkyeneko and Brewaniese and SG Sustainable Oils Ghana Limited, a subsidiary company of Herakles Farms based in the U.S. (now Volta Red) registered on June 10, 2010 under the title deed N0. VR 2548 and serial N0. 357/2010 was seen for the first time by the land owners representatives the day they signed it at Gateway Hotel in Nkwanta. This means they never read it. Only one copy was given to them and in 2016 when we asked they had not received the additional copies.

Shocking Revelations in Land Lease Agreements

The company Herakles Farms hired and paid both its own lawyer and the lawyer representing the land owners, a clear conflict of interest. Unsurprisingly, Article 12 of the lease states that: *“Any dispute, controversy or claim arising out of or relating to this Agreement or the bridge, termination, or validity thereof that is not resolved pursuant to Section 12.2 shall be finally settled by arbitration under the Rules of Conciliation and Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce (the ICC) Rules. The Arbitration shall be conducted in Paris, France and, unless otherwise agreed by the parties, the number of arbitrators shall be three”* which leans strongly in favor of Herakles Farm. How much land would a community or a family need to lease in order to afford legal representation in a French court? This is one example as to why our awareness campaign is so important.

Project Implementation

AFJN in partnership with the Mamaa Alorvi II, Queen Mother of Dorfor/Adidome in Ghana's Volta Region carried out the “Land Grabbing Prevention Awareness and Promotion of Responsible Investments” project from May 23 - May 29, 2021 in Ghana's Regions of Volta, Greater Accra, Oti, and Bono East.

It is of note that we incorporated Catholic sisters, members of AFJN-Ghana, in this cross-country trip to raise awareness and educate people child labor and Human Trafficking. The content of our presentations which will be annexed to this activity narrative will not feature the sisters' message for the simple reason that it was not part of the purpose of the grant application.

Schedule of Activities

Date	Location	Region	Number of attendees
5/23/2021	Bator Horme Kpekpo	Volta	53 Adults
5/23/2021	Bator Moklikpo	Volta	74 adults
5/24/2021	Live Show at Denyigba Fm Radio in Dzodze	Volta	People of Dzodze and beyond
5/24/2024	Dzodze Penyi Senior High School	Volta	More than 400 and less than a dozen of staff
5/25/2021	Apolonia	Greater Accra	41 Adults
5/26/2021	Fodzoku	Volta	38 Adults
5/28/2021	Garadima/Atebubu	Bono East	More than 250 Adults and youth
2/29/2021	Trubo Senior High School in Brewaniase	Oti	More than 1,300 adults and youth

Meeting in the Context of COVID

To minimize the spread of the Coronavirus, town hall meetings were held outside. The Dzodze Penyi Senior High School event was in the schools auditorium and Fodzoku was in the community center.



Campaign: Immediate Impact in Horme Kpekpo

In Bator Horme Kpekpo, landowners were in discussions with investors. With the information provided and their new enlightenment on the issues, they wanted to see if they could stop the negotiations. After the meeting, they thanked us and said that we came at the right moment because they had not signed any documents with the new investors so they can easily tell investors that they had changed their minds.

In Kpekpo, we were told that already existing agriculture projects have polluted the community's drinking water source. At the time of our visit nothing was being done by community leaders to find a solution. The youth took the opportunity of the gathering to once again bring attention to the traditional chiefs the need to quickly discuss with the investors whose agribusiness is the cause of the pollution of their drinking water source.



Campaign: Immediate Impact on Bator Moklikpo

An investor has divested the water stream called Korlor to irrigate his crops, leaving people downstream without water. Also, a Chinese investor who has a fish farm project in Moklikpo has restricted fishing on their side of River Volta which has never been an issue until he came. The community in Moklikpo said that it did not lease



any land to this investor, but the people on the other side of the river. How is it possible to deprive them of their livelihood associated with the River Volta and the stream Korlor? Recently a man was allegedly shot for fishing in the River Volta.

Mamaa Alorvi II, one of the beneficiaries of our training who used it to get the traditional land of her clan removed from a land grab by an Indian investor was at hand and taught them how to go about getting the water stream flowing again. Also, during our live show the next morning, we denounced that matter and encouraged people to say no to such injustice.

Large Gathering at Dzodze Penyi Senior and Trubo Senior High



An African proverb says that “We do not inherit land, but we borrow it from future generations.” Preventing land grabbing and promoting responsible investing is necessary for the youth to learn in order for future change. Fathers do not inform their children that they are about to lease their farmland for decades. By educating the youth with this information, they are now empowered to advocate for better agreements and raise concerns before their land is leased. We asked the youth

to educate their households, parents, and communities, to ensure their families do not become victims of land grabbing.



At Ntrubo Senior, we first spoke to a large gathering of parents who had come for a parent-teacher meeting. After our presentation to parents, we spoke to a very large crowd of high school students and teachers.

Apolonia/kpone Katamanso Constituency



People came from near and far to attend this gathering. Our interest in this area is that we learned that there are many land conflicts. However, most of these conflicts involve Ghanaians, not foreigners. They were very pleased with the insights.

Garadima

The situation in Garadima affects a lot of people. The paramount chief is the custodian of the land and therefore has the rights to all the land in his traditional area. It is in this context that a large size of which the inhabitant of Garadima called home was leased by African Plantation for Sustainable Development Ghana Limited for more than a decade ago. They were not consulted before the leasing of the land. They cannot access the land either to get firewood, medicine or any other reason. A project to help them access clean water which the company had promised to carry out has never been materialized. Instead people are asked to bring their contribution if they want the project to move forward. AFJN will try to reach out to the paramount chief for

further follow up. The Garadima situation is very complex and requires an in-depth understanding of the sociological and political reality of the people of Garadima. We want to understand why they are called settlers. Their children are victims of child labor because of the poverty. The issue of child labor and human trafficking was also discussed during this meeting.



Evaluation of Stated Outcomes



In light of the activities conducted, we are satisfied with the “Stated Outcomes” in our grant application with the exception of number 4 because the method utilized in these gatherings were town-hall style meetings. However, we were able to meet with the Honorable Edward Owusu, the Municipal Chief Executive of Atebubu Amantin Municipal Assembly, for a brief discussion at his home. The Hon. Owusu suggested that we reach out to the Ministry of Agriculture and they should be made aware of our advocacy around the issues of land acquisition, environmental pollution, water rights, and seed sovereignty.

Conclusion

Two important questions to rest our case against land grabbing in Ghana and anywhere else in Africa. Is there an alternative to develop Africa’s agriculture sector and how has our message been received?



What is the Alternative to Land Grabbing?

Ghana and Africa must develop their internal capacity. The tragedy is that political leaders continue to believe that solutions to African problems are sought to come from outside. This is the education of post colonization. As an alternative, we must look at successful models such as the Songhai Center in the Republic of Benin.

Located in Porto-Novo, the Songhai Center provides an alternative model of agricultural development for a new African Society. The Songhai Center uses an integrated production system based on the Zero Emission Research Initiative principle. This simply means that waste from one part of the operation is used in other parts of production. Crop waste is used to feed animals and animal waste is used in fish production. Most importantly, in this integrated system, the environment is respected because no chemicals are used. The soil balance is done through the natural process.

Project Relevance



After every gathering, people wanted to know more. For example, the gatherings in Moklikpo, Kpekpo, and Atebubu lasted more than three hours each. We discovered that there is an overwhelming lack of knowledge about these threats, namely the threat of land grabbing and all associated consequences that arise from it, as evidenced in these meetings throughout the country. There is an urgent need to continue this campaign in Ghana and in other parts of Africa. Chiefs, opinion leaders, landowners, men and women, young and old alike took away knowledge about how valuable their land is, how to preserve it, how to make it generate wealth for them and future generations through responsible investments.

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We look forward to future collaborations in the U.S. and in Africa.