

IBIAE LANDLORD COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Ibiae Oil Palm Estate, Biase Local Government Area, Cross River

RE: FRIENDS OF THE EARTH ALLEGATION ON WILMAR

The attention of the Landlord Communities of Ibiae Oil Palm Estate has been drawn to a write-up by a non-governmental organization called "FRIENDS OF THE EARTH EUROPE". The write-up has as its subject: Deforestation, Exploitation, Hypocrisy: No end to Wilmar's Palm Oil land grabs in Africa. The write-up was forwarded to us as an e-mail on the 28th of May 2015.

In our assessment, the write-up is an evaluation of Wilmar Compliance with what Friends of the Earth termed "Sustainability Pledge". Our interest is particularly on pages 2 and 3 where Statements were made to the effect that: "... In the village of Ibogo, the local community saw their farmland being excavated just one week before we arrived. They took us to show the land and the destroyed crops"

and again: In the nearby village of Betem, the water supply was severely damaged and polluted by PZ Wilmar's operations. The alternative borehole that PZ Wilmar supplied is not functioning and the company has not dropped by to repair it. Even for the brief spell, where it worked, the water quality was poor, a thick brown liquid that was a major source of illness in the community..."

and finally: Meanwhile down the road, the leader of the village of Idoma, Chief Steven Omori complained: "As a consequence of the Wilmar project our forest has been seriously degraded. Our timber has been destroyed and they have yet to compensate us. People who were farming in that area lost their land and they have yet to be compensated" .

It is disheartening that allegations of this magnitude will be made on Wilmar's operation in Ibiae-land based only on unreliable and unconfirmed sources. We think that an NGO of the status of Friends of the Earth should know that every sociological, anthropological and

political report, especially in Africa, should contain "balanced information and not gleaned from one source. If that was done in Ibiae, then the following facts would have been established:

1. That Ibogo is only a settlement of Akpet Community establishment in 1972 after Ibiae land had been acquired by the Eastern Regional government much earlier in 1962.
2. That the land carved and marked out as Ibiae-land is jointly owned and leased out to government by Idoma, Betem, Igbofia and Akpet Communities since 1962.
3. That the Landlord communities demanded for compensation from Government of Cross River State as a pre-condition for Wilmar operation in the area and got paid since 2014.
4. That the compensation was demanded in line with the 1962 agreement between the landlord communities and government for economic trees destroyed as at 1963 and not for those farming there now.
5. That the Landlord communities, or any peasant farmer for that matter, have never written any letter to Wilmar demanding for compensation. Such demands had always been directed to the Government of Cross River State.
6. That whoever is growing crops in the said land is doing so in total disregard for the law and various warnings from the landlord communities not to do so.
7. That in 2014 the government of Cross River State paid compensation as demanded by the Landlord communities. The Ibiae landlord communities committee set aside a fraction of the compensation money to pay "stubborn" natives who were still farming in the land despite repeated warning.
8. That on the 17th of October, 2014, payment commences for farmer's whose farmlands were verified. Every farmer got paid with the pledge to vacate the land before December 2014. There

was not a single letter from any farmer protesting the payment because they all know that they were farming there illegally.

9. That Chief Steven Omori of Idoma Village who was quoted by FRIENDS OF THE EARTH has denied ever making such comment and is indeed one of the signatories to this document and regrets the misinformation by FRIENDS OF THE EARTH.
10. That the information on water supply to Betem community is half-truth. It is true that the borehole provided by Wilmar [like every other manual borehole] breakdown once in a while. Wilmar response each time it breakdown is usually prompt. It is a blatant lie that the quality of the water is bad. The drilling of the borehole was awarded as a contract to a Nigerian Company and Wilmar has not been known to accept poorly executed jobs from her contractors. The borehole has been a good source of drinking water to Betem people.

"Friends of the Earth" should be told that in Cross River State land is owned either by an individual, family or community. It is a criminal offence in Cross River State for an individual to farm in a community land without the consent of the community. This is exactly what Mr. Willam Ojobe [who friends of the earth quoted] and most of his friends did.

We are worried that most non-governmental organizations that seek to investigate Wilmar activities in Ibiae land usually do so with a bias mindset. They seem to come with pre-conceived notions about Wilmar. In seeking to know what Wilmar is doing, they will usual avoid the Chiefs, women/youth leaders, community leaders and all constituted authorities. This is unacceptable. Wilmar is not operating on any individual land in Cross River State. They are doing so in land belonging to communities. Therefore, questions about the rightness or wrongness of their operation should be directed to the community not to individuals.

Below are extracts from the payment vouchers for compensation to farmers in Ibiae:

Signed:

BETEM:

1. Prof. Arikpo Bassey Arikpo
[Ibiae Landlords Coordinator]
2. Chief Udah Udah Urom [Clan Head – Betem]
3. Chief Egbai Isong [Village Head – Betem]
4. Dr. Oruk Egbai [Community Leader]
5. Mr. Obe Izu Onda [Youth Leader]
6. Chief Onda Egbai [Sec. Village Council]
7. Eyong Oke Okorie
8. Ekpeyong Onda
9. Ekpeyong Eyong
10. Celestine Isong Egbai

Handwritten signatures and a blue circular stamp for "BETEM CLAN HEAD" dated 06-06-2015. The stamp includes fields for "SIGN" and "DATE". Below the stamp, there are several handwritten signatures and the date "1/6/2015".

IDOMA:

1. Chief Steven Omori [Village Head – Idoma II]
2. Chief Ekpai Enang [Village Head – Idoma]
3. Chief Jacob Egbai [Community Leader]
4. Mr. Andrew Otori [Community Leader]
5. Monday Otoi Abit [Community Leader]
6. Sylvester Ambo [Community Leader]
7. Sunday Denis Ekpe [Youth Leader]
8. Chief Raphael Omori [Community Leader]
9. Pastor Sunday Omori Ekpokari [Community Leader]
10. Mr. Friday Samson Obio [Community Leader]

Handwritten signatures for the IDOMA section, corresponding to the list items.

AKPET:

1. Atte-Obhort Sunday Evong [Clan head – Akpet].....
2. Chief Evong Otei Ebit [Village Head Ibogo].....
3. Chief [Hon.] Sunday Abit Ehom [Ojor II].....
4. Chief Egbai Okpetim Egbai [Clan Head – Akparavuni].....
5. Chief Inyaang Ukpe Amang [Village Head Umai].....
6. Mr. Uka Egbai Epom [Youth Leader].....
7. Dr. Uti Ojah Egbai [Secretary Ibiae Landlords].....
8. Comrade Arikpo Ahama Arikpo [Community Leader].....
9. DCN Otei Evong Ebit



IGBOFIA:

1. Chief Egbai Egwu [Village Head]
2. Chief Udo Akpe
3. Mr. Ahong Oyire Ahong [Youth Leader]
4. Glory Asuquo [Women Leader]
5. Chief Udoh Akpe [Village Council Chairman].....
6. Chief Nelson Ivang Ibin [Finance Chairman].....
7. Sunday Nebe [Village Secretary]
8. Chief Akpan Akpe [Treasurer]
9. Chief Moses Onda
10. Assem Agom Bassey [Asst. Youth Leader].....
11. Chief Egbai Ehwu [Village Head]