



Draft Land Rights Policy Consultation/Buchanan, Grand Bassa County

February 12-14, 2013

Transcript of Group Discussions on the Draft Land Rights Policy

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THE LAND COMMISSION

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Day 1; February 12, 2013; Morning Session

All Groups (Recording did not distinguish between different groups)

Question: Are the four land categories clear to you? If not, why? Is the difference between Government Land public Lands clear to you? If not, why?

Speaker 1: Section 5.2.2.6 say any citizen or legal entity including any government entity may seek to cancel or prevent in transferred in the government protected area but policy did not say how that can be done or structure or what principal will be apply in the resolution for the kind of challenges that will be coming up.

Facilitator: I think his question is the lease agreement or the selling of any part of the government land can be canceled by individual or government and his question is what is the process? He is also saying the policy did not draft anything in here to look at the process, so what do you think?

Speaker 2: I think we need to jot down point which type of protected area that can be cancel and what is the process in canceling it.

Facilitator: Before we can go to that other one, we will ask our Secretary to please write down some of these concerns that we will take to plenary. We said government protected area we cannot sell them, we cannot lease them or for concession but can use on a limited basis. For example someone want to do some study in the forest then the government will give them a short time but you have to tell the government what you doing the study for so these protected area people are not disadvantaged in there but can give limited rights to do so for what they want to do.

Speaker 3: I think we need to look at it differently, if we are saying this area is restrained, let say forest, in other place people can visit forest but you can cut down trees or except they cut down for specific propose but you cannot cut down tree there or kill animals in that area but people can go there even the community go there for setting thing maybe to guard there for some many reasons, so what I think you can buy such land, you cannot gave a concession owner right in that protected area or anybody for example can build houses or make farm in that area so it is restricted and not protection so there is a difference between protection and restriction.

Speaker 4: To add up to what you have just said, if you read section 5.5, it said limited user right may be granted over government protected area to individual, private entity or government entity only if the use concern with the land conservation to management for the benefit of all Liberians.

Facilitator: Ok so we are leaving Government land now to public land, is any other you have about government land? The definition that is given to this land, do you understand and like this definition?

Facilitator: What do you think about it? Or we can keep it and make it as a law?

Speaker 1: Yes

Speaker 2: Yes

Speaker 3: Yes

Speaker 4: Yes

Speaker 5: Yes

Speaker 3: My people what trying to do here is first understand, what are public lands? What are private lands? What are Government Lands? So for now we are deciding on how government should do or how the process, so let us come up a definition what is government land and base on that definition we can see how the process can go about.

Facilitator: Again Government land are land that is use for building projects for the government, any question on this government land definition, are you satisfied with that definition?

Speaker 5: My question is and I am not so sure but we been hearing government been developing project on different lands and now we have come up with this definition, so what happened to those land government develop and not own by government? Because it is private own land like my old church the New Testament.

Facilitator: This is very important point or issue so we record it and take it to the commission, for now I think our definition for government land is clear and so let us look at what we called Public Land.

Speaker 3: Yes what I wanted to add to this, government land as we define it, it should be continuative meaning if government pass and new government come that new government should continuative where that old government stop maybe the pass government was under taken a project and did not finish. In this country people take advantage because they are in government, some time they will say the pass government did not buy this land and so they will gave it out to people of interest.

Speaker 2: Government does not just take land from people even if governments declare eminent domain on just property; government paid the value of it.

Speaker 5: Let me say this I don't want to be personal, before the war there were structures, there were places, when other regain came to power that places began private property or places. So whether it was John government or Paul government it must all always be government property.

Facilitator: I think it is fine concern we are putting forward, like this draft we are having if government follow the process, no one who have their proper document for a private land any one can come and claim it.

[Audio Unclear]

Speaker 5: Is it right for government official to own government land because official in government use their power to take other people private property?

Facilitator: She is asking a very sound question and we all need to hear her, she saying for example, in some counties like superintendent leaves power and claim government is it right.

Speaker 6: I think this is the time that the Commission sees reason to address some of these matters because most of the government lands now a day people have claim ownership on it so the Commission needs to move fast.

Speaker 5: I was in a meeting with civil society people one of them kept defending government on some major issue happening in the country and I said to him, why I you doing this? Is it because you find yourself in civil society today? What I am trying to say, if I am a government official and I want property from government let government give me original deeds but I will not see a town hall building own by government and take it because I am a superintendent no.

[Audio Unclear]

Speaker 6: Yes we all have point and these points will be taken to the commission so we cannot be saying one thing over and over because time is not in our favor.

Facilitator: Public Land comments and Suggestions:

Facilitator: Ok so let us come to what we call Public Land and I guess some of us have an idea on what is government land and beside that, anyone have idea or know what is public land? I remember the Commissioner mention something about public land during her address.

Speaker 3: Public land is a land that is not own by anybody.

Speaker 2: Land that is not own by anyone with no building.

Speaker 5: What I am seeing here in this document, it did not describe public because public land is land is the biggest land and land matter in Liberia and as such most people consider public land as government land and so we need to know how public land are determine.

Speaker 6: To add up to what she was saying, if you read here, it say public land may be granted for concession, leased or given to government, individual or the community or public land may be consider customary land or private land, so my point here, how this take effect?

Facilitator: What I want us to understand here is, as for the definition in this draft the public land is a land that is not owned by individual also is a land that is not owned by the government and is not a land owned by the community like customary land, for example if a huge portion of land was to be share among people and government any portion that will be left over will be consider as public land.

[Audio Unclear]

Facilitator: We need to understand something here, as a facilitator I am here to guard you what is the definition of public land is and what do you think about that definition so if it is not clear what do u think?

Speaker 6: The reason for which I want to bring out this point, for example before Gbopolu became a city the people who live there up to now no one can establish who own what land or what but any land you want to go on the country people will say that customary land for us so no want understand what is the difference between public, government, private and customary land is.

Speaker 8: I want to know if it is not private or government that who own the land

Speaker 7: It is not clear.

Speaker 8: It is not clear.

[Audio Unclear]

Speaker 9: For me I think we should asking our self, how should government be deeded and how should be name so that when other government ministry is coming to know how to transfer the deed.

Facilitator: I think his question is, if the ministry of internal affair is buying a land should the title deed carry the ministry name and background of is how is the land deeded because if it is the government generally than there is no distinction for me because it is the same government property.

Speaker 3: If me I think if government bought a land that land should be deeded under that entity name so that any other entity come there will be continuity because government can change any time.

Speaker 9: For example the LU that use to be where the Germany government is, when the war came the government took them out.

Facilitator: So for public land, some people was suggesting that the definition was not too clear so what are we saying?

Speaker 9: Well not to drag things whether private or public all land in this country is owned by the government of Liberia.

Speaker 2: What I understand is that government land is area that government build road, hospital, clinic, etc. that been used for active purpose that is called government land but public land is a land that is not owned by the government it not a land that is been claim by the customary people.

Speaker 1: I think the background of public land is that no ownership to it evens the government does not hold ownership to any such land.

Facilitator: According to the draft policy a public land is own by the government that is what is in the policy.

Speaker 5: If the policy is saying all government and public are own by the republic of Liberia than raises align again than what is the deference between the republic of Liberia and the government.

Speaker 3: There is difference, the government is the administration of the state, and the republic of Liberia includes both the administration and the entire citizen of the county so there is a difference.

Facilitator: Suggestions and questions?

Speaker 1: According to what I have learned and hear from everyone of us, who is allowed to build on a public land?

Speaker 8: Another question that I will want to know how many days meeting or consultation will be head for? Because Monrovia people when they come here they can hurry us and we be relax so for us time is not our problem because we want to understand this policy well.

Speaker 4: Another suggestion, I think the time for this consultation is very short because we have not even started discussing customary land yet why other people have started.

Facilitator: Now we have listened to all the question and suggestions but let us first answer her question and the question says who allow building or owning public land? Can anyone answer here question?

Speaker 7: According to policy, a public land can be transfer to an individual, to government

and so before someone build on a public land that person have to go through the process of who transfer or lease that land to you.

Speaker 2: For me I got different view, my view here is who own the public land first? Because from the beginning all we know public land was government land so if I want to build on public land and you are talking about transferring to the other, the question is who is giving me this land because it is not government land, not private land and not customary land.

Facilitator: The policy raise some thing and think that what you want to say because it say all government land private land is own by the republic of Liberia.

Speaker 6: Now when I raise that early, the lady back there in the Commission were saying this why the task force will be set up and the land commission will be an autonomous body that will be set up and those body will be there to regulate these issue.

Speaker 3: Now we the common people or the ordinary Liberian people will continue to rent and suffer because if you will put up task force to distinguish between government and public land, that surveyor is going to do his own thing, will own half of that land because we that do not have money to even survey our million lands and so when you when you sent the surveyor in the interior we will stay used his power to get people land even if the deed is 1816, he can go to the archive and change the date. Right now myself got property in duazon, the people now are suffering in the surveyor hand so whatever land that has been consider government land be government land.

Facilitator: So you are saying what so ever land be a public or government land be consider government land.

Speaker 3: Yes I am simply trying to say all lands will the exception of private or customary land the rest should be considering government land.

Speaker 2: I don't know if this is right place and time to asked this question, but let us take for example, a company came to Buchanan and got a huge land and it happens this company goes back; I really want to know who this land go back to.

Speaker 3: That is a very good question that we have to talk about because if this land was taking from John Brown to the church and the church cease to exist that land will turn over to the government or the big words exceeds to the government and if the government want transfer that land to something else they contact the original owner that land so it in the policy.

Speaker 4: Another thing is, like the own your own property and so I believe the own your own property should come back to the county than you take a administrator and say you are the administrator for this property, who makes you administrator for county property or government property and these same so called administrator will began to sell these property and so what happen to the county who to benefit.

Speaker 3: Another thing that is coming up, I believe that there is a law at the legislature and when you people start to discuss these thing you shall include the legislature, the law I am talking about is called criminal conveyance law and that law will help in dealing with some of these matters.

Speaker 8: My question is when she was talking about the own your own land, I you talking about the occupied land or the unoccupied land.

Speaker 3: No the unoccupied land.

Speaker 1: So you are talking about the unoccupied land?

Speaker 3: Yes it should go back to government.

Facilitator: So I we saying that public land should be explain more what public land is apart from what is in the draft? Is what our concluding point?

Speaker 3: No, we are saying all public land must go back to government because is what we know. My people do we agree here?

Speaker 6: Yes

Speaker 2: Yes

Speaker 1: Yes

Speaker 9: Yes

Speaker 3: Yes

Speaker 8: Yes

Speaker 4: Yes

Speaker 5: Yes

Speaker 7: Yes

Facilitator: She have asked a beautiful question, if the land is to be given back to government after it has been use by past company; what shall it be called? Government land or public land?

Speaker 3: There shall be an existing policy as to what is what.

Facilitator: What I was saying is that the policy already declare that government is the owner of public land so what this draft is saying we can no because that what the draft is saying so what our mother is saying that all public and government land be own by government but the others are saying that public land should explain in more detail. So let us finish with public land issue and move on.

Speaker 3: Yes I want understand something, somebody say land that were previously use by other company or consecution and then these companies leave who should the property goes to? The community or what?

Facilitator: I think if the land was given to a company by community that land was customary at the time and after the company leave that land should be given back to the community but if the land was given by the government that land should be given to the government.

Speaker 3: What I was thinking on is this Lamco was there and Lamco left but the property was been manage by the government and other companies that were here before, OTC came and took over, OTC left Mittel Steel took over an maybe left later than every one of us go and start living on these camps do you know how difficulty will it be for us be remove from such camp? Some people or children might even be saying my father or relative work for the company so to me all these issue about public land had been given to who should be government property because people of like mind will be willing to use it instead of it going back to the community.

Speaker 2: My point I want to understand in this draft that says government land cannot be given out to concession but public land can be, so my question here is if the company leave is that land goes as government land, return as public land or customary land? That is my question.

Facilitator: I think the policy should establish an institution that administer the public land than if a concession come and use that land than it goes right back to the institution that is administrating that land because if the government should be the institution than it means I see a conflict since the policy is saying that all government land that own by the republic of Liberia who is the republic of Liberia must be establish than person who is the republic of Liberia be establish that will take ownership of that land.

Speaker 3: Who is the republic of Liberia?

Facilitator: The republic of Liberia is represented by the government and the state is being represented by the government, so when it comes to administration is the government been look at.

Facilitator: Ok we have deed with two types of land, and our concluding points again all public and government land are owned by government and others said the definition of public should be erased why other said we should go in more indebt with public land our concluding points from us here right? We can say look at it later so let us move to customary land.

Facilitator: Is there anybody who can help us with the definition of customary land? Customary land whether deeded or not is define as land own by the community and it members and use and manage accordance with the customary practices and norms. That is the definition we have in the draft policy.

Facilitator: Did we understand what I just read?

Speaker 3: If that is the case when LAC was about to expand, than they should have given the people three days to move which is not even yet settle.

Facilitator: This draft policy we are going through is to change some of these issues.

Speaker 7: Land whether deeded or not is defined as a land own by a community and it member and use and manage in accordance with customary practices and norms, what I want to add here, with this definition is this, in a sense whether deeded or not is customary land right? And have full ownership of it, but not withstanding public land would derive from in this customary land, so what I will advise is that whether deeded or not, the boundaries that agree, customary should be boundaries that agree.

Speaker 9: The boundary of customary land shall be defined through active participation of the neighboring community and their members.

Speaker 3: I am saying the definition of customary land should be community lands by metes and bounds that agree by it neighbor.

Speaker 1: Yes it be quantify, the reason why I am saying means bounds should are not define , this share forest be use because we are from the same chiefdom and the same district they use it, so that can consider as public land.

Speaker 3: So from what you are saying now, public land can be consider share land right? So what I want us to be clear about that, customary land are land with metes and bounds are clearly define by their neighbors, so every land that in there began for that group.

Speaker 3: Another I see in that definition, to me government should begin to deed people lands that are customary because all of us have native back ground and all of us will not go to school.

Facilitator: Ok, she is saying all customary land should be deeded by government for the People.

Speaker 8: I agree what the old ma just said, because I can remember last December in rivercess I made a farm and were I made the farm is old and hard spot and after made my farm I wanted to plant my rubber there and I told the people, time came for me to plant the rubber they said no and they have no deed and up to now no one has done anything there so if they have their deed it will be alright.

Speaker 6: Suppose the policy document is passed into law and we say we look at your policy right but yet; you don't have deed, then what happened?

Speaker 9: Example I am from cavalla district and have 200,000 acres of land but I have never surveyed it and I don't have a deed and someone come claiming my land, what will happen?

Speaker 3: They will take it because the law says whether deeded or not.

Speaker 7: I think what the commissioner is saying when you are protected by this definition you can decide if you want to deed it but in the absent you are protected.

Speaker 1: According to what I have listen to, it is happening to us, many years ago our father came and establish on this piece of land and he has settle there for over fifty years and above; and some of my older brother are like fifty to sixty five years but now a person came and saying the land is for them and our father have stay on this land for more than sixty now and no deed but the man is saying the land for him; he went and brought in a brand new deed but my older brother told him that our father came here before we were born, so we cannot gave this land to anyone but will survey this land in our own name because some of us have our life tree here so he said he was going to take the case to court but he can go to court. So what began of us?

Facilitator: Can anyone say something on what she just said?

Speaker 6: Let me ask you, where is the area?

Speaker 7: The area is in Rivercess.

Speaker 4: What part of Rivercess?

Speaker 8: They called the place Jason community.

Speaker 9: I know Jason community before you get to cestor.

Speaker 4: Yes if can answer some of these question, constant with the draft land policy of equal protection, I think the policy said that customary land is protected as private land and the right to customary land including but not limited, must be secure like the way people in the interiors administer their traditional norms and custom; they know where their life stream is; they know where their boundary is and think it is establish that those people have right to that land.

Speaker 8: I think we need to establish how the land transfer to him; who sold it to him including the man is also claiming the land so we can legitimize it to someone.

Facilitator: So he is saying we should first know how this girl father got the land and the person who is also claiming the land got the deed; but the guy who she is excusing is not here so how do we look at this situation? But I think the land commission is working on something; but before then, family members in community own property but I think everybody who in that community should be entitle to that land.

Speaker 2: This issue she brought up might be customary land and we talking it but it is happing in the urban area , this making deed is becoming rampant, the last time we were at the city hall; I was trying to make people understand this adverse possession the draft is saying that in the time of war it does exist but people are putting in all kinds of thing because they already get the idea that this draft policy is saying thing about; so people who have not claim land before even the war now claiming land, now they are coming with these deeds that it was forefather estate, example Johnsonville where I live can you image the hoff family are saying almost half of that Johnsonville is for them. We need to discuss more on this issue.

Speaker 7: Let me give this example that I witness; a man claiming that his land is on the right per the deed from the archive but the other party claiming that the land is for them but the one the man carry is not what the surveyor and him came on the land, it was completely different so the people that work in the archive need to be present when the commission is conducting such workshop.

Speaker 6: From what she said I am a living witness to it, there is a parcel of land and that land is own by my grandparent my great-grandfather fought some kind of war and President Barclay gave them a deed and my great-grand uncle the land, we have our house right when you cross here. I suppose to be appealing in court this term of court, a man went and bought corner stone right in my living room and I took the corner stone and brought it to the police station. This man then wrote a letter to survey the land without including us but he came and planted his corner stone right in the front of my front door and the people he wrote the letter those people were never existing and he also said that he bought this land from Stephen Looking but then how

come the shone family own majority of that land? But he took me to court and I said to Judge Cole I don't have any problem with this man since he said he bought this land from Stephen Looking let him go to him; but why sue me for a land?

Facilitator: This is very important for us, why we are making these comments or suggestion, I want for us to make all our suggestion to the Commission so that they can look into it for these issues to be address.

Speaker 3: I think let us get back to the policy again because some of the issue they are raising are not policy related because the policy is the foundation for every person, so we got private right, public right, government right and we got customary right so let finish with these right and we can discuss others related issue about land because even the President have issue with her land.

[Audio Unclear]

Facilitator: Group suggestion on customary land rights?

Speaker 3: Customary land right should be as private land right or equal protection so we should take out the portion of norms and tradition.

Speaker 3: I think what the Land Commission need to do is to get private surveyor and a government surveyor and have a workshop with them because they are the one the main problem when comes to land business in this country.

Speaker: Can we read 6.1 under Customary Land? Because it talk about equal protection so why can we include it in the definition.

Facilitator: What she is trying to say is that, before then customary land rights was not protected equally to private land so in this draft policy all should have the same equal protection.

Speaker 3: Rights to customary land include the community as collective groups, family within the community.

Facilitator: So what are we saying? It should remain like this?

Speaker 2: No it should remain like this.

Facilitator: So what will be our suggestion from this forum?

Facilitator: She is suggesting that from this group perspective, a special section be called by the Land Commission that should comprise of man, women and youth to discuss this customary land issue.

Speaker 3: For me, there are other women in other groups who are town chief, clan chief that

over administrative matters, so I will want for all women to meet for at least two hours so we can discuss this issue.

Facilitator: So here hear her? She is saying all the women in the house should come together in one group to discuss the issue of customary land right to come up with a clear understanding.

Speaker 7: Land policy should protect women under our constitution on customary land right.

Speaker 8: The policy should also address multiple women right to customary marriage because seven women who are marriage to one man in some cases and the law provide that only 1/3 of the property should be given to women but the law shall all the seven women each should be given 1/3 of the property.

[Audio Unclear]

Day 1; February 12, 2013; Afternoon Session

Group 1 (Women)

Question: How does the draft policy address the issue of wetland? What are the rights and responsibilities of landowners who have a deed for land in a wetland area? Should the government treat wetlands that have been developed differently from wetlands that have not been developed?

Speaker 1: A wetland is where you have constant flow of water.

Facilitator: Are we together?

Speaker 3: I want to ask question if you are talking question, does wetland include river, sea maybe like setting distance in the sea and does it include creek, etc.?

Facilitator: Let see what the group say about that, he asking a question whether wetland are land that is in the sea or river.

Speaker 7: Any land surrounded by water is called an island but within island you could find wetland but wetland is where the water drains out from the sea so that my idea.

Speaker 3: Again it is important for us to understand what we want do with this wetland, for me I agree with the two definitions that was said because swampland can also be called wetland at the same time land that is in the sea can also be called wet land.

Facilitator: Ok, we all have putting it this way, wetland is a place where you find water most of the time.

Speaker 9: Are you talking wet land to be a swamp or wetland is different from swamp?

Facilitator: Any contribution to that?

Speaker 3: Well we said in the swamp, you have first of all the soil that is there is compose of mud or soft soil and in the swamp we have setting species of trees vegetation etc and etc, in the swamp you also have setting kinds of animals so within the swamp you have the wet soil and water, now the other wetland we are talking about, when the ocean comes and leaves the sand remain so the question he asked for me I will say yes because the land under that river is wet.

Speaker 8: If you consider that as a wetland, then in my mind, we will be using river and sea interchange with wetland, and so in my option swamp land is consider wetland because the quantity of water is not much and is even possible that over the time the water can dry but in the case of just a river for example the St. John river is it a wetland? Do we consider it a wetland? Or under the category a wetland?

Speaker 5: For me I do not agree that the sea is a land; it is a body of water because under this soil is water and so where this draft policy is consecrating on is where there is a land not soil.

Facilitator: So let us build a consensus on the meaning of wetland because what I am getting from the flood is in our little man understanding is kind of swampland like river and sea that has tree on it not sand because the policy did not specifically define wetland, are we clear on that? And then make a suggestion on what we just said. Now we said the draft policy treated the issue of wetland on protected area, why is it considered protected area? We will want to know because protected area are area set aside that people should not tamper with maybe there are major reasons maybe they got something in it that the world need and you will need in the future.

Facilitator: Why do we set wetland aside as protected area?

Facilitator: Can we find some answers?

Speaker 3: The draft policy said that wetland should form part of protected area if yes that how should it be treated? The one the Private Land with deed and the one that is not develop and not on no Private Land, can both of them be treated the same or separately?

Facilitator: So do we agree with the policy that wetland should be treated as protected area or we have different idea. We want your input.

Speaker 3: The first is that; not all wetland meets the standard of conservation so if a wetland meet the standard of conservation, let it be consider protected area.

Facilitator: The issue of wetland according to her not all the wetland you see can be conserve, can be set aside maybe some of them done have the things that require conservation but those that really need to be kept aside as wetland or for conservation be treated differently but if I have my land already meet the standard of conversation that land should treated differently as to the

land that has nobody on it. So that is what she is saying, are you getting me?

Speaker: It brings to my mind the need to say what we consider protected area then we will know which land is consider to be a wetland to be conserve or what land to be consider a wetland that private person can still claim ownership and use it at his will than the other question I want to asked, in case a customary land happens to be use as a wetland but at the same time been use for customary purposes, does the government claim ownership of that land.

Speaker 1: My question is why if that land according to the government standard of protected area you know where that area can be used for scientific research and etc., does the customary people loose ownership of that and turn it over to government or will it still be considered a customary land and their protected area.

Facilitator: How do we look at his question?

Speaker 3: When I was a little girl growing up, swampland was swampland, it was never sold, and it was a place where most people use to dump dirt from the street that is why our streets were not dirty. It was an area where beside farm land. So once that place was a swampland and we know the reason for swampland and we know swampland can help the environment so if it passes in to law we declare it of no use to government for the purposes that will be indicated in the policy; when it is declared to be protected area it must be protected area at all time or except for research or something but not to be use. Support women group for awareness not only gathering like this but we need to educate our people on these issues because our people don't know these things.

Facilitator: Are there any other comments?

Speaker 3: In all what she actually saying, strategic group need to go out in these villages so that people can know some of these law that is coming and make them get feedback on what we are discussing.

Facilitator: Ok secretary please take down these points, more awareness should be created especially on the issue of wetland in rural area.

Rural Women President: You people are talking about putting awareness on the radio station in the rural area, but not ever area get radio station so expect you people to called various women group than paramount chief because this thing is fall under women group, women will be able to take this to all of the counties and village to village so that the people can be party of this because not everyone listen to radio or got radio so for me I will not rest until you people include us in this process.

Facilitator: I think all of these thing are for both women groups and paramount chief thing, so that they can also get idea too like your women group and I also said we could not bring all of the women group from Rivercess here because so many reasons and so if you are representing

any group whether from Rivercess or Bassa or whatsoever you will take it to them from here. So why we are here anything we think about let discuss it so that we can take it back to the Commission.

Speaker 7: My question is, wetlands that are developed are they different from wetland that not develops? What do we say?

[Audio Unclear]

Speaker 8: Also wetlands that are developed should be treated differently from wetland that not develops.

Speaker 3: One thing I think we need to understand, do we understand what we mean by develop wetland?

Speaker 4: Should the government treat wetland that are develop different from one that are not develop?

Speaker 2: I think we should define what develop wetland is? And you said what standard should a land meet to protected area and if a land should be develop, should we say that the development of that land should promote the conservation of the land and should undermined the conservation because a lot of people could get a land and they develop it to the detriment of the species on that land so I think we need to define what we consider a develop land what are the standard that need protected area before we reach a decision as to weather a develop land be treated as a private or a land that is not develop.

Facilitator: Well I think what she saying basically, is that we first define what a develop wetland is and in fact if there is a necessary that the land can be develop, what kind of development should go there right? Whether that development is able to promote the conservation of that land?

Speaker 3: According to the tender land system, we have four main one, we get Government, the Private, the Public and the Customary, suppose the Customary is in wetland category or in the Private Land category? All wetland whether should be treated the same.

Speaker 9: Government is a body that regulate all land whether Customary Land, Private Land or Public Land so it possible that a person buy a land and the government say this land you buy you do have the right to build entertainment center here because this place is residential area, in the same light, it is also possible that a person land that means the standard of a conserve land, government should have the right equally if the conservation to that land will do the public good and so I think government also regulate Private Land that meet the standards of preservation.

Facilitator: So we are all saying wetland that meet conservation standard should treated as

protected area right? Oh she is also suggesting that all wetland that meets conservation standard government should regulate it also.

Facilitator: So the question about treating the wetland differently how do we answer it?

Speaker3: Develop or not the policy should be standard.

Facilitator: Then the question is the people own private property before the how can that person own such property?

Speaker 7: Such property cannot be withdrawn from such property owner.

Facilitator: Are we there? Because there is question to, it is what are the right and reasonability of land owner who have a deed for a land in a wet area?

Facilitator: Again how should treat those who have deed to wetland as of this policy? Any women?

Speaker 8: Those with wetland deeds before the policy is put into place remain as their property we will support the standard that will be put in place on wetland and so standard is a standard for us women.

Day 1; February 12, 2013; Afternoon Session

Group 2 (Youth)

Question: How does the draft policy address the issue of wetlands? How should the policy address wetlands which are part of customary land?

Facilitator: Emmanuel Tarr

Facilitation Process: Someone going to be reading the various category of land and the issue we want to be looking at is this draft policy that will be pass into law and whatsoever we are going to be reading and coming up with will effect generation upon generation so we are various counties and from various region we want to know the policy that have been crafted will it fit us as young people what the policy is saying, so that is thing we will be looking at and so that will be the four category of land we will be discussing.

Facilitator: Can somebody ready for the benefit of the group?

Speaker 1: Historically, all land under Government control was treated as public land without any distinction based on how the land should be manage, used, and transferred. This has contributed to mismanagement of land under Government control and ineffective land

administration. By establish the categories of Government Land and Public Land, including Government Protected Areas, the below recommendations will strengthen land management and administration.

Speaker 8: Section 3.1 All Government Land is own by the Republic of Liberia.

Speaker 9: Section 3.2 Government Land is defined as land used for the buildings, project, or activities of the Government.

Speaker 1: Section 3.3 Government Land may be sold or leased to the Government, an individual, or a private entity, including a community, only if the transfer process follows the strict protections designed to prevent fraud and abuse set forth in the Land Rights Policy Statement. Government Land may not be granted as a concession.

Speaker 7: Section 3.4 Government Land includes Government Protected Areas which are owned by the Republic of Liberia and must be conserved and managed for the benefit of all Liberians. Government Protected Areas shall not only be converted to Private Land, Customary Land, or Public Land in accordance with a law passed by the Legislature.

Speaker 1: Section 3.5 Limited use right may be granted over Government Protected Area to individuals, private entities, or government entities only if the use is consistent with the land's conservation and management for the benefit of all Liberians.

Speaker 8: Section 3.6 Public Land is defined as land which is not Private Land, Customary Land, or Government Land.

Speaker 3: Section 3.7 Public Land may be sold, leased, granted as a concession, or otherwise transferred to the Government, an individual, or a private entity, including a community. Public Land may be converted to Private Land, Customary Land, or Government Land.

Facilitator: So we start from one and see, what we do is to review it well and weather it is can reflect the view of the young people.

Facilitator: All Government land and Public land is owned by the republic of Liberia. That is number one.

Speaker 2: For me if the policy says that for me it is accepted.

Speaker 8: For me what I see here is that, if you will define Government Land and you define Public Land and looking at the issue here if we consider Public Land to be for government and Government Land for the same government, for example in my township if government come and build clinic, hospital, schools then all these for government? Then what began of the

township? So what I think looking at this aspect we shall look at it very carefully and do the necessary correction and recommendations on it because we young people tomorrow will be our time and when we shall have pass away our children will come.

Facilitator: Now what I want us do deal with it one by one when we document and then we go to the next one ok?

Faith Varney, from Tubman Town Todee District: My concern is if you are saying all Government and Private Land is own by the government then if I want to get a Private Land from government how will I be able to get the land?

Facilitator: In the first place, there are four categories of land ownership; there are some lands that are for people in the interior and that land is called Customary Land and there also land that are own by private individual so if you want land you go that person who will issue you deed for you to but a land.

Speaker 4: The issue raise in 3.1 is that all Government Land is own by the Republic of Liberia not an individual, think I agree with that all Public or Government land belong to government not individual.

Facilitator: So are we all clear on what he is saying? All Government and Public Lands are for the government and land such as Customary Land and Private Land are owned by private individual and Customary Land is owned by the traditional who settle on the land.

Speaker 7: My question is: how are these lands identified?

Facilitator: Lands are identified by boundary right?

Speaker 2: What if you own a land and government official came and say move that land what will happen?

Facilitator: Ok that will fall under Customary Land but that will be discussed later.

Junior Caller: I want to know why the policy makes the land not to be the people property but the government property.

Facilitator: She makes her points very clear and she said there are categories of land tenure, we got Customary Land, Private Land, Public Land and Government Land so the Customary Land belong to the community and the community got absolute right not to use it, can also sell portion that land and issue deed, they can also lease the land and can also use it as a protected area but Government Land are land that the government already got property sitting on, so Public Land and Government Land those two land belong to government so we want to be very quick on section 3.1 any follow up on 3.1 or suggestion?

Speaker 4: I suggest that section 3.1 be accepted by the body and place in the document.

Speaker 2: I also agree with him that the document be accepted in the document.

Speaker 8: I also agree with him that the document be accepted in the document.

Speaker 4: I also agree with him that the document be accepted in the document.

Facilitator: Let's discuss section 3.2.

Speaker 2: Section 3.2 reads: Government Land is defined as land used for the buildings, project, or activities of the Government.

Speaker 9: I got a concern, I own a land, my Private Land and I build a clinic or a school and then turn it over to the government, how do we classify that land?

Speaker 3: To answer your question, once you turn or donate that property to the government, that property become government property.

Facilitator: Also let she said; in the policy government receive a land by donation or other means.

Facilitator: Ladies and gentleman can we pass a resolution on 3.2?

Speaker 1: Definition on section 3.2 accepted.

Speaker 2: Definition on section 3.2 accepted.

Speaker 3: Definition on section 3.2 accepted.

Speaker 4: Definition on section 3.2 accepted.

Speaker 5: Definition on section 3.2 accepted.

Facilitator: Let us discuss section 3.3.

Speaker 8: Government Land may be sold or leased to the Government, an individual, or a private entity, including a community, only if the transfer process follows the strict protections designed to prevent fraud and abuse set forth in the Land Rights Policy Statement. Government Land may not be granted as a concession.

Speaker 4: If Government Land may be sold or lease to the government than why is it called Government Land?

Facilitator: Take for example right; this is Buchanan and all property here; who is in charge? Government right so what they are saying, even though it is government property but property can still be sold or leased to other institutions.

Speaker 8: I still need more clarity on portion. I read, only if the transfer process follows the strict protections designed to prevent fraud and abuse set forth in the Land Rights Policy Statement. Government Land may not be granted as a concession.

Representative from the Land Commission: Part of what we are trying to do is that mistake from the past should not be repeated, for instant you mention tribal certificate and lot of our people don't understand what a tribal certificate is; people take it to be deed, or just anything so we are trying to make sure people understand what it takes to obtain land in this country not what has happen in the past, we may reach some way in working process that tribal certificate may no longer exist any longer and so let us look at this document and come up with what we want to do in the future and do away with tribal certificate; let come up with some form so we show it that youth from Grand Bassa including Rivercess and all other counties that we will insert into the final document and it will not be the Land Commission document any more but our document.

Dr. Othello Brandy Chairperson: I have been watching and making tip on all the various youth groups, the Bassa youth, the Rivercess youth; do we have a youth from Margibi? This group needs to be strong, I see lower Montserrado and others group's present; I am very pleased to welcome you all; we need to hear from you, what we are doing here today may look small but things you be a part of for longer time the issue of land and so land is fundamental to citizenship what your future will be like in terms of what benefit you will enjoy; reading economics it say the three major resources Land, Labor and Capital, land is fundamental to economic development but more importantly to how are you born as citizen to be part of Liberia. So we want to hear from you in constructive way to make this document a strong document. And just to inform you that even if you are tired give yourself some energy because you are the one who are making decision here today so pay attention to what you are doing here today and you are privileged to represent the youth so that your rights are ensured especially under the Customary Land because most of the land in the county is customarily owned. One of my friend from the Land Commission was telling me the other day how disappointed he was, when he came from America from doing his master, and he when into his area, one of his friend a young man who he grew up with from the same village when to school in America wanted a land and when in their area and the people say no problem we can give you and your people are the one who founded this village but this other man his father came here as a stranger so his problem is different, so

my point here is this: there are issue relating to youth on such matter so there are things I want you guys to talk about. Thank you.

Speaker 3: One Philip Duho from white plain and think you guys from the Land Commission may know him, he went to the community and said he wanted do Mackenzie farming and he requested about one thousand acres of land so for me I raise it as an issue. What so much this brother will want to do with such land and the community may need other to use other parts of the land so what we are saying that this policy that we are about to put into place we that are representing our people need to know or understand them so that when we get back we will be able to inform our people.

Facilitator: Ok; so where are we on section 3.3? Can we come up our resolution? Do well agree with what the policy is?

Speaker 1: Yes

Speaker 2: Yes

Speaker 3: Yes

Speaker 4: Yes

Speaker 5: Yes

Speaker 6: Yes

Facilitator: Can someone read section 3.4 for us?

Speaker 5: Section 3.4; Government Land includes Government Protected Areas which are owned by the Republic of Liberia and must be conserved and managed for the benefit of all Liberians. Government Protected Areas shall only be converted to Private Land, Customary Land, or Public Land in accordance with a law passed by the Legislature.

Facilitator: Do we have any qualms on what she just read? Are we in agreement with is this policy? As young people, do we see anything that is going to affect our future?

Speaker 3: Government Protected Areas shall only be converted to Private Land, Customary Land, or Public Land in accordance with a law passed by the Legislature okay; what if the Legislature doesn't see the law as important enough to be passed? What happens?

Arven Wallah Observer: Now I want us to understand Government Protected Area and

differentiate it from our own area, example Protected Area which is a swampland and government have eminent domain over swampland and swam land is not to be sold to anyone; and so what they are saying that the only way swampland can become someone property except the Legislature go back and deem it necessary and that is what this section is saying and we all need to understand it.

Speaker 8: Now my doubt has to do with the verdict the Legislature come with. For example, the young people went to the legislature and say we want a piece of swampland all swampland that is owned by government and government decide to sell it that means that legislature have agree?

Speaker 2: Now in the first place the legislature will not cover setting community but it will be a law pass for the entire republic of Liberia, so what they are saying the only way you can own Government Protected Area is for it to be passed into the legislation; so people who living in swamp, park etc. they are all squatters.

Speaker 8: My concern; if you drive on SKD boulevard, there is a large swampland there; a guy wanted to build or lay road there but EPA put stop to him because if he put road there it will block that area because area is consider Government Protected Area for now until we pass this policy into law before anyone could carry on such project.

Facilitator: So can we come up with a resolution on 3.4 that is reflected in the the view and reality of the young people?

Speaker 2: Youth resolution on 3.4, we the youth representing our various counties agree that this document be accepted.

Facilitator: Can someone read section 3.5?

Speaker 2: Section 3.5, Limited uses right may be granted over Government Protected Area to individuals, private entities, or government entities only if the use is consistent with the land's conservation and management for the benefit of all Liberians.

Facilitator: So are we clear on that? Government can decide to give someone limited access but you may able to define what you are going to do there and it should also be in the interest of the Liberian people.

Speaker 2: For me I think this portion is clear, like example the Blue Lake in Bomi County.

Facilitator: I see everyone shaking their head, it seems like everyone agrees with this 3.5 right? So we agree that this section is clear and meets the view of the young people?

Speaker 1: Yes

Speaker 2: Yes

Speaker 3: Yes

Speaker 4: Yes

Speaker 5: Yes

Speaker 6: Yes

Facilitator: Can a female read for us 3.6?

Speaker 4: Section 3.6, Public Land is defined as land which is not Private Land, Customary Land, or Government Land.

Speaker 7: Can that Public Land be sold to individual?

Facilitator: Can a Paramount Chief sell a land?

Speaker 2: I am facing the same problem with the Paramount Chief from Montserrado County, he can just send people in our area and give right to land in the area without proper documents.

Facilitator: This policy is trying to help is to draw clear understanding on who what or how and so no Paramount Chief will come up this time and sell or take what is not on the book or the law, so if this place is declared Customary Land, only the community determine what they want to do with it. So are we clear on 3.5?

Speaker 1: Yes

Speaker 2: Yes

Speaker 3: Yes

Speaker 4: Yes

Speaker 5: Yes

Speaker 6: Yes

Speaker 7: Yes

Speaker 2: Section 3.7 Public Land may be sold, leased, granted as a concession, or otherwise transferred to the Government, an individual, or a private entity, including a community. Public Land may e converted to Private Land, Customary Land, or Government Land.

Speaker 6: When come to section 3.1, for me I have no problem with it for the fact that we are saying that all Government Land is owned by the government so if we are looking at this area for me are have no problem.

Speaker 6: I am from the township of Harrisburg and let me informed this group about how we go about lands business, we have various committee to manage land so no one can just come up and say they own million acres of land there, what we usual do there is, if anyone own a land and want to sell it we will asked that person to show us all of his claims on the land and after that the committee will gave you the right, along with superintendent, to sell or survey it.

Facilitator: Any more question or comments on 3.7? Can it be used for us in the future for us as young people?

Speaker 4: If this land is identified as a Public Land then we should be able to make decision on that land or what?

Speaker 6: From his question he just read who make the government?

Speaker 3: We make the government.

Facilitator: So if we make the government then the government that is the one that is going to decide. Can someone define what are Government Land, Public land, Customary Land, Private Land and Customary Land?

Speaker 4: Public Land is define as a land which is not Private, Customary or Government Land, in 3.7 say Public Land may be sold, leased, granted as a concession, or otherwise transferred to the Government, an individual, or a private entity, including a community. Public Land may be converted to Private Land, Customary Land, or Government Land.

Facilitator: So we are talking about the conversion of land right, the Public Lands are not for anybody only governments have responsibility.

Speaker 8: My concern in 3.7 on concession, in 3.3 say Government Land may not be granted as concession but in 3.7 say Public Land may be sold, lease as a concession then why is it that since we have agree that Government Land is owned by the Republic of Liberia why can the Government Land responsibility of all so if Public Land will be granted as a concession but not Government Land.

Facilitator: Can someone answer his question?

Speaker 2: From my little man understanding Government Land cannot be sold.

Speaker 5: For me my understanding is Government Lands are lands that government has deed for not necessary need to have structure on it and Public Land is land that does not have any deed or register.

Speaker 3: For me I like to speak on white plain; only one government school that is build no clinic etc build there.

Speaker 7: I like to comment on this question to my brother from white plain, if government only have one school in your township or community and want to building additional even if there is no additional lands left for government there, government could use it eminent domain power to take any private or customary land for development.

Facilitator: Ok; so what we are discussing here will help make this policy right for the future so can pass a resolution on 3.7 or any more comments?

Speaker 8: Yes 3.7 be accepted.

Speaker 3: Yes 3.7 be accepted.

Speaker 2: Yes 3.7 be accepted.

Speaker 3: Yes 3.7 be accepted.

Speaker 1: Yes 3.7 be accepted.

Speaker 5: Yes 3.7 be accepted.

Facilitator: Let us read and discuss section 4.0.

Speaker 5: Right to Customary Land, including ownership rights, must be secured by ensuring that these rights are as protected as private land right. Rights to Customary Land include rights of the community as a collective land owner and rights of groups, families, and individuals within the community. Secure rights to customary will promote long-term decision making and thereby strengthen Liberia's. The below policy recommendations recognize this diversity such that communities may define themselves and determine how their land is managed, and shared responsibility with the Government of Liberia.

Speaker 3: Customary Land, let the policy say, if the policy wants to be clear, on how the administration of the land be done, or if it wants to say in the legal framework of transparency, this and that, let it point to transparency as a component interest of the community, for example youths, women, etc. Then it will be known that in case the land is being given out, for concession, etc. or in case that land should be formalized, it should be given out only by the agreement of those legitimate interests.

Speaker 7: There should be a law that the Customary Land should not to be sold but to be leased; such in the future the people can retake their land for other purposes that is when

business people want to invest in the land, it should only be lease.

Speaker 1: The land is not protected under this arrangement.

Speaker 2: Wants to know the difference between Customary Land and traditional land.

Speaker 3: They are just the same thing; it is like you say Head of State or President.

Speaker 2: Then I recommend that we drop the customary land and deal with traditional land.

Speaker 4: All sales of customary land should be put to stop, it is used for so many things; anyone who violates the law should go to court.

Day 1; February 12, 2013; Afternoon Session

Group 3 (Rivercess)

Facilitator: Jerome Vanjahkollie

Question: How should the policy address large Landowners? What is a large landowner to you? What if the landowner has been away and now there are people living on the land?

Facilitation Process: Can any of you volunteer to be our secretary for recording of the discussions, and one person for the presentation of the group discussions.

[Audio Unclear]

Day 1; February 12, 2013; Afternoon Session

Group 4 (Grand Bassa)

Facilitator: Raymond Zaizay

Question: How should the policy address concessions? Should communities be allowed to grant land to concessionaries? If yes, how should the community make that decision?

Facilitator: Can we discuss these issues and come up with a resolution?

Speaker 1: For me I think the government should be the only one to grant land to concessionaires not the community.

Speaker 2: The purchase of land should have a limitation to buy, but for the purpose of buying, it is good to know the intent, let the intent be clear for the land, land bought must not be resold.

Speaker 3: For example, like Buchanan Renewable, they signed a concession with the government, but it sold the company with no one knowing the amount for which it was sold. Buying land should not be authorized, it should be leased.

Pauling Watson: The policy should allow the communities to make such decision on how to know the quantity of acres to be granted, how many hectares of land may be sold to any individual or people will want to buy or lease.

Speaker 1: Yes! The draft policy should give the communities the authority.

Speaker 2: There should be a law put into place given the government not the communities.

[Audio Unclear]

Day 1; February 12, 2013; Afternoon Session

Group 5 (Margibi/Rural Mont.)

Facilitator: Jeremiah Karmo

Question: How should the draft policies address concessions? What should be communities' rights and responsibilities regarding concessions?

Speaker 1: It should not be "exclusive" but it should be in collaboration with the community.

Speaker 2: If Section 6.4.1 says the Community shall have land Management decision-making authority regarding customary land than my question is, are others lands such as public land, private and government land can be decided by the communities also?

Facilitator: He asked a question; can someone comment on his question? If no comments should we come up with a resolution?

Speaker 2: We agree that the policy involved communities grant land to concessionaires.

Speaker 3: I enjoyed the facilitation.

Facilitator: The writer will put down what we have agreed on for the group and so thanks very much for participating in such discussion.

[End of Recording]

Day 2; February 13, 2013; Presentations to the Plenary

[Day 2 Group Discussions Not Recorded]

Facilitator: We will now call on the women groups to make their presentation.

Dr. Othello Brandy Chairperson: Good Morning everyone; at this time I will extend my thanks to every one for coming to be a part of this group discussion and everyone of the group was very engage yesterday so we want to thanks you for the level of cooperation and we expect you be involve like you did yesterday.

Recommendations of Women, Rural Montserrado and Margibi:

- Government should buy Government land through the ministry of land mind and energy and the withholding entity.
- Government land should be clearly demarcated so as to avoid conflict even if the land is not for government it should be demarcated even if the land is somewhere.
- Before government sell public land, the local people should be part of the decision making to such sale.
- Government should allocate setting potion of land from the public land area to be sold to private citizen and settle to be kept not be sold but to be for other governmental purposes.
- In the process of identifying public land, tribal people should found a part.
- All customary land should be properly documented and demarcated even if not deeded customary land should be identified and border should be considered.
- If deeded customary land should not carry the name of any one individual.
- No private individual should be allowed to plant cash crop on customary land.
- When every a private owner sell a portion of his land, the original deed should be rewritten or mark to reflect the remaining portion of said land.
- Wet land or other area should not be sold.

Facilitator: That was the recommendations from the Women of Rural Montserrado and Margibi counties. Do we have any Comments from the women of rural montserrado and Margibi recommendation?

Commissioner Flaming from Rivercess County: I hear him saying the different between public land government but he did not give us details information and from government should land that will be for government.

Facilitator: I think our main task is to look at the draft land policy and come up with recommendation and think is what we are showing here.

Oju Williams: Let's look at 4.1 land rights principal, the government of Liberia has treated all land that is not deeded as public. Let us be clear on this, please tell us in simple term what is public land?

Speaker 1: For our working definition, public land is that portion of land that is left after Government, Private and Customary Land have been removed but what we are recommending is not to extract anything from the existing document but we are recommending things that we feel that was left out and that is our objective.

Edwin Martist Commissioner of Rushville: We are here to write the wrong and if we are here to write the wrong than let's discuss what went wrong in the past, especially our elders'. Let us discuss what went wrong in the past because public have been what we called self-interest and we from Rivercess county civil society are critical and debatable so hope we are running into dialogue, we have our objective and our objective was to recommend what we think is good and we stand by it.

Rivercess Superintendent: Question for the group that just presented, under our law lands can be given to individual or groups or an institution which register legal person under our law and so the individual; which category will be public? Is it an individual or institution that should be entitled to land?

Emmanuel Viatumeh from the Township of Charlesville Margibi County: My question has to do with swampland and wetland, you may mention if it should be sold, but whether is a private person or government? Or can wetland be sold?

Speaker 2: I think if you look at our recommendation we say wetland should not be sold.

Samuel P Kamoji from district one Grand Bassa County: I hear you saying something about Customary Land and I hear say private individual should plant cash crops on Customary Land; I want to know why you said that?

Speaker 1: We said that because people are in the constant habits of going to the customary people saying they want to grow farm cassava and then sooner and later starts to grown rubber and as time pass by, they began to own the people's land and so we are saying that there should be law or provision that say if you ask for farmland to make a animal farm let it be animal but take the people land.

Eugene Huetta from civil society: I hear him saying on Customary Land no one individual name should carry the deed; now, this is a recommendation so let him tell us who name should carry such document.

Speaker 1: In our group deliberation, we find out there are many deeded properties that are in the names of private individual and so if government want to sell or lease property that deed should be put in the community or village name because sooner or later John Brown will soon be saying this is my forefather property.

Land Commissioner of Margibi County: My concern is on wetland, I bought my private land and the swamp was included inside and you say it should be sold and already getting my deed and somebody come to me and say I want to buy it and you say I must not sell it?

Speaker 1: Our coming here is to resolve what went wrong in the past. Government or who so ever that was selling such land should stop it not the one you already have, we saying here after.

Dr. Othello Brandy Chairperson: I will like to address the question you just raised because the question about public land and in my mind, every group that I went to raise the issue of public land so we not too clear on the public land issue, in the past many Presidents have used public land for their friends why other use it politically. The other day the Vice Chair and I went in the Mansion to view some the deed many of the Public Land has never been signed because never like the people or because they was not the right political people, and so there were many problem with Public Land, and many places were encroach on by the communities, and so every one of the group raise issue with Public Land. And we at the Commission ourselves it took us almost one year to define Public Land so what we decided to have this consultation to give you the opportunity to come up with a definition or our view on public land, we have define all the four category of rights and what we done is make Public Land the last so that any land that left over, the land we will look at will be Customary Land we will take the Customary Land off than the people who got their private deed off also, right after that time any other land that remain is public land. Now in some area there may not be public land in some area after the process so public land is the last area. So everyone understand what we are talking about? Do we need Bassa translation?

Speaker 1: No

Speaker 2: No

Speaker 3: No

Recommendations of Women, Grand Bassa:

- Government land should be the same process as doe's Private land, and the ownership to Government land should be continuity.
- Government should have a deed for all Government land.
- Public land should be enrich, what institution should transfer land? Who represent the Republic of Liberia (RL)? We also said that we should not be looking at the public land but rather customary and private land because public land is interchangeably use because public land is a land that nobody own so interchangeably government can use it and so say we should focus on customary and government land.

Facilitator: I want us to be very clear on the issue of Public Land, according to the policy, public land can be transfer to an individual, a business etc., but did say what institution and if the policy it say public land is own by the Republic of Liberia and who is the Republic of Liberia? Or who is going to represent the Republic of Liberia? So we are thinking what kind of institution is ready?

Women Interest Group Grand Bassa County: When we go to customary land the definition should be amended to include all potential interest that women do not lose out that so that women are able to own their land too. For example may be in that community but customarily to that community and so the land policy should protect women constitutional and statutory rights since the policy is there to guard existing principles. Customary land is formalized, purpose should include interest of women but what we are trying to say, all lands in this country should have a document. The policy should also address the issue of inherence multiple wives.

[Audio Unclear]

Commissioner Flaming of Rivercess County: I asked a question to lower montserado and they did not give a clear answer so I want to repeat myself, from whom and by how means should government purchase a land to be their owner?

Dr. Othello Brandy Chairperson: Let me help in answering his question, government can acquirer land like anybody and beside that government can buy the land from the customary people and also the community can give government land for development so government can buy a land from private individual too but if you refuse government to cooperate government can use their eminent domain rights ok, so is that answer your question?

John More Jr. from Rivercess County: My concern is on customary land, some customary lands have been given to concession and tomorrow if the company leave who will be the owner of that land?

Commissioner Liberty: I am sure most of these question that you are asking are been discuss in your groups and you have not found a suitably answer especially public land the institution that will be responsible and all of that. We told you we have another task force that is coming with a new policy on land administration and land use and management so don't worry we will do good job but this is just the beginning but we have addressed the issue of customary land and he also talk about the concern of women and the guiding principle it address the issue of women.

Land Commission Chairperson: Let me add to what Commissioner Liberty has said and answer that question directly. Some of these questions you are asking relate to what we are discussing but also to other issues that will be coming out later. Directly to the question you ask, if you own a land or this piece of land is owned by the community and you have a deed for the area and concession come to you, the concession did not buy the land from you but lease the land and so when the lease expire what happen to the land? And answer is the lease will come back to the owner.

Facilitator: So I think this issue has been addressed, anybody has a concern?

Eugene Hutta from Negate district Grand Bassa County: Now he made a comparison that if you marriage from this village to this village automatically that women should be part of that community and any activities of that community. Now if this right is granted that lady, what happen in the case of divorce?

Commissioner Land Commission: The question concern custom and so we are not purposing a change of custom, if a woman marriage from her family to another family and move up to another village she is began a member of that village, than the issue of divorce come in the process, marriage is a contract that put these two people together and divorce break that contract so you go to where you come from.

Rural Women President for Montserrado: I hear my sister saying women should take part, if you want women to take part than you need to include us in everywhere the Commission go because rural women don't even a radio station in their villages.

Dr. Othello Brandy Chairperson: I know you're tired of seeing me talking. One of the thing women all over Liberia are very concerned with is the fact that when they marry and they are from different village or different town, after all of them have live and work to develop property and get children and the man die, under the traditional custom they are not protected, right? Ain't that what the women are saying? Under the traditional practice they will say you have to marry one of the man's brothers. That is the only way you will able to own that land and the women are saying no because they don't have to marry the brother before owning the property, right? We want to tell you the Land Commission recognizes the traditional norms and practices but

whatever you do they cannot go against the laws of Liberia, and that is very important to us. So the practice to move women from the land is against the new law because you cannot go and stop women from owning the land because it violates the new law. And so this new policy insures the protection for women too and be sure all the man understand what the new law is. Do we understand it?

Rural Women President for Montserrado: Yes

Women Interest Group of Grand Bassa County: Yes

Henry K. Toe Christian Association of the Blain Buchannan Brunch: I tell you all thank you, the Commission thank you for this new idea they putting together because if Liberia had started these things like this, then we have go in front long since but I thank God for the good idea. Yesterday in our group work, I hear the land that we own which is the resources that is there, the oil, the diamond and gold is not for you but for the government. Then my question is if you own a land as far back and the land has gold or diamond than they come and say the land is for government why I want to know?

Dr. Othello Brandy Chairperson: Thank you very much and I appreciate your participation but that one is a answer for me, because we will go to the Constitution of Liberia because we can't do anything against the Constitution and the Constitution clearly states, any mineral be a gold or diamond in the land or in the sea belong to government but the Constitution did say the trees, animals etc. on the land not for government, therefore the resources on the land belong to the people that is why government has something called the community forestry because the forest on that land supposed to be for the community thank u.

Erurise Myers representing the young people of Bassa: If the land belongs to the people and our elders have given land to people in government and these people have planted rubber and palm tree on the land and have not sign no land deed yet and so what belong to such land?

Land Commission Vice Chairperson: Your hello, we got something they call moratorium and moratorium means you must stop small, this thing we looking at is a big thing since we take over this land thing we starting receiving hula-hula from all over the place that people was selling land tribal certificate and all of that. So we say we can understand and we went to the President and asked her to stop the sale of public land so we can look into all this land matter. Then the President sent deed to us and say I will not sign any deed until the Land Commission look into it, and we from the Land Commission have stop people like town chief, clan chief, commissioner etc. from selling land because anything they see trees on they want to sell it and we are saying any land that whether you a deed or not that land for you so we are doing big thing for you because when company come who are they going to?

Recommendations of Group 2 (Youth):

- All wetland should be own by the Government of Liberia.

Recommendations of Group 3 (Rivercess):

- Our recommendations is that public lands must not form part of the land policy document, reason is that, administration is not clearly define and could give more advantage to people in government so for us we do not want any category called public land.

Facilitator: Are there any questions? If no question than let us give Riverces County a hand.

Recommendations of Group 4 (Grand Bassa):

Commissioner Jackson B Sinoeplah of administrative district: Are the four land categories clear to you? Grand Bassa County say yes because we find out that public lands are owned by the government and no one owns it, and also look at government land, and that is where the government have their construction like hospital and other things. And in that document we look at keenly that customary land is a land that is belong to the people who have their common boundary and also private lands are property that is own by individuals who has a title or deed to it so we say yes it is clear.

The difference between government and public land? We say government has the right to obtain deed for buildings, our schools and other things that government may build structure on. Then we look at public land, we said after the community or customary people have taken potion of what is due them, whatever piece should be for government.

Facilitator: Thank you very much Grand Bassa County. Are there any questions or suggestion?

Speaker 3: What is confusing my mind here is that, the President given order that all land be halted, but my question goes to the honorable Commission. Now there are violators all over Liberia, they have brought table deeds concerning lands, what will become of these violators?

Paramount Chief Peter Garvleh: I first of all want to give thanks to the Land Commissioner and to recommend few points. This regional consultations meeting we are in and these sub section be taken to the various counties so that those that are not present be able to contribute to this policy for tomorrow thank you.

Commissioner Liberty: Your question you asked is very interesting and important. Like we told you the issue of the moratorium and the moratorium was put into place to guard our own interest because the President say the way the land business was going on she was not satisfied to signed deeds. And you said people are going around to selling lands to individuals, but I can assure you that those deed that are being prepared for the President's signature will be review before she can sign it alright. So in this public manner advise all those who are in such act to stop because they are not during good service to those people but disservice to Liberia so this what we got to say.

Dr. Othello Brandy Chairperson: Commissioner Liberty has told your something but just want to add on it. There are lot of people in the county who think they have violated the moratorium and preparing some kind of paper saying that deed, public land deed is a deed currently until it is sign by the President of the Republic of Liberia. Even some people can called that deed a mother deed and so right no public land deed will be sign even if it is a hydro plan or whatever deed the President will sent it back to us; so we can assure you of that. She also sign a moratorium that no deed will be signed until it goes through a vetting process at the Commission and my brother all that paper work that those guys are fixing will be of no use and that acts by these individuals are criminal and they will be expose to the public even if it is going to hundred or fifty years and I know that moratorium is taken place in Grand Bassa and I can see the Honorable Commissioner of Bassa here and we want to let the rest of the Land Commissioner's here know that the moratorium is still in effect.

One last thing I want to let you know. If you listen to the President's annual message something called Criminal Land Conveyance Bill and also mention a number of bills that should be pass by this Legislature, and she mention this that we at the Commission develop, and that law have also be pass by the Senate and is called Criminal Conveyance of Land which will have a serious effect under our law and that law apply to anybody including commissioner's, city major, town chief, paramount chiefs etc. And the penalties in the bill are high that could lead you into jail for over ten years, stop surveyors from surveying lands etc. Again Commissioner Kandakai wants me let you know that this law came from the previous consultation we had the last time.