



Open Letter to the Council of Paramount Chiefs of Sierra Leone

“Please support the enactment of the two bills currently in parliament on land - do not throw spanners into the painstaking progress already made – Please understand that an inclusive Land Governance shifts the burden of blame from your shoulders”

8th March, 2022.

Dear esteemed **Paramount Chiefs**;

I am writing to you from the Golode Lansana community of the Gorblah Clan in the western region of Liberia. I am here for a comparative study on customary land governance with the aim of using the experience to contribute to shaping discussion on land issues in Sierra Leone. I am here seated with the Gorblah Clan Chief Lamin Bondokai Browne.

Before I left Sierra Leone, I was made to understand that on Saturday, 5th March 2022, cross-section of your membership met in Bo city to discuss a possible action to vehemently oppose the two land bills in Parliament and to do so by writing a protest letter to the president, requesting him to entirely discard the two bills and to allow the continued existence of the laws that everyone agrees are really old and are counterproductive for sustainable, inclusive national development. I understand that your argument is around the fear that the proposed laws will take away your authority in land and reduce your governing power over your people. Well, based on experience in Liberia where a similar law was passed in 2018 and now in existence, no such is the case and Chief Browne puts it right:



Photo with Chief Lamin Bondokai Brown of the Gorblah Clan

Well, based on experience in Liberia where a similar law was passed in 2018 and now in existence, no such is the case and Chief Browne puts it right:

‘We are happy with the new law. It has restored trust between our people and us. It has made us share the difficulties dealing with land issues with our people – women and youth - and all of us now have the blame if any mistake is made. Now, women are happy, youth are happy and everybody in the clan is happy because they all have the space to contribute to decision making on land. We are currently dealing with several difficulties with the investment company here, but all of us have accepted that it is our joint problem and we are dealing with it as a people. So, we the chiefs have gotten some ease now and we are very happy’

- Chief Chief Lamin Bondokai Browne

My noble chiefs, I am banking on Chief Browne's statement to kindly plead with you to support the reform process so that you can start and/or continue enjoying peace with your people. For those who have been in it, already understand the complexities around land issues once there is conflicting interest. Those of you who have not witnessed such complexities (probably because you don't yet have an investment entity in your chiefdom) should desire that the proposed laws are passed. I supposed, you would want a law that can provide answers to the many doubts currently characterizing our land rights and governance. Please support the enactment process for a sustainable national development, peace and security.

Yours faithfully;

Berns Komba Lebbie;

National Coordinator

Land for Life Initiative in Sierra Leone