
Local Communities in Tanzania Continue to Face Problems Brought by Green Resources' Tree Plantations

Green Resources Tanzania Limited (GRL) is branding itself as a leading company in East Africa. It claims to offer solutions to climate change through planting monoculture trees. This wrong and misleading claim hides the reality on the ground. GRL is causing land grabbing, deforestation, destruction of grasslands and much social harm.

My name is Frank Luvanda, born, raised and living in Tanzania. I work at SUHODE Foundation, a small but active NGO working in addressing various environmental and social challenges that local communities face in this country. This article is an opportunity to expose to the rest of the world the dangers and evils that monoculture tree plantation companies in Tanzania inflict, in particular, the company Green Resources Tanzania Limited.

Green Resources is the biggest tree plantations company in the country, and also in the East Africa region, where the company controls an area of about 38,000 hectares of land. It is a Norwegian company, controlled by Norfund, the Norwegian governmental development institution, and Finnfund, the Finish governmental investment arm. Besides Tanzania, the company also has tree plantations in Mozambique and Uganda.

Discourses and lies

In recent years, many communities in Tanzania have been experiencing challenges brought by climate change, such as increased temperatures, emergence of new crops and human diseases, excessive flooding, long drought seasons, unpredictable rain patterns, increased hostile weather events, sea level rise, inundation of smaller islands, among others. These climate change impacts bring other challenges, such as food insecurity, expansion of deserts, loss of water quantity and quality, loss of biodiversity in various ecosystems, among others. And all of these challenges heavily affect local communities, especially those depending on their lands for food and production of business crops in their respective localities.

On top of this challenging context, some multinational companies and funders have come up with so-called solutions to mitigate climate change by insisting on expanding monoculture tree plantations, especially in countries in the global South. After many years of testifying what these plantations look like on the territories and for communities living in and around these monocultures, I can firmly say that industrial monoculture plantations are NOT a solution to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change. The solution can only be in leaving fossil fuels underground.

Green Resources Tanzania Limited (GRL) is branding itself in Tanzania as a leading company among other monoculture tree plantation companies in East Africa. It claims to offer solutions to the negative impacts of climate change through carbon sequestration by planting many hectares of monoculture trees!

This wrong and misleading claim hides the reality on the ground. By planting thousands of hectares

of plantations with eucalyptus and pine trees, GRL is in fact causing many challenges to local communities and affecting the environment in general through land grabbing, deforestation, destruction of grassland ecosystems and contribution to the loss of biodiversity.

Green Resources on the ground in Tanzania

I recently visited twelve villages affected by the GRL's plantations, namely Mapanda, Kihanga, Nzivi, Idete, Mninga, Taweta, Uchindile, Ukami, Mgugwe, Mnyela, Chogo, and Igowole. It became evident to me that many communities in these villages experience serious problems, most of which have been caused GRL's grabbing their lands and resources.

Communities in the village of Idete are now experiencing land shortage due to GRL grabbing much of their land for its plantations.

GRL arrived at Idete in 1996 and acquired 14,000 acres (5,665 hectares), a land area known by communities as Farm 900, with full consent of the Idete communities. Few years later, GRL acquired other 12,000 acres (4,856 hectares), an area locally known as Farm 901. Local communities and the current Idete local government affirm that they don't understand how this was given to the company as there was no consultation made, and thus the acquisition must have been made illegally. Based on the communities' perspectives, GRL possession of Farm 901 is a dishonest grabbing of their fertile land, which has provoked much suffering due to the insufficient land that was left for them. According to many community voices, *"The land on Farm 901 was the fertile local community village land for their current and future uses but it is now under GRL illegally!"*

As a result, people are starving due to insufficient land for producing their crops, grazing their livestock, and other social and economic activities. Land related conflicts among local communities at Idete are increasing as people compete and fight for smaller pieces of lands. In order to escape from this, some communities have opted to move away and start a new life inside forests along the way to Makambako. Hence, for their survival, they have had to deforest these areas, which are well known as Miombo woodlands. Other community members from Idete have decided to return to Farm 901 to continue farming, claiming that GRL did not consult nor compensated them and that they are ready to fight for their land! Many others are starting to feel encouraged to enter Farm 901, so that their voices and demands for that particular land that was grabbed from them could be heard.

Another vivid danger of the GRL operations in Tanzania is clearly visible at Ukami village. There GRL acquired 3,400 hectares of land offering, as usual, lots of promises, such as building a village government office, classrooms, health facilities, and creating employment to communities. Most of these promises have not been fully fulfilled. The current village government still cannot understand what was the basis for the former village government to offer such a huge area of land without reserving some land for communities to carry out their social-economic activities in their area. They suspect that corruption might have helped GRL to be able to acquire almost all the land of the Ukami village.

Local communities have started a campaign to demand back their land, which requires legal support from organizations supporting communities in their struggles against monoculture plantation companies. As of now, Ukami village experiences lots of serious challenges to survive. There is extremely insufficient land for agricultural activities and even for social needs such as burial sites, human settlements, among others. There are many land conflicts, as well as food insecurity and children malnutrition. The SUHODE team asked them what they think would be the solution to their situation, and their response was *"to reclaim part of the land or the whole land"*.

In summary, out of 12 villages that we visited, only the villages of Chogo, Igowole, and Nzivi are somehow secure from the most serious challenges brought by GRL. The reason for this is that on these 3 villages, land is still available and sufficient. The Chogo village has still plenty of land which they said they will not dare to give it to GRL. This stand is the same for the the Nzivi and the Igowole villages. (1) Unfortunately, the rest of the villages are suffering a lot, they experience land shortages, increasing land conflicts between their local community members as they compete and fight over land, unfulfilled promises by GRL, increasing levels of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity, increased levels of poverty as most of their economic activities depend on the availability of land.

I take this opportunity to request and call upon people and organizations that share our vision and thinking on the destructive impacts of industrial monoculture tree plantations, to work together towards supporting community struggles and movements against the expansion of these plantations in Tanzania and other parts of the world!

In particular, we call upon the Norwegian and Finnish citizens and organizations to help us stop the destructive investment their governments are promoting in our countries!

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<https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/tanzania-community-resistance-against-monoculture-tree-plantations/>