

## Enabling Sustainable Peace in Rural River Cess County



Dorbor community members mapping boundary points that were memorialized in a MOU ceremony

*“I thank LGSA for helping our clans find peace about land matters.” –Mary Beh, Dorbor Community Resident*

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In anticipation of the passage of the historic Land Rights Act, which will give communities a mechanism to own land for the first time in Liberia’s history, USAID’s Land Governance Support Activity (LGSA) has been facilitating processes aimed at building the capacity of communities and local governance institutions, so that once the Law is enacted, communities will be able to own their land as seamlessly as possible. In order for communities to gain title, they must agree on their membership and harmonize their boundaries with neighboring communities. LGSA and its partners have been working in communities, throughout Liberia, to prepare them for customary land ownership.

After working with communities in rural River Cess County to self-identify, this quarter, LGSA supported the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) among four clans – Banama, Voor, Garezohn, and Togbayakun – along with the GPS mapping of the clans’ shared community, Dorbor in Fan River District. The MOU signing on boundary demarcation brought together community members, stakeholders, and formal and informal influential leaders, which included the Fan River District Commissioner, Unification Town Chiefs, Paramount and Clan Chiefs, and youth and women group leaders.

The collaborative and participatory process for establishing boundaries left community members feeling empowered and confident in the MOU’s sustainability. As Mary Beh, a resident of Gbalah town, relayed, “I participated in laying down the rock that stands as a cornerstone between [Gbalah town] and the Kru Town... [before LGSA came to Gbalah] we had 14 boundary disputes, but now there is only one; we are working through it.” Ms. Beh extrapolated further to say that the incidence of land disputes and controversy stemming from cross-boundary farming has been greatly reduced, and “after the formalization of the boundary, [her] community has been at peace and there is no longer fear [her] family will fight over the land.”