Conflict: the Fourth “c” in Liberia’s Forest Management

PERSPECTIVES ON 10 YEARS OF FOREST AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Africa Biodiversity Collaborative Group

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Outline of the Presentation: biodiversity conservation, people and conflict

• Background on Tetra Tech’s work in Liberia and broader biodiversity and socio-political context
• Legal framework on natural resources
• Summary of the 3C experience
• Conflicts related to 3C implementation
• Summary
BACKGROUND
Tetra Tech’s 10+ Years of Forestry Programming in Liberia

• USAID/Liberia Land Rights and Community Forestry Program (LRCFP)
  – 3+ year pilot initiative (2007-2011) to develop and apply a “community forestry framework”; field activities in four pilot communities (Nimba & Sinoe Counties); worked closely with FDA and Land Commission

• USAID/Liberia People, Rules and Organizations Supporting the Protection of Ecosystem Resources (PROSPER) program
  – Five-year (2012-2017) project to support the expansion of sustainable forest management and CF in Liberia through education and improvements to human, legal, regulatory and institutional capacities

• World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) for the REDD+ Strategy (2015-2016)

• USAID/West Africa-Biodiversity and Climate Change Program (WA-BiCC) (2015-2020)
  – Support for transboundary biodiversity programming including three PA in Liberia
Liberia’s Forest Resources and Biodiversity

- ~2.2 million hectares of closed canopy dense forest
- Ecologically diverse flora and fauna, holding 46% of the Upper Guinean rainforest ecosystem
Liberia’s Population

A Diverse Populace

- 54% of population lives on less than $2/day
- At least 27 local languages 16 tribes
- Dominant political class (~5%) has historically emphasized these differences
  - Land ownership limited to “civilized” peoples
  - “Growth without development”
Liberia’s Conflicts

Liberia’s Conflicts


• More localized Protected Area disputes over access and use

• Conflicts with legal concessions
National Forestry Reform Law (NRFL)

- Passed in 2006; establishes legal framework for managing Liberia’s forests
- Enshrines “3 Cs”: conservation, community and commercial
- Dislocates forest resources from forest land opening door to exploitation with compensation
- Calls for new law on community rights to forest resources
Community Rights Law (CRL)

- Passed in 2009; establishes a process by which communities can secure their customary rights over forest lands
- Use a nine-step process to ensure Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC)
- Includes/envisions commercial management
- Nine-steps include a proven conflict resolution process
Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management Law

- Passed in 2016; provides a framework for conserving flora and fauna
- Supports community engagement in the conservation of biological diversity
- No implementing regulations in place
CONSERVATION MANDATE & EXPERIENCES
Conservation Commitments

• The Government of Liberia has committed to establish a Protected Forest Areas Network, and Conservation Corridors that covers 30 percent of the existing forested area of Liberia ~1.5 million hectares

• 16 PA and Proposed PA; 4 established to date
Protected and Proposed Protected Areas

DATA SOURCES
Forest Cover, Metria/Geoville Preliminary Classification, August 2015.
Rivers, roads, boundaries, cities, LISGIS, obtained 2014.

This map has been produced for the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) for the REDD-Readiness Preparation Activities of the Liberian Environmental Protection Agency.

Disclaimer: This map has been assembled with the best available data, as evaluated by the SESA team. Due to lacking metadata Tetra Tech is unable to guarantee the correctness, completeness and current status of the information offered and therefore declines any liability.
East Nimba Nature Reserve
PA Establishment Process

- East Nimba Nature Reserve (~11,500 ha.)
- Transboundary area of international importance
- Passed in October 2003
- Opposed by local population
- FDA unable to demarcate until 2011 and with significant USAID investment
PA Establishment Process examples...

- GEF investment to support consolidation of the PA Network (2008-2011)
- Lake Piso, Gola and Wonegezi
- “This project expected too much, too quickly from FDA… FDA had never managed a conservation project on its own.”
- Livelihood Activities: “No clear change attributable to the project”
Current Status

- Four Protected Areas
- Draft Management Plans
- Limited capacity to implement
- Support from WB/Norway, WA-BiCC, Arcelor Mittal
COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCES
The CRL is an extremely powerful tool…

- Allows communities to define their forests
- Secures management rights
- Management rights include conservation, commercial and community use
As such, there have been multiple efforts to undermine its use…

• Private Use Permits
  – Illegally granted to harvest timber on community lands

• Community Forest Applications
  – Developed and submitted for commercial purposes

• Land Rights Act
  – Introduced to the legislature with provisions removed that would have provided compensation to communities whose lands were “taken” for PA management
Current Status

• Less than 20 CFMA (all of the donor-supported CF have conservation objectives, while others have commercial objectives)

• More than 100 applications that may have links to commercial interests and many are located around PAs

• Current donor strategy supports those around PA

• Livelihoods from CF are extremely limited
Community Forestry Applications and other land uses
COMMERCIAL FORESTRY EXPERIENCES
Commercial Forestry Experience

- Significant portions of the country have been identified for timber concession management
- Laws and regulations are in place but support limited to EU
- Some agricultural concessions convey timber harvesting rights outside of the NFRL
- Some of these overlap with community customary lands
- Some overlap with other land concessions
Allocated and Unallocated Concessions

DATA SOURCES
Boundaries, cities, from LISGIS, Protected Areas, FMC, TSC, from FDA; Mining, from MLME; Plantation, from GFW and Metria

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Summary of the Status of 3C Management

- There are overlapping land uses and claims between the three Cs
- Liberia has set ambitious conservation targets but has limited capacity to implement
- Communities require incentives for conservation
- The interest in commercial exploitation of forests is alive and well
CONFLICTS – the 4th C?
Conflict: PA Management

- Sapo National Park ~ 180K+ ha.
- Forest elephants, Pygmy hippo, etc.
- On-going conflicts between local people and FDA over use and access rights.
Conflict: Concessions

- Concessions have the force of law and many for 25-50 years
- Independent audit found that many were signed without compliance with public consultation requirements
- Overlap with customary rights
- Include timber rights
Conflict: PA and Transboundary Conflict

- Protected Areas are located in remote, transboundary areas
- Historically staging grounds for internal and trans-boundary conflicts
- Now international wildlife trade are using these routes and networks
Proceed with caution and consider all 4 Cs

- Ambitious conservation targets – 30% now supported by WB/Norway
- Limited capacity
- Economic barriers to adoption by communities
- Liberia is STILL emerging from its years of conflict and other challenges