nfp UPDATE - information as of 2004

Nfp process

This section brings a brief chronology of the nfp process, from its early phases to the latest developments. Details are given on the mechanisms, procedures and structures put in place to advance the implementation of the nfp, as well as on the main issues constraining its progress. A final overview on the forthcoming actions and activities closes the section.

Chronology of the nfp process

The national forest programme in Sierra Leone has always concentrated on sensitization and awareness raising campaigns, training programmes, reforestation of degraded lands, natural forest management, forest protection and biodiversity conservation.

The Sierra Leone Forests Action Plan (SLFAP) was developed between 1988 and 1989 by conducting a Forestry Sector Review jointly supported by UNDP and FAO. The exercise pointed out the major problems of the forestry sector and proposed an action programme "far beyond the present institutional capability" to solve them. The SLFAP was therefore framed on the basis of the following priorities:

- immediate/short term: institutional strengthening;
- medium term: pilot development and consolidation;
- long term: investment in development.

In 1990, following the issuing of the final SLFAP document, revised Forest Regulations were introduced and a log export ban set, which is still in place. Recently, a 250% increase in forest fees and royalties has been recommended.

An updated policy statement was published in mid-1995 in the Master Plan. The Forest Act was approved in 1998 but it has not been enacted yet.

In May 2003 a draft Forest and Wildlife policy document was issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security and is currently on the process to be approved.

Mechanisms and procedures

National forest programmes (nfp) in Sierra Leone are designed to address environmental degradation, hunger and poverty reduction.

The government of Sierra Leone, through the Forestry Division, has incentive schemes whereby woodlot establishment and maintenance can be supported financially as a means of promoting forest conservation by community-based groups/and or local NGOS. This strategy also addresses the wood energy issue and reduces pressure on the national forest for poles and firewood. To reduce the rate of deforestation from firewood harvesting, rural communities are also trained in the construction and use of energy-efficient stoves, such as the mudstove, which save on firewood and hence reduce cooking costs.

Community awareness-raising campaigns on the causes and consequences of deforestation are a major regular activity. Weekly programmes are organized over the air waves, involving panel discussions by a variety of stakeholders on various environmental issues. Group meetings are also frequently held with communities in areas where deforestation rate is high such as in the east and south of the country where chain-saws are rampantly used for exploitation of timber, and in the north and north-central regions of the country where there is frequent occurrence of wild bush fires.
National forest programmes implementation implies cross-sectoral relationships among government ministries, institutions and non-governmental organizations. The FD works collaboratively with the Environmental Protection Division of the Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and the Environment in the following areas:

- Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) before permitting certain land use activities, such as mining, logging, quarrying, etc.;
- Protection of hazardous areas around settlements by the restoration of forest cover or a Green Belt around the City of Freetown. There are also plans to extend this collaborative programme to urban centres in the provinces.

**Main constraints**

**Information Vacuum**

A major impediment to planning and funding forestry development is the lack of recent information on the forest and wildlife resource base. Without information relating to changes in forest cover, it is difficult to predict trends which justify appropriate planning. Inevitably this impacts negatively on fund raising mechanisms to carry out work.

**Debilitated Forest Service**

As previously noted, the staffing structure of the Forest Division is over-aged and suffers from a high vacancy rate, particularly in the professional grades. There has been little training carried out in recent years, and few professional staff have been trained in the new skills necessary to broker partnerships between stakeholders at District level - such as team building, conflict resolution and the provision of unified extension services.

Most of the infrastructure, buildings, communications, transport and equipment in the field was destroyed by war or has fallen into dilapidation. Many Districts lack office accommodation and staff housing, which are prerequisites for decentralising Forest Officers.

**Under funding - Low revenue base and administrative weakness**

Budget provision from government is very low and, furthermore, owing to administrative weakness, the revenue capture rate is estimated to be only 25% of its potential. The consequent lack of revenue data means that proposals for revenue and benefit sharing with communities cannot be based on reliable fiscal data.

**Dysfunctional communities**

Community forestry faces many challenges such as tree planting, joint management of forest reserves and management of off-reserve resources, which require leadership qualities, technical and management skills within communities. But, Communities and Traditional Authorities have been much weakened as a result of civil strife and displacement of peoples.

Particular groups, such as migrants, internally displaced persons and ex-combatants may face constraints in accessing land and forest resources. Such persons may default to encroachment on forest reserves and other protected areas.

**Weakened private sector**

There is no large-scale commercial tree planting (except for rubber and oil palm), and most tree-planting is done on individual farm or household level. The lack of a formal forest sector constrains planning, monitoring and management of forest resources and their utilisation.

In Sierra Leone, land acquisition for private forestry may be difficult due to land tenure system which empower chieftdoms with ownership rights, except in the Western Areas where the freehold system applies. For obvious reasons, lack of tenure is inimical to private sector investment in forestry resources.

**Debilitated implementation capacity of NGOs**
Many of the NGOs lack technical and institutional capacity to carry out natural resource management. Whilst they may be closer to communities and stakeholder groups than government, they are largely self-appointed and may lack some credibility as genuine advocates of those whose interests they claim to represent.

**Poor inter-sectoral co-ordination**

The forestry and wildlife sector is intrinsically linked to other sectors such as agriculture, mining, energy, water affairs and tourism. But, hitherto, conservation and development in the forestry sector has been constrained because many of the driving forces affecting its destiny originate elsewhere. These forces, such as demographic and agricultural pressures, cannot easily be changed by forestry actors, although their impacts may be mitigated.

**Future actions**

**Incorporation of Forestry into Agriculture Sector**

Forestry is now part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), and is well positioned in this ministry to demonstrate the contribution of the forest and wildlife sector to sustainable agriculture and to food security.

**Inclusion of Wildlife mandate with Forestry**

There exists great potential for an eco-system approach to the conservation and development of the forest and wildlife sub-sector. Furthermore, the wildlife sub-sector, in particular, can make a major contribution to food security through sustainable bushmeat supply and through revenues from eco-tourism.

**Development of Forestry Scenarios for the year 2020**

Sierra Leone carried out a review of options for future forestry development as part of the Forestry Outlook Study for Africa. This provided an opportunity for key thinkers in the forestry and wildlife sector to examine the driving forces impacting on the sector, and to construct alternative scenario outcomes to the year 2020.

**New Draft Forest Policy**

The Forestry Division has also orchestrated a forest policy review process in 2003 which, together with the Outlook Study, provides a basis for the development of a future vision for Sierra Leone of its forests and wildlife.

**National Desire for Recovery**

The upbeat mood of the country is reflected in the optimistic scenario "Sweet Salone", generated by the recent exercise on alternative futures for Sierra Leone's development to 2025. This has clarified the long term aspirations and vision of Sierra Leoneans, and the Vision lays down guidelines for ensuring the sustainable and effective utilisation of natural resources whilst maintaining a quality environment. The time is ripe for development and there is good will from the donors now that the country is stable.

**Forest Production**

Although not recently assessed, Sierra Leone's forest resources should recover sufficiently to support rural incomes and livelihoods. Small-scale entrepreneurial activities (rattan, bamboo, etc) upwards to formal sawmills all have a part to play.

The Forest Division has an opportunity to create a conducive environment through the revamping of the Forest Industries Corporation which would also serve to displace and absorb illegal power saw operators.

Additionally, the rehabilitation of the Kasewa (Demonstration) Sawmill would act as a stimulant to the private sector to improve techniques, equipment and other skills vital for successful entry and survival in the sector.
**Forest policy**

The national forest policy and their main achievements are hereby pointed out, together with the draft or official policy statement, when available. Two specific sub-sections on forest tenure and financial issues provide a more complete vision on the socio-economic context influencing the forest policy.

**Main achievements**

**Forestry & Wildlife sub-sector policy**

There is no formally adopted Forest Policy for Sierra Leone yet, but rather an evolution of practice in response to changing priorities of the day. Latterly, these include decentralisation, community roles, gender issues and the linkages to other sectors - in particular, agriculture, fisheries, energy, water catchment, medicinal services, mining industry and rural development. Special policy attention needs to be given to enhance emphasis on wildlife, mangroves, tourism and food security.

Prior to the accession of FD to MAFFS, a policy review process was initiated within MAFSS, but excluded forestry. Subsequently, a similar forest policy review process was initiated early in 2003, and a first draft became available in May 2003. As currently drafted, the new Forest and Wildlife will feature an overarching General Forest Policy and five subsidiary-policies, namely:

- Community Forests Policy
- Private Forests Policy
- Forest Economy Policy
- Policy on Bio-prospecting
- Wildlife Policy

The policy review process has taken on board several important recommendations pertaining to forest policy emanating from the recently-complete Review of Forestry Institutions. These included

(i) Wildlife Policy should be developed and incorporated into the new Forest Policy with any necessary supporting legislation;

(ii) In order to provide linkages to rural and local development, a new deconcentrated structure for the Forestry Directorate be incorporated into the new Forest Policy;

(iii) The new policy should be cognisant of the inter-sectoral linkages

The new draft Forest & Wildlife Policy is geared to the 21st century, and reflects Sierra Leone’s macro policies (PRSP and National Vision), as well as those of Agriculture and Food Security. The Sector Policy strengthens the role of the Forestry Division to manage forests and wildlife in line with the decentralisation policy and empowerment of communities to manage natural resources together with the government. The role of the private sector and civil society are strengthened, and the draft policy build on linkages to other sectors such as water catchments, mining, urban land, eco tourism, forest medicines and social forestry.

**Forestry and wildlife Policy Goal**

The goal of the Forestry and Wildlife Policy is to support the development and exploitation of the forests and wildlife of Sierra Leone in a sustainable manner for the material, cultural and aesthetic benefit of the people of Sierra Leone in particular and mankind in general.

**Objectives**

The main general objectives of the new policy are to:
• promote best practices in forest management so as to provide optimum combination of economic, social and environmental benefits that the forests can be made to provide. This includes the rehabilitation of the national forest estate;
• create enabling environment for production of sustainable volume and quality of forest products that contribute to food supply;
• directly provide and encourage private sector provision of employment opportunities in the sector.

Strategies
In order to achieve these objectives, the government will:
• prepare, update national inventory of forest resources and conduct audits from time to time for the preparation of resource management plans;
• identify, compile types of economic activities in forests for management planning use;
• encourage, promote improved agroforestry practices;
• encourage, promote private sector (communities, NGO) establishment of fuelwood plantations.
• develop, implement a forestry reforestation fund;
• assist private sector best management practices through provision of technical expertise;
• set up a forest products quality control unit;
• fund and engage in regeneration of encroached areas of high forests with hardwood plantations;
• technical supervision of the development and expansion of the sawmill industry;
• provide incentives/payments as reimbursements to private sector reforestation drives;
• grant, supervise concessionary licenses for controlled utilization of forest resources;
• raise monies through licences, rents, fees for exploitation of forest resources;
• set up a forestry planning unit.

POLICIES THAT IMPACT ON FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
Policies contained in this section are those which the Forestry and Wildlife Sector considers desirable for achieving its goal. Adoption of these policies by the various sectors whose activities impinge on forests and wildlife will assist the Forestry and Wildlife Sector achieve its goal.

Agricultural Sector Policy
The policies contained in this section are those policies in the Draft Policy for the Agricultural Sector of Sierra Leone, November 2002 which are of particular relevance to the goal of the forestry and wildlife sector.

Land Development Policy
Because of multiple use to which land is put, it is desirable that the concerns of the Forestry Division be reflected in an overall policy.

Crops and Livestock Policy
The agricultural production policies of the MAFFS address the concerns of forestry and wildlife. Of special concern to the Forestry and Wildlife sector are:
• the deforestation caused by wildfires which often result from the slash-and-burn land clearing techniques as well as deforestation by nomadic cattle owners in search of palatable fodder;
• the opening up of new areas for farming as demand for land increases.

Forest, trees and land tenure

According to the Forest Act of 1988, two main categories of forests are identified in Sierra Leone: **classified forests**, embracing National Production and Protection Forests (Forest Reserves) and **community forests** (protected). Forests outside Forest Reserves and Protected Forests which are neither a Game Sanctuary nor other area declared by government are considered unclassified forests and include private forests.

The **National Forest Estate** is made up of Gazetted Forest Reserves, Proposed Reserves and Communal Forests on chiefdom lands. All forest land except forest reserves is subject to local traditional land use rights. Most of the productive forests lie in the East of the country, about half of the Estate is in the north is savannah and over half the forests of the Western Area are protection reserves.

Forest tenure is closely linked to the land tenure system of the country. Generally, land tenure in the Western Area, i.e. in the capital city of Freetown and its environs formerly known as the "colony" is free hold. In the provinces however, ownership of land is vested in the community or family. Hence forests on land in the Western Area belong to the owner of the land while forests on land in the provinces belong to the community or to families.

Forest Reserves are forest areas constituted legally by government as national forests for purposes of protection, production or for environmental stability. They are wholly and solely under jurisdiction of the Forestry Division, the government body responsible for forest conservation in the country.

Community Forests, also called Protected Forests, are located on chiefdom land and are managed by the Forestry Division in collaboration with the chiefdom council. It is possible for community forests to be managed by credible and trained forest associations or forest cooperatives on the basis of an agreement with the chiefdom council and the Forestry Division. Revenue accruing from the utilization of community forests is paid to the chiefdom in which the forests are located. Private forests are owned and managed by families under the supervision of the Forestry Division.

Forest finance

The new Forestry Act (1988) revitalized the forestry sector, improving the revenue raising capacity by introducing new charges on the transportation of firewood and charcoal, production of charcoal for domestic use and export and a processing fee on sawn timber. A positive impact on sustainable forest management of the new legislation was the introduction of a special fund or account, the Reforestation Fund, for fees for replanting and training. This fund is intended to supplement government’s meagre funding to the forestry sector and provides a handy source of funds for the timely implementation of forestry activities which are time-bound. The reforestation fees vary by class or species of timber.

Forest stumpage fees are based on timber volume extracted and on species class. Forest Royalties are also payable to land owners and chiefdom administration in respect of commercial timber harvested in national forests (Forest Reserves), Community Forests (Protected Forests) or unclassified (private) forests. The legislation also prescribes distribution of royalties as fifty percent to the land owners, forty per cent to the chiefdom administration and ten percent to the Paramount Chief.

Institutions

This section presents an overview on the main forestry and forest-related public bodies operating at the national and local level. Details on the decentralization processes and structures are also provided, when available. A special subsection on the major national and sub-national stakeholders outside the public sector completes the picture.
Decentralization

Like the other Divisions of the MAFFS, the FD is currently decentralized into fourteen districts, each supervised by a District Forest Officer responsible for the implementation of forestry programmes in the district.

The District Forest Officer is considered the subject matter specialist for forestry in the district and reports to the District Director of Agriculture. He is supported by foresters, assistant foresters, forest supervisors, forest rangers and forest guards. The forest rangers and guards are the front line extension staff.

The District Director of Agriculture coordinates the activities of all line divisions in the district, controls the operational funds and resources and reports to the Director-General. The District Forest Officers obtain their divisional budgets for operations from the Director of Forests, who provides information, advice and coordination on forestry matters at national level.

At the request of Government, a supplementary review aimed at the Forestry Directorate was carried out, also with DFID support, and presented in April 2003.

The Review of Forestry Institutions benefited from the findings of the previous review of Agricultural Institutions, and some key recommendations were carried over *mutatis mutandis*. For example, it was agreed that the key recommendation for the decentralisation of MAFFS’s activities from the HQ to Districts should apply immediately to the Forestry Directorate. The report therefore identified the following five priorities:

(i) Deconcentration of FD functions and activities from HQ and refocusing on the District Level through a new District forestry planning process which would become the forestry component of the recently introduced District Agriculture Plans;

(ii) Disaggregation and delegation of FD's budget to the District Offices of MAFFS - thus focussing on District Forestry Directors and discontinuing the Regional Office structure;

(iii) Formation of District Management Teams to improve control and accountability;

(iv) Formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should define FD's relationship with key local stakeholders (e.g. farmers & NGOs) to engender a positive spirit of mutual trust and collective endeavour;

(v) Change in job designations of junior and middle level staff to reflect their prime functions as extension personne

The Review of Forestry Institutions also noted acute shortage of funds in the FD, despite the potential of the forestry sector as a source of revenue. Looking into the future, the Report suggested that consideration be given to converting the FD into a self-funding Directorate after revenues had improved and necessary reorganisation had been carried out.

Whilst being broadly welcomed by the Forestry Directorate, few of the above recommendations had been implemented before the start of the Agricultural Sector Review in June 2003. Reforms are necessary, but so is institutional stability to enable the Forestry Division to fulfil its mandate.

Other stakeholders

NGOs:

The Conservation Society of Sierra Leone is involved in wildlife management and formation of conservation areas, while Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, Environmental Foundation for Africa and Action Aid are general NGOs which include tree planting amongst their activities. The Royal Society of Birds is an international NGO impacting on forestry through its activities of protecting habitats of birds and other related species. It directly supports the Conservation Society, and works collaboratively with the FD in environmental aware-raising campaigns, education and advocacy.
Various community NGOs are involved in tree planting, protecting water catchment areas, and monitoring woodlots, charcoal burning and illegal pit sawing operations in the Western Region. These include the Agriculture Community and Timber Development Association (ACOTIDA), Building Rehabilitation and cultural organisation (BRACO), Barharm Road Youth Development Organisation, (BRYDO) and the Peninsular Action Group for the Environment (PAGE).

In the Eastern Province, Friends of the Earth are involved in organic farm tree planting, training of youths in tree planting and environmental sanitation. Other NGOs are the Council for Human Ecology Sierra Leone (CHECKSIL) which promotes wise natural resource use and agroforestry, the Green Scenery Project, Council of Churches (CCSL) and CARITAS. Some Farmer associations are also involved in increasing awareness of the importance of better crop production through soil protection by trees.

Many of the NGOs lack technical and institutional capacity to carry out natural resource management. Whilst they may be closer to communities and stakeholder groups than government, they are largely self-appointed and may lack some credibility as genuine advocates of those whose interests they claim to represent.

Collaboration arrangements are underway to establish a working arrangement in the Gola Rainforest Reserve between an NGO-driven conservation project and the Forestry Division. Success will strengthen the link between government and NGOs.

The private sector consists of household farmers, commercial-scale investors and small-scale entrepreneurs, including chainsaw operators and pit sawyers. Privatisation has promoted private sector involvement in the forest sector, but wood resources are scarce and scattered.

Most timber harvesting is currently carried out by chainsaw operators who have filled the gap left when the formal forest industry sector collapsed during the war. Their production feeds the ongoing reconstruction boom, and is sold through an increasing number of timber store outlets. The proliferation of these stores is a matter of concern for the Forestry Division in that they are symptomatic of uncontrolled exploitation of the nation's timber resources.

**Legislation**

The main forestry laws and regulations, either enacted or under development, are listed and shortly presented. Details are given on other significant legal instruments pertaining to sectors having a bear on forestry, such as agriculture and environment. A complete list of legal papers from the joint ECOLEX database is provided.

**Forestry legislation**

The most recent legal instruments to support sustainable forest management in Sierra Leone are the *Forestry Act* of 1988 and its enforcing *Regulations* of 1990. They provide the guide for the management and conservation of forests, as well as means of revenue generation from the harvesting and transportation of forest products.

Prior to the 1988 Act, forestry was governed by the Forest Ordinance which was redesigned in 1912 as the Forest Act and amended in 1942.

The new Forestry Act revitalized the forestry sector, improving the revenue raising capacity by introducing new charges on various forest-related activities. The log export ban set in 1990 is still in force to ensure local processing of timber by the sawmilling industry, which undoubtedly provides employment opportunities at the village level.

Other improvements in the new Act include the involvement of communities (village forest associations) in the management of forests in collaboration with the Forestry Division and the empowerment of forest officers in the apprehension of forest offenders.

**Other relevant legislation**

According to the Act, the wildlife conservation estate of Sierra Leone consists of Strict Nature Reserves for protecting land, flora and fauna from injury and destruction; National Parks for propagating, conserving and managing wild animal life and wild vegetation; Protecting sites, landscapes or geological formations of scientific or aesthetic value for the benefit and enjoyment of the public; Game Reserves; Game Sanctuaries for the protection of all species especially those recovered from captivity and Non-hunting Forest Reserves.

The Act designates controlled hunting areas, establishes restriction of hunting in National Parks, Game Reserves and Non-hunting Forests and provides schedules which specify prohibited animals, protected animals, game animals and restriction on weapons for hunting game animals.

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security

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Edited A. Alba – April 2008