

# LIBERIAN FORESTRY BRIEF



September 2009 No. 3

## Status of the awarding and start-up of timber contracts

### The Three FMCs

In the previous LFB, it was inaccurate to report that EJ&J (FMC B in River Cess County) had secured financial backing from Euro-Liberia Logging. Discussions between the two companies are ongoing. Meanwhile, for the pre-harvest enumeration, EJ&J has completed 12 blocks and is starting on another 10.

LTTC (FMC C in River Cess) reports that it remains in discussions with investors to fill the void that the departure of Logs & Lumber created. LTTC has cut and tagged 11 blocks, as well as the boundary line between the EJ&J and LTTC concessions.

Alpha Logging (FMC A in Lofa and Gbarpolu Counties) has finished the boundary line, and 12 blocks have been completed. SGS-Liberfor is currently evaluating the performance of these activities. Working with the Lofa CFDC (Community Forest Development Committee) and the Gbarpolu CFDC continues.

Some of the contract holders contend that at a recent workshop it was discussed

that the contract holders be exempted from paying 20% of the land rental fee on account of being prohibited from logging identified buffer strips and exclusion areas in the concessions. The companies have been asked to pay 100% of the land rental fee until a formal ruling on the companies' appeal is made.

LTTC reports that hunters have been trying to remove the chain-of-custody tags from trees and both LTTC and EJ&J report that pit sawyers have recently returned and resumed operating in the concessions.

Drafting the Forest Management Plans is an outstanding pre-felling requirement that all three contract holders must meet.

### The Four FMCs

Four companies were recently provisionally awarded concessions in the Southeast by the Inter-Ministerial Concession Commission (IMCC). These companies are Euro-Liberia Logging (FMC F), Geblo (FMC I), International Consultants Capital (FMC K), and Atlantic (FMC P).

The international NGO Global Witness (GW) claims that there was collusion between some of the companies, with Atlantic being linked to Southeast and these two companies, along with Alpha Logging, being linked to the Malaysian giant Samling. GW also contends that some companies, including the recent winner ICC, changed its ownership structure between pre-qualification and bidding, and that three of the four recent winners don't actually provide legally binding agreements guaranteeing that funds exist or will be provided.

Despite GW's claims and protestations, the contract negotiations and the signing of the contracts by the appropriate ministries and agencies were completed by 17 September. At the time of printing, the contracts await the President's signature before they move to the Legislature for ratification.

### The TSCs

B&B (TSC A7 in Grand Cape Mount) has cut five blocks and is working on another five.

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## Why tag dead trees, standing or fallen?

Liberia's CoC system requires that some dead trees be entered into the log-tracking database. But given that the CoC system is about monitoring revenue flows, why tag a dead tree? The following points provide an explanation.

1) If intended to be exported, dead fallen trees must be tagged. It is up to the com-

pany to decide whether to tag a decaying fallen tree. If, however, the company determines that there is value, then like any other merchantable log, it must receive a tag.

2) All dead standing trees above 40DBH in TSCs and 50 DBH in FMCs must be tagged, irrespective of whether the company plans to fell them for

export. This is because such trees are valuable as landmarks for planning purposes — e.g., where to build roads and skidding trails.

3) Recording the location, species and size of dying or dead trees also provides important information to the company about species concentration and stand structure

that helps the company plan its operations. And of course, dead trees have significant forest health value, providing nutrients to later growth cycles.

SGS-Liberfor estimates that the dying or dead trees that are tagged comprise only about 2% of all those tagged, suggesting the benefits of more and better information about the forest far outweigh the costs.

## The LFI Retreat: US Gov. decreases support to commercial, but .....

On 1 September, the LFI Coordinator convened a day-long LFI Retreat in Monrovia. Over 50 people came together to 1) close down the USG's lead involvement in the LFI, 2) develop a new LFI mandate under the World Bank's lead role, 3) assess the state of forestry in Liberia, 4) juxtapose this assessment against LFI Partners' current and near-future activities, and 4) based on this, to help LFI Partners plan their future support to the FDA and the sector. Discussions were varied and

assignment at the end of the month, Peter Lowe of the World Bank will be assuming the role for the coming year. The Acting Mission Director further emphasized that USAID will continue its support of community forestry initiatives and, insofar as commercial forestry overlaps with community forestry, would remain engaged with commercial forestry.

The outgoing LFI Coordinator, Cohen, recapped the major achievements of the LFI over five

mittees (CFDCs), and not least sustained coordination and cooperation among the LFI Partners. On the eve of resuming the Liberian timber export business, Cohen emphasized the importance of readjusting the forest sector projections in the PRS as a first step in managing the revenue and employment expectations.

The incoming LFI Coordinator, Lowe, asserted that the LFI still has a major role to play in Liberia's forest sector re-

the LFI website.

The FDA's Acting Managing Director Hon. Kederick Johnson expressed his thanks to the USG for its commitment to forest reform. He suggested that the LFI should consider expanding the partners list to include other organizations like the German Forestry Mission, Japan Forest Service and the ITTO. He also stated that henceforth there should be emphasis placed on developing income-



Clockwise from top left, Theo Freeman (FDA), John Deah (Liberian Timber Association) in the background and Paolo Nastasi (UNMIL), Thomas Pichet (SGS-Liberfor) discussing with Alfred Kotio (FDA), Peter Lowe of the World Bank and incoming LFI Coordinator, Brian Cohen of the US Forest Service and outgoing LFI Coordinator, and Dan Whyner (USFS/USAID), Jangar Kamara (FDA) with Anyaa Vohiri (Independent Consultant).

engaging. The following are some highlights.

USAID's Acting Mission Director for Liberia, Carolyn (Teddy) Bryan, opened the event by commending the achievements of the LFI Partners for having worked in concert to help reform the sector. She commented that while the current LFI Coordinator, Brian Cohen, will be completing his

years. These include the passage of the NFRL of 2006, the FDA 10 Core Regulations, the 'righ-sizing' exercise at the FDA, the Code of Forest Harvesting Practices, the establishment of the Chain-of-Custody system, the Social Agreements Handbook, oversight of the concessions awarding process, the Forest Management Planning Guidelines, capacity building support to the Community Forest Development Com-

form process, describing the LFI as an effective medium-high stage on which to assess the state of forestry and plan donor activities. He emphasized the importance of shifting the responsibilities of the LFI away from donor partners and toward the FDA, especially the FDA's Strategic Planning Unit. He also voiced his intention to develop a comprehensive document library and to update

generating activities and a forest research exchange network.

The SPU's Myer Jargbeh offered an analysis of the FDA as an institution, suggesting that strengthening its capacity in the areas of strategic planning, law implementation, monitoring and enforcement be made a top priority. He also encouraged that atten-

## ..... continues with community as WB assumes LFI coordination role

tion be given to strengthening the forestry educational institutions in Liberia.

SDI's Silas Siakor presented compelling reasons why it may not be the right time to engage in a re-assessment of the new forestry laws and regulations because they had not yet been sufficiently tested.

The Liberian Timber Association's John Deah took an alternative position, stressing that the contract awarding process was too time-

they pay soon, have their contracts cancelled, or arrive at an agreement with the GoL for a relaxed payment plan.

Francis Odoom also reported the findings of a recent study on the impact of illegal timber harvesting. Odoom said that next steps included convening the Steering Committee to determine how to commission an 'options paper' that would lay out policy and project ideas.

Discussion on biodiversity

Against the backdrop of such challenges in Liberia's oldest protected area, the GEF's initiative to expand the number of protected areas from two to seven was discussed. With \$1.7M, the GEF plan will have established a preliminary framework within three years on which other development actors can build. Certainly, more coordination between the development partners will be needed to make the GEF support successful.

means that the FDA and development partners can use the broader, looser language of the National Forest Management Strategy to inform project designs.

Supporting the GoL to develop a position on carbon and REDD was also discussed. Alex Peal shared that CI was working to conduct a cost-benefit study on various options concerning carbon capture. He conceded, however, that no matter which schemes were decided on, they



Clockwise from top, Nora Bowier and Silas Siakor (Sustainable Development Institute), Myer Jargbeh and John Kantor (FDA), Jhony Zapata (FAO) with Hon. Kederick Johnson (FDA), Ian Deshmukh (ARD) with Ellen Shaw (US State Department), and Alex Peal (Conservation International) looking on with James Otto (SDI).

consuming and should be redone. He also suggested expanding the size of TSCs from a maximum of 5,000 ha to up to 50,000 ha. He went on to say that a proposal had recently been put forward to request that the tax structure be readjusted.

Given SGS-Liberfor's report that very little of the fees that have been invoiced to contract holders have been paid, it was clear that either

protection centered on the need to link income generation opportunities to conservation. Richard Sambolah of FFI presented the case for this in describing FFI's experiences in the Sapo National Park. The FDA's Theo Freeman agreed, claiming that inequitable benefits sharing, the lack of good roads, and the presence of drugs and guns in the Park were major factors that made conservation a challenge.

Dan Whyner of the US Forest Service/USAID presented an overview of the laws related to communities. A range of laws and regulations were cited, suggesting once again that the question of how forest management relates to local communities threads through all discussions. The LRCFP's outgoing Chief of Party Ian Deshmukh offered that the absence of a comprehensive Community Rights Law

would have to consider county-level development plans, ensure equitable benefit sharing, develop value chains for community income generation, and strengthen stakeholder capacity in all these areas. In the near-term, many LFI Partners are helping the GoL prepare its position for the COP Meeting in Copenhagen in December.

The LFI Retreat concluded with a discussion on new partners and partnerships (see next page).

## New forest sector coordination initiatives recently launched

The day after the LFI Retreat, the FAO gave action to its intention to help Liberia realize Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) by launching the National Forest Programme (NFP) Facility. The two-day meetings and workshops attracted over 60 community members, private sector representatives, development partners, and government and non-government workers to articulate pressing needs, opportunities and constraints related to developing a cohesive national plan for forest use and management.

The Head of the NFP Facility, Jerker Thunberg, lay out the rationale and framework. Already existing in 75 countries and supported by a

multi-donor trust fund, the Facility aims to build a participatory and intersectorial platform on which policy development and implementation of SFM can happen. Its principles are 1) sovereignty and country leadership, 2) partnership and participation, and 3) consistency within and integration beyond the forest sector. A process rather than an event, the Facility endeavors to help identify the core issues and agreed principles among all stakeholders and to inculcate a sense of shared vision and trust that it is hoped will translate into effective SFM management strategies and actions.

Activities that the NFP Facility has supported in other countries include but are not

limited to 1) increasing the participation of civil society organizations in the NFP, 2) integrating planning processes with other sectors (water, finance, agriculture, mining, biodiversity, etc.), 3) technical studies that assist the formulation and adoption of policies, 4) trainings that strengthen capacity, and 5) setting up knowledge sharing mechanisms and networks (e.g., workshops and websites).

The IUCN's Stephen Keller presented a similar 'coordination' initiative at the LFI Retreat. Called the 'Growing Forest Partnerships' Program, it seeks to facilitate local and international partnerships and investment to support stakeholders in their efforts to improve forest livelihoods and ecosystem ser-

vices.

Activities of the GFP Program include but are not limited to 1) identifying effective partnerships, 2) facilitating 'people's diagnostics,' or focus groups to determine needs, 3) improved in-country cooperation among donors, 4) cross-country work, and 5) knowledge management.

Given the overlap of some of the functions of the FAO's NFP Facility, the IUCN's GFP Program, and the LFI, questions remain as to how these mechanisms will gel with each other, as well as how they will gel with national-level priorities and initiatives. The FDA's Strategic Planning Unit has its work cut out for it.



Some of the participants at the launch of the FAO's National Forest Programme Facility at P.A.'s Ribhouse in Lakpazee, Monrovia

## Introducing the Community Forestry Partnership (CFP) of Liberia

We would like to take a few moments to introduce you to the Community Forestry Partnership Program of Liberia. The partnership involves a collaboration between three core organizations including: the Skills and Agricultural Development Services (SADS); the Farmers Associated to Conserve the Environment (FACE); and the Nature Conservation Research Centre

(NCRC). SADS and FACE are domestic NGOs while NCRC is an NGO from Ghana.

The goal of the collaboration is to establish community forestry pilot programs within or surrounding key proposed protected areas of Liberia. Initial work has commenced in two locations, namely Lake Piso and Wonegizi, with plans in the pipeline to conduct comprehensive

feasibility assessment surveys in other promising locations such as the Marshall Wetlands.

The Community Forestry Partnership operates with a set of key ingredients.

We believe that for conservation to work in Liberia, it must have an economic baseline. In order to achieve this, three avenues for income generation have been designed: the rehabilitation of

agro-forestry (tree crop) plantations; the establishment of non-timber forest product production sites with connection to value-added regional / international markets, and ecotourism services development (at Lake Piso only). All three of these elements are able to provide beneficiaries with sources of additional livelihood without destroying their life-giving forests in the process.

## CFP cont'd

We establish community management boards for rural-based governance. Our approach is to enter a dialogue with rural people and communities, and gauge their interest in our ideas. We strive to turn the reigns over to them in a deliberate way that ultimately results in decision-making power lying squarely in the hands of community leaders and families. The infrastructure for such a governance regime is established through the creation of a community management board. We expect that the building of capacity for successful natural resource management will follow a process of trial-and-error learning culminating in the NGO group and our technical support becoming obsolete.

We strive to nurture relationships built on mutual respect

and trust. For example, the CFP team operates at a pace that enables forest dwellers, young and old, to absorb new information and internalize it. If they understand, and are interested in the concepts, then they are able to contribute and participate meaningfully in moving forward. Traditional beliefs and cultural norms are also embraced and respected, with programs designed in such a way as to employ local experts in various capacities to guarantee the preservation of traditional and cultural standards.

The CFP team puts an emphasis on long-term, results-driven implementation. Community

engagement is not driven by funding cycles but rather is characterized by the steady partnership between people motivated to incorporate community forestry concepts into their lifestyle. After all, if we pack up and leave at the end of two years, or five years, or even ten years, we are talking about a "project" rather than a comprehensive way of life that marries rural development



In the upper left is a view of the view toward Lake Piso; a chief near Wonegizi PA posing next to a culturally significant Dahoma tree; a boy processing *Xylocopa aethiopica* — an NTFP species of economic importance

## Community forestry in Liberia: reflections, challenges and opportunities



Outgoing CoP Dr. Ian Deshmukh

The outgoing Chief of Party (CoP) of the Land Rights and Community Forestry Program (LRCFP), Dr. Ian Deshmukh underscored key features for a sound community rights law (CRL) in Liberia, based on customary practice and modern, internationally recognized, legal principles. In other countries, "most versions of CRL recognize that all forest resources on community forest lands are owned by local communities", he noted in his parting words at the LRCFP's 'Annual Review Meeting' held on 8 September 2009 in Monrovia, where a public handover

ceremony ushered Allen Turner in as the new CoP for the program.

Dr. Deshmukh called for defined community responsibilities for sustainable management of forest resources, and simple, but effective mechanisms for community forest governance and management. He emphasized the important supportive role the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) should assume. Dr. Deshmukh also highlighted pitfalls that Liberia's CRL should avoid. The CRL should not seek to establish land ownership through a forestry law, but rather, through the Land Com-

mission's work. A sound CRL should also avoid detailed prescriptions for the management of forest resources; it should allow for a range of solutions for different circumstances.

In the opening presentation, the head of the FDA's Community Forestry division, Moses Wogbeh, summarized the FDA's efforts with other partners towards a shared vision for community forestry in Liberia, through a Community Forestry Working Group (CFWG). Liberia's community rights law has been under discussion at Parliament for over a year following efforts by the CFWG.

## Update on the draft wildlife conservation and PA management law

The National Forestry Reform Law of 2006, Chapter 9, Section 9.11(c) mandates the FDA to "present to the Legislature for consideration and passage a comprehensive framework law for Wildlife Conservation and protection"

within one year of the effective date of the law (2006 Law).

Non-compliance of this mandate was due to a number of factors, including a lack of financial resources. A GEF/World Bank-funded consultant

working with the Conservation Department finally drafted the law in January 2009.

The process leading to presentation of the draft law to the President of Liberia includes vetting the document through-

out the country to obtain community stakeholders' input and incorporate comments into the draft law. The vetting exercise was successfully conducted at six venues, five of which grouped three counties each with 10 persons representing a



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**Go to  
the LFI website at:  
[http://www.fao.org/forestry/  
29020/en/](http://www.fao.org/forestry/29020/en/)**

county: Group I (Bomi, Gbarpolu and Grand Cape Mount Counties with center in Tubmanburg); Group II (Montserrado, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties should have met at the Kakata venue, but Bassa was absent); Group III (Lofa, Nimba and Bong Counties met at the Gbarnga center; Group IV (Rivercess, Sinoe and Grand Gedeh Counties met in Greenville); and Group V (Grand Kru, Maryland and River Gee Counties met at Fish Town venue).

The first phase of the exercise took place from June 22–30, 2009. However, since Grand Bassa County did not show up in Kakata, the FDA decided to go to them in Buchanan. The Buchanan vetting activity took place from July 20–22, 2009, thus concluding the vetting exercise around the country. The next phase is a national stakeholders' meeting to discuss and incorporate the community input into the draft law. This meeting is slated for 29 September 2009.

Participants at all six venues expressed gratitude to the FDA Management for involving them in making a law that will affect them directly, hoping that this should be the beginning and not the end of such a gesture. Participants also expressed appreciation that the law repeatedly stresses the importance of community participation in the management of Liberia's forest resources. Two key concerns expressed by participants everywhere were **alternative livelihood opportunities** and **community involvement in the management and use of the forest**. Stakeholders were assured that the draft law does have provisions for addressing these genuine concerns and there was no reason why government and its partners would not commit itself to meeting them following the passage of the Law.

### On the horizon

- ITTO Steering Committee Meeting, 23 September
- LFI and SDI support to strengthen capacity of Community Forest Development Committee (CFDC) Members actualized through the first of four 7-day trainings in Gbanrga (Oct.)
- The first significant payments from timber contract holders to GoL (Oct.)
- Arrival of the Volunteer Partnership Agreement Coordinator (Nov.)

In 2004, the US State Department engaged a number of US agencies, including the US Forest Service, US Agency for International Development and the US Treasury, as well as NGOs, to launch the Liberia Forest Initiative. Shortly thereafter, the World Bank and other organizations joined, giving the LFI a strong multilateral and multinational character. The LFI aims to provide coordinated support to the Liberian forest sector. It is particularly focused on assisting with reforms that will allow for the transparent management of forest resources and will ensure that benefits from forests are equitably shared by all Liberians. The LFI is committed to helping the Government of Liberia balance competing demands on forests. Although an informal coordinating mechanism, the LFI seek to form a common position among its partners and with other stakeholders on forestry issues. LFI achievements include • a review of the state of forestry in 2004-2006 • the design of a roadmap for reform • the passage of the 2006 National Forestry Reform Law • 10 Core Regulations • the drafting of the Code of Harvesting Practices • helping the FDA to become a more functional, performance-driven agency • technical and organizational support to draft a Community Rights Law • the activation of the nationwide chain-of-custody log-tracking system • significant improvements in the contract tendering and awarding process.

