



Implementation Completion Report

**Community-based Forest Enterprise Development (CBED)
UNTS/LIR/012/WBK - Subproject of the World Bank
Development Sector Management Project (DFSMP)**

Liberia

Final report reviewed by:

Sophie Grouwels, Lead Technical Officer

Final report prepared by:

Laura Schweitzer Meins and Samoa Perucca, Forestry Consultants

Forest Policy, Economics and Products Division

Forestry Department

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
ACRONYMS	4
A. BASIC PROJECT DATA	1
B. ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE AND DESIGN AND QUALITY AT ENTRY	2
B.1 Project background and rationale.....	2
B.2 Original objectives	2
B.3 Changes to original objectives	3
B.4 Target beneficiaries	3
B.5 Costs.....	3
B.6 Time frame.....	3
B.7 Project components, activities and performance indicators.....	3
B.8 Project implementation arrangements and partners	5
C. ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS	7
C.1 Overall outcome/achievement of objectives	7
C.2 Achievements, successes and challenges in carry out the objectives for Component 1: MA&D	7
C.3 Achievements, successes and challenges in carrying out the objectives for Component 2: FC 16	
C.4 Achievements, successes and challenges related to overall project implementation.....	20
D. RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED.....	22

[ANNEXES](http://www.box.net/shared/4vusov3p9csxno4slj07) (click on <http://www.box.net/shared/4vusov3p9csxno4slj07> to access all annexed documents)

ACRONYMS

CaF	College of Agriculture and Forestry (of the University of Liberia)
CBED	Community-based Forest Enterprise Development
CBFO	Community-based forest organization
CI	Conservation International
DFSMP	Development Forestry Sector Management Project
EDP	Enterprise Development Plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FC	Forest Connect
FDA	Forest Development Authority of Liberia
FF	Field Facilitator
FFI	Flora and Fauna International
IG	Interest group
LACE	Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment
LFI	Liberia Forestry Initiative
LRD	Liberian dollars
LYEAP	Lofa Youth Educational Awareness Program
LRCPF	USAID Land Rights/Community Forestry Programme
MA&D	Market Analysis and Development
NFF	National Forest Forum
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPC	National project coordinator
NWFP	Non-wood forest product
PA	Protected Area
SADS	The Skills Agricultural Development Services
SAMFU	Save My Future Foundation
SLPP	Sustainable Livelihood Promoters Program
SMFE	Small and medium forest enterprise
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UoL	University of Liberia
WB	World Bank

A. BASIC PROJECT DATA

Report Date:	13 October 2011
Project name:	Community-based Forest Enterprise Development (CBED) Subproject of the Development Forestry Sector Management Project (DFSMP) of the World Bank (WB)
Country:	Liberia
Region:	Africa
Sector/Subsector:	LR-Development Forestry Sector
Project codes/ID:	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) code: UNTS/LIR/012/WBK World Bank project ID: P104287 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ID: 00056156
Implementing agencies:	FAO and UNDP
ICR Team leader:	Sophie Grouwels
ICR Primary Authors:	Laura Schweitzer Meins and Samoa Perucca
Donor:	World Bank through UNDP Liberia
Local partners:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Forest Development Authority of Liberia (FDA)▪ Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE)▪ College of Agriculture and Forestry (CaF) of the University of Liberia (UoL)▪ Lofa Youth Educational Awareness Program (LYEAP)▪ Sustainable Livelihood Promoters Program (SLPP)▪ Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU)
Original duration:	1 September 2009 to 30 September 2010
Actual duration:	1 September 2009 to 30 September 2011
Total budget:	369 579 USD

B. ASSESSMENT OF DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE AND DESIGN AND QUALITY AT ENTRY

B.1 Project background and rationale

Community forestry was established as a priority in Liberia in the country's National Forest Management Strategy, which provides opportunities for piloting community concessions. Under such arrangements, communities take on the management responsibilities for forests, including wood and non-wood forest products (NWFP), and accrue the resulting benefits.

A partnership of government, international and non-governmental organizations known as the Liberia Forestry Initiative (LFI) has been active since 2004 to support the rehabilitation and reform of Liberia's forestry sector and to enhance broad cooperation and coordination of activities in order to promote sustainable forest management in Liberia. When the Community-based Enterprise Development (CBED) project was conceived in 2008, community forestry was still fairly new in Liberia. To facilitate and strengthen the implementation of community forestry in the country, the LFI, including the World Bank (WB), had been supportive of the implementation of pilot community forestry activities, following the "3-C" forest policy of the country, which means focusing activities on small-scale **Commercial** activity within **Communities** affected by **Conservation** of protected areas (PA). To strengthen activities related specifically to community-based enterprise development for sustainable livelihoods, the WB recommended the adoption of a market-oriented approach, and selected the Market Analysis and Development Methodology (MA&D) developed by the FAO Forestry Department.

FAO was therefore identified as the institution responsible for implementation of the project's identified activities related to community-based enterprise development, with technical support provided through the WB/FAO Cooperative Programme. A project planning mission to Liberia was undertaken in October 2008 by Mr. Kanimang Camara, International consultant and MA&D trainer, and Ms. Sophie Grouwels, FAO Forestry Officer. The result was a preliminary definition of project objectives, sites, institutional arrangements, budget and likely in-country partners.

B.2 Original objectives

The CBED sub-project agreement was signed in September 2009. This agreement consisted of an Inter-Agency agreement signed between UNDP and FAO for FAO to implement the CBED subproject, under the WB-funded Development Forestry Sector Management Project (DFSMP). The overall objective of the project was to contribute to livelihood improvement and forest conservation in Liberia through the implementation of:

- (1) the Market Analysis and Development (MA&D) approach around two proposed PAs, the Lake Piso PA in Grand Cape Mount and Bomi Counties and the Wonegizi PA in Lofa County, in order to enable the creation of ecologically, socially and financially sustainable community-based enterprises that center around wood and non-wood forest products;
- (2) Forest Connect (FC) in Liberia in order to increase the visibility of the small and medium forest enterprise (SMFE) sector within partner countries, thereby increasing the level of connectedness of FC SMFE members to national forest programmes and decision-making, service providers and markets, thereby reducing poverty.

Another key aim of the project was to strengthen the capacity of the Forest Development Authority of Liberia (FDA) to work with the communities around the PAs.

Field activities were intended to enhance the capacity of the communities around the PAs to:

- realize the value of forest resources for income generation activities, thereby creating incentives for forest dependent populations to protect and sustainably utilize forests;
- work together to design and implement sustainable enterprises using the strategies for marketing taught under the MA&D training approach; and
- contribute to general poverty reduction, food security and livelihood improvement.

B.3 Changes to original objectives

No changes were made to the original project objectives during project implementation.

B.4 Target beneficiaries

Target beneficiaries for Component 1: MA&D of the overall objective were inhabitants of selected rural communities adjacent to the proposed PAs of Lake Piso and Wonegizi. Target beneficiaries for Component 2: FC of the overall objective were SMFEs and SMFE associations in Liberia.

B.5 Costs

The CBED project had a budget of USD 369 579, contributed by the WB.

B.6 Time frame

The CBED subproject was initially scheduled to be carried out over the duration of one year, ending on 30 September 2010. At the request of project partners, and as a result of various delays in project implementation, the time frame was extended, through a no-cost extension, and ran until 30 September 2011.

B.7 Project components, activities and performance indicators

The following lists the project components, including activities and expected outputs, as laid out in the CBED project agreement. There has been no revision of these project components during implementation of the project.

Component 1: Market Analysis and Development

1.0 Building an Effective Implementation Partnership

- 1.1 Stakeholder consultation and awareness training including FDA, LACE and partner NGOs
- 1.2 MA&D experiences from other African countries shared
- 1.3 MA&D training material tested and start adaptation to local Liberian context
- 1.4 Training of Trainers

2.0 Building Community Partnerships (MA&D – Phase 1)

- 2.1 Baseline Survey
- 2.2 Field training in the MA&D approach for Field Facilitators and Project Coordinators)
- 2.3 Identify and engage with interested communities (5 per PA; 10 in total)
- 2.4 Identify and organize target groups (one group per village; ideally around ten persons per group)

3.0 Developing Market Awareness and Opportunities (MA&D – Phase 2)

- 3.1 Field training in the market development for Field Facilitators and Project coordinators
- 3.2 Market Studies
- 3.3 Participatory selection and characterization of productive activities, target markets and resource supply areas

4.0 Building Productive Community Enterprises (MA&D – Phase 3)

3

4

- 4.1 Field training in the enterprise development for Field Facilitators and Project coordinators
- 4.2 Community-based enterprise plans developed on participatory basis in each of the pilot sites
- 4.3 Training target groups in business planning skills at village level to optimize the application of limited financial capital and sustainable use of limited natural capital
- 4.4 Development of a Small Enterprise Grant Fund and financing community enterprises
- 4.5 Better linkages to markets, service providers (including microcredit and training) and between small producers themselves
- 4.6 Better coordination between different actors in product chains
- 4.7 Strategic alliances established at local and national levels and pilot enterprises up and running
- 4.8 Continuous support to pilot enterprises (training, market linkages, etc.)

Component 2: Forest Connect

5.0 Diagnostic of forest-based SMFEs (if required)

5

- 5.1 Carry out preliminary diagnostic of forest-based SMFEs and their associations

6.0 Building Capacity for Forest Connect

6

- 6.1 Stakeholders consultation and awareness training including FDA, LACE and other involved stakeholders such as private sector, governmental and non-governmental service providers, CBFO, etc.
- 6.2 Forest Connect experience from other African countries shared
- 6.3 Forest Connect concepts tested and adaptation to local Liberian context

7.0 Establishing Forest Connect

7

- 7.1 Refine criteria for membership of Forest Connect in Liberia
- 7.2 Develop a process for induction of new members
- 7.3 Establish a membership database
- 7.4 Develop a strategy for self-assessment and selective monitoring of Forest Connect
- 7.5 Conduct a survey of service providers relevant to SMFEs in Liberia
- 7.6 Collect information on the main forest decision-making processes in Liberia and develop a strategy for eliciting the key policy concerns of SMFE members and for enabling participatory representation by Forest Connect members in forest decision-making – especially in relation to any national forest programme
- 7.7 Identify gaps in service provision and prepare a strategy for addressing those gaps based on the existing institutional capabilities in country
- 7.8 Develop a Forest Connect feedback mechanism
- 7.9 Participate in relevant fora that are geared towards promoting SMFEs both nationally and through international meetings of Forest Connect partners
- 7.10 Prepare twice yearly reports that describe progress

8.0 Support the development of a Forest Enterprise Information System

8

- 8.1 Prepare a Forest Connect web site for Liberia as an information platform
- 8.2 Publish on the project web page or other information platform the relevant elements of the membership database
- 8.3 Publish on the project web page or other information platform the contact details and key information on the service providers
- 8.4 Publish on the web page or other information platform a series of news articles relating to market trends and innovations for the main product lines of interest to SMFE members

- 8.5 Develop a communication strategy based on the information needs of SMFE, such as market trends for key products in association with the main producers associations and market councils, available service providers, etc.

B.8 Project implementation arrangements and partners

The executing partner for the project was FAO, under the project supervision of Sophie Grouwels, Forestry Officer for Community-based Forest Enterprise Development. In this role, FAO coordinated with and provided technical guidance to Mr. Lawrence Greene, the project’s coordinator at national and field levels (officially called the National Project Coordinator (NPC)). Mr. Greene is a staff member of the Community Forestry Department of FDA.

Additionally, the following local implementing partner entities were selected and subcontracted after consultations between FAO, WB and FDA:

Component 1: MA&D

- The Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE)
- The College of Agriculture and Forestry (CaF) of the University of Liberia (UoL)
- The Lofa Youth Educational Awareness Program (LYEAP)
- The Sustainable Livelihood Promoters Program (SLPP)
- The Skills Agricultural Development Services (SADS)

Component 2: FC

- Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU)

Table 1: Roles of local implementing partners

Institution	Role
FDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To coordinate project activities at national and local levels, including supporting the organization of MA&D trainings, with technical guidance from FAO and in close collaboration with LACE and the NGO field implementation partners, LYEAP and SLPP. ▪ To support the initiation of Forest Connect Liberia, providing assistance in convening workshops and trainings and support in making travel and subsistence arrangements. ▪ To prepare periodic feedback to the LFI and to unit heads at FDA on the status of the project’s implementation. ▪ To collaborate with project partners to carry out a participatory mid-term review. ▪ To support the finalization of locally developed MA&D and Forest Connect training materials and to prepare the results for publication and for relevant national fora. ▪ To support participatory project analysis and dissemination of lessons to key stakeholders at national and subregional levels.
LACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To manage the day-to-day technical support and coordination with NGOs and with the University of Liberia for Component 1 (MA&D). ▪ To support the logistical arrangements for MA&D field implementation by the local NGOs and the University of Liberia. ▪ To manage and implement a Small Grants Scheme funded from within the sub-project. ▪ To support and supervise MA&D implementation, including by collaborating with FDA and FAO to carry out reporting on the project, and working with UoL, SLPP and LYEAP to generate reports on field level implementation progress. ▪ To assist the consultant conducting the baseline survey and to supervise other research activities as needed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To support participatory project analysis and dissemination of lessons to key stakeholders at national and subregional levels. ▪ To solicit periodic feedback from the NGOs (SLPP and LYEAP) working directly with communities and from the communities themselves about their activities related to Component 1 (MA&D). ▪ To support the finalization of MA&D training materials and the preparation of the results for publication and relevant national fora.
LYEAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To play a key role in the implementation of Component 1 (MA&D) by providing two (2) staff persons to act as Field Facilitators (FF) for the field trainings to take place in the selected villages near the Wonegizi PA. ▪ To implement capacity development activities at the local level by organizing trainings and following up with community members in the Wonegizi PA on an ongoing basis. These activities are to be carried out in close collaboration with and under the supervision of LACE. Additionally, LYEAP is to liaise with FDA to ensure their awareness of any capacity development activities.
SLPP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To play a key role in the implementation of Component 1 (MA&D) by providing two (2) staff persons to act as FFs for the field trainings to take place in the selected villages near the Lake Piso PA. ▪ To implement capacity development activities at the local level by organizing trainings and following up with community members in the Lake Piso PA on an ongoing basis. These activities are to be carried out in close collaboration with and under the supervision of LACE. Additionally, SLPP is to liaise with FDA to ensure their awareness of any capacity development activities.
UoL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To assist in the field trainings. ▪ To support LACE and the two local NGOs selected to carry out field level implementation of the project. ▪ To cover part of the implementation costs for the capacity building of selected students in small-scale forest enterprise development through the application and Forest Connect in Liberia. ▪ To support the development of curricula related to small-scale forest enterprise development, focused particularly on inclusion of the MA&D approach.
SADS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To carry out the development of a baseline survey questionnaire and undertake the implementation of the baseline survey in communities near the Wonegizi and Lake Piso PAs.
SAMFU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To initiate Forest Connect in Liberia with the objective of increasing the visibility of the SMFE sector, thereby increasing the level of connectedness of Forest Connect SMFE members to each other, to service providers and markets and to national forest programmes and decision-making. Fostering such connectedness is likely to lead to a greater level of empowerment amongst the targeted entrepreneurs and to increased technical and financial resources, and over time, lead to a reduction in poverty. ▪ To designate a staff member of SAMFU to serve as Focal Person for Component 2 (FC) of the project.

C. ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUTS

C.1 Overall outcome/achievement of objectives

Overall project results for both components of the project can be rated as **satisfactory**.

Component 1 (MA&D) of the project aimed at enabling five communities around the Lake Piso PA and five communities around the Wonegizi PA to improve their livelihoods through relatively small, but nonetheless substantive capacity and enterprise development steps. The approach taken was a highly participatory one, and more than 200 community-members were trained within their own localities bringing a truly place-based sense to the capacity building activities. Both of these elements encouraged community members to take ownership over their skill and knowledge building, and fostered a sense of responsibility for achieving a key project objective – the realization of viable and sustainable community-based forest enterprises. The result was the development of 20 new SMFEs in 10 villages in rural Liberia.

While the project did face a number of difficulties, particularly related to delays which prevented timely implementation of planned activities, ultimately, implementation bottlenecks were identified and appropriately addressed, and the project moved forward well, if not within the initially anticipated timeframe.

Component 2 (FC) of the project aimed to enhance the level of ‘connectedness’ amongst small and medium forest enterprises within Liberia by initiating FC in the country. This was successfully achieved by the identified organization, SAMFU, who oversaw the development of three studies intended to raise the level of knowledge amongst their SMFE network and beyond about the situation, opportunities, barriers and policies related to SMFEs in Liberia. This information formed the basis of a workshop with partners to discuss these issues and identify capacity building gaps which involved 50 participants. As a result of that workshop, a further workshop was held, in which 19 people were trained in the identified capacity needs areas related SMFE. Besides being excellent learning opportunities, both workshops presented opportunities for participants to develop the SMFE network FC Liberia hoped to build. This has been further strengthened by the recent development of a FC Taskforce, a group whose primary purpose is to bring together key SMFE related players to discuss key SMFE issues, challenges and needs and work together to identify possible ways forward. This group also aims to widen the network of those participating in FC Liberia.

Implementation of Component 2 was not without its issues, particularly that while a network of SMFEs has begun to be built, communication and outreach to a broader group of SMFEs and SMFE service providers could have gone better. We can conclude that the groundwork has been set through an initial network of SMFEs for FC to grow a broader network in the future.

C.2 Achievements, successes and challenges in carry out the objectives for Component 1: MA&D

Building an Effective Implementation Partnership

Ranking: Satisfactory

As a first step in beginning implementation of project activities for Component 1: MA&D, a consultative awareness raising meeting was held (September 2009) in which all the project

implementing partners attended, along with other stakeholders, including Flora and Fauna International (FFI), Conservation International (CI), the USAID Land Rights/Community Forestry Programme (LRCPF), FACE Africa and SADS. The MA&D component of the project was presented during the meeting, and a discussion was held about the areas in which the non-project stakeholders were already doing work in the Pas, in order that duplication of intervention activities could be avoided.

Mr. Kanimang Camara, a national of The Gambia and skilled trainer of the MA&D approach, was selected as the regional consultant responsible for training and supporting Field Facilitators (FF) and project coordinators in their utilization of the MA&D process. Mr. Camara undertook five missions to the country over the course of the project and remained actively engaged with LACE and FDA project staff via emails at times in which he was not physically in Liberia. As the FFs and project coordinators were all new to the MA&D methodology, the trainings provided to them by Mr. Camara, enabled them to acquire the knowledge and capacities needed to assist the selected local communities to identify, set up and manage sustainable forest-based small-scale enterprises. The implementation of the MA&D trainings by Mr. Camara were organized in four different stages, following the current four phases of the recently revised (2011) MA&D approach, as the need materialized for a separate fourth phase to assist the pilot enterprises within communities in starting up their enterprise activities.

Field Facilitators and project coordinators (including staff from LACE, FDA and students from UoL) were trained first by Mr. Camara. Immediately following these trainings, the Field Facilitators provided training on the MA&D approach to the selected local communities. Each stage of training on the MA&D approach utilized a participatory, learning-by-doing approach. Because MA&D takes an applied approach, in which entrepreneurs actually build their entrepreneurial skills as they work through the training process, each completed training stage formed a basis for the next phase of MA&D training.

An adjunct effort to ‘translate’ and simplify the MA&D materials for the Liberian context has also been undertaken by the FDA and will continue beyond the project lifetime. In order to make this process economical, the translation has been carried out by a cooperative group, each participants taking on small chunks of text for simplification. While this effort was not finished in time for use during the current project, FDA staff indicated that as it was anticipated that the MA&D approach would continue to be used in the country, that such an effort was worth making in order to have the simplified materials available for future projects. As of the close of the CBED project, a document comparable to the MA&D manual, which walks through the MA&D approach, providing an overview and breakdown of the process, had been developed. The remaining MA&D Field Facilitator Guidelines documents are intended for ‘translation’/simplification in coming months.

Building community partnerships (MA&D – Phase 1)

Ranking: Satisfactory

A key outcome of the first stakeholder meeting was the selection of the villages within the Wonegizi and Lake Piso PAs in which the project took place. These included: Vetesu, Lutisu, Ziggida, Zango Town and Wakesu in Wonegizi; and Bendu, Falie, Saah, Sawelor and Weajor in Lake Piso. The MA&D tools were adapted to the local situation of each project site. In each community, two groups were formed. These constituted the groups of potential entrepreneurs, often referred to as the target groups. Each group consisted of 10 people, so in total, between the 10 communities, 200 people received MA&D training. The formed target groups were trained on the complete cycle of the MA&D, starting with Phase 1 in which community members assessed the existing situation and began short-listing a range of potential products to be sold by their future enterprises.

At a later point, Community-based Forest Organizations (CBFO) or Interest Groups (IG) would form from these target groups to become officially responsible for the SMFEs once they got started. These

groups were selected by and from the community itself, in a consultation which took place within each village. This was an important element in fostering support from the whole community for those within the group, since not all community members were able to be in the groups. In total, 137 people participated as IG members, 40 of who were women (see Tables 2 and 3 below for more details). It should be considered that all IG members, including women, entered into a leadership capacity upon becoming part of the IG as each group member will play a crucial function in the survival of the enterprise going forward. Roles differ from member to member, but the group acts as a team together and their work serves the community by raising funds for community projects. The CBFOs were expected to maintain transparency and to consult with all the community members while running the enterprise, presenting financial reports and other enterprise documentation (stock register, cash book, etc). Decisions about how to utilize the proceeds of their enterprises were also to be decided with broad community input.

Another important element of the target groups was their high level of inclusiveness of women. One of the FFs working with communities in the Lake Piso PA area was a woman. This was expressed to have been useful in helping women in many of the communities to feel emboldened to become involved in project activities and trainings. Additionally, in all communities, women were encouraged to be active participants in IGs and trainings, and to be involved in leadership opportunities.

Table 2: Overall population and product IG members in Wonegizi area (NGO LYEAP)

No.	Community	Type of enterprise	Village population	Interest group: total members	Interest group: female members
1	Vetusu	Palm Wine	1500	5	2
2	Vetusu	Rattan Furniture & Handicraft	1500	5	2
3	Lutisu	Rattan Furniture & Handicraft	1500	10	2
4	Lutisu	Palm Oil	1500	10	1
5	Ziggida	Honey	3010	10	2
6	Ziggida	Palm oil	3010	10	4
7	Zango Town	Palm Wine	1600	5	1
8	Zango Town	Palm Oil	1600	5	2
9	Wakesu	Palm Wine	1800	10	3
10	Wakesu	Palm Oil	1800	10	2

Table 3. Overall population and product IG members in Lake Piso area (NGO SLPP)

No.	Community	Type of enterprise	Village population	Interest group: total members	Interest group: female members
11	Bendu	Honey	1158	6	3
12	Bendu	Palm oil	1158	6	2
13	Falie	Honey	793	6	1
14	Falie	Handicraft making(Ecotourism)	793	5	2
15	Saah	Honey	675	6	2
16	Saah	Bamboo Furniture &Handicraft	675	6	1
17	Sawelor	Honey	411	5	1
18	Sawelor	Country cloths/weaving	411	5	2
19	Weajor	Cane Rat production	780	6	2
20	Weajor	Honey	780	6	3

Concurrent to the MA&D training, a baseline survey was carried out by the Skills Agricultural Development Services (SADS) to investigate a variety of livelihood and forest product market issues in the villages where MA&D was being implemented, as well as in control sample villages where MA&D was not to be implemented. Six communities were thus surveyed near the Lake Piso PA and six near the Wonegizi PA. 120 households, 60 per PA area, were surveyed, with the heads of household, typically men (95% men respondents, 5% women) who were mostly between the ages of 30 to 49, responding to questions posed by SADS. Households were surveyed in clusters of 10 households at a time.

The issues examined by SADS through their survey process included the following:

- Existing income generating/livelihood activities
- Type of forest products traded in the area, and income generated from these products
- Opportunities and constraints in the existing value chain and market systems for forest products
- Current economic status of sampled Households/ Families in the pilot sites and in other sites (intended to supplement or enrich the data collected in the MA&D Phase 1 by Field Facilitators)
- Overview of socio-economic status in the sites being examined at the time of the survey
- Number and types of individual enterprises in the pilot communities
- Number, organizational structures and types of group enterprises in the pilot communities
- Internal institutions in the area, types and nature of market assistance programs rendered to communities
- Number and location of marketplaces for forest products in or near the pilot area
- Characteristics and location of microfinance institutions
- Enabling policies existing at the time of the survey for CBED based on Wood and NWFP products and services

Conclusions from the results of the survey:

- Rice farming in Wonegizi and Cassava farming in Lake Piso were found to be the primary sources of income for more than 80% of respondents, yet the outputs from these activities are disproportionate to the intensive amount of labor that must be inputted into these activities. This is because farmers use simple tools and methods resulting in relatively low yields.
- 88% of respondents from Wonegizi stated that of the forest products being traded for household income, NTFPs provide the primary source of that income. In Lake Piso, 50% of respondents stated that of the forest provided being traded for household income, charcoal is the most important source of income.
- Survey results showed that the level of awareness about the Forestry Reform Law is extremely low. In broad terms, people seem to understand what a PA is, however a deeper understanding is not widespread.
- The market for most forest products, including NTFPs, has yet to develop in both sites. Nevertheless, markets in neighboring countries, such as Guinea, are developing rapidly which is driving over- exploitation of several forest resources.
- Despite the good contribution to household incomes made as the result of trading NTFPs, sustainable harvesting and post-harvest practices are poor.
- Poor road conditions, particularly in the rainy season, have led to considerable problems, including increased transportation costs, damaged goods going to market and goods being sold for lower prices in locations closer to the communities (further from larger markets).
- Women are at a disadvantage with regards to accessing loans and credit, even when they meet the basic requirements.

Recommendations made based on the results of the survey:

- The introduction of improved and sustainable agriculture methods and small agricultural machinery would enable survey respondents to produce more food and thus more income from farming.
- There is a need for training on sustainable harvesting and processing of NTFPs. Alternative forms of income generation could be suggested. Additionally, non-forest energy sources could be introduced to communities, such as the eco-stove, in order to reduce the demand for forest based charcoal.
- A sensitization and education campaign is needed in order to raise awareness and develop better understanding amongst forest dependent communities about the forestry law, its framework and institutional structure, and about the Community Rights law.
- An assessment of potential markets should be carried out for markets beyond the local, such as in neighboring Guinea. There is also a need to conduct a market chain analysis for most NTFPs, such as honey, bush palm oil, rattan, palm wine, etc.
- Community self-help initiatives dealing with the rehabilitation of damaged bridges and roads should be supported in order to improve transport routes to markets and enable local community people to obtain better prices for their products.
- Loan and credit institutions need to become more gender sensitive and should base decisions about whom to give loans to on strict criteria, instead of on gender.
- Improved gender equity needs to be mainstreamed into the implementation strategies of community oriented programs and projects.

Developing market awareness and opportunities (MA&D – Phase 2)

Ranking: Satisfactory

The target groups were trained on MA&D, Phase 2 in which market studies were carried out to assess the viability of the shortlisted products, including an analysis of potential markets and of the means of

commercializing the products. During this phase, the products final enterprise products were selected from a longer list of products identified across each PA (see list below), and considered by each village. Two of the listed products were selected by each village.

Below is an overview of the products/resources selected by each village per site prior to the elimination exercise/ prioritization:

Wonegizi:

Ziggida Town: Peanut, Bean, Rice, Cassava, Plantain, Pineapple, Eddoes, Vegetable, Potatoes, Yam, Timber, Palm oil, Cocoa, Coffee, Sugar cane, Kola nut, Oranges, Palm wine, Bush meat and allanblackia

Wakesu Town: Rice, Peanut, Palm oil, Pepper, Beans, Plantain, Coffee, Vegetable, Cocoa, Pineapple, Cassava, Eddoes, Kola Nut, Palm Wine, Bush Meat, Cattle, Timber and Allanblackia

Vetesu Town: Cocoa, Coffee, Rice, Plantain, Beans, Banana, Palm oil, Rattan, Bush pepper, Palm wine, Cattle, Kola nut, Peanut, Vegetables, Eddoes, Bush meat, Timber, Yam and Allanblackia

Zango Town: Rice, Plantain, Eddoes, Peanut, Palm oil, Beans, Vegetables, Coffee, Cocoa, Kola, Cassava, Bush meat, Fish, Cattle, Livestock and Palm wine

Lutisu Town: Peanut, Rice, Vegetables, Palm oil, Plantain, Coffee, Cocoa, Beans, Eddoes, Potatoes, Cassava, Bush meat, Palm wine, Cattle, Kola, Pineapple, Bush pepper and Allanblackia

Lake Piso

Falie Town-Grand Cape Mount County: Cassava , Fish, Wood, Charcoal, Palm oil, Rice, Thatch, Mat garri/farina and Palm wine

Bendu Town Grand Cape Mount County: Cassava , Fish, Wood, Charcoal, Palm oil, Rice, Thatch, Mat garri/farina and Palm wine

Weajor Town Bomi County: Cassava , Fish, Wood, Charcoal, Palm oil, Rice, Thatch, Mat garri/farina and Palm wine

Saah Town Bomi County: Cassava , Fish, Wood, Charcoal, Palm oil, Rice, Thatch, Mat garri/farina and Bee products

Sawelor Town Grand Cape Mount County: Cassava , Fish, Wood, Charcoal, Palm oil, Rice, Thatch, Mat garri/farina and Bee products

*Building productive community enterprises (MA&D – Phase 3) **Ranking: Satisfactory***

The target groups were trained on MA&D Phase 3 in which, on the basis of the information collected in the previous two phases, a final selection of the most viable products was made and business plans were developed around these products. This screening process conducted by communities and facilitators took into account important aspects of sustainability. This meant that while they considered the economic issues associated with starting up new enterprises, they also addressed social, institutional and environmental concerns.

As a point of reflection on the overall training cycle of MA&D under this project, although every project partner demonstrated a good commitment to achieve project objectives, it was not easy for them to abide by the timeline established in the work plan at the beginning of the project. They were very supportive and participated actively during the trainings of the MA&D expert, but after each mission they had difficulties in implementing what they had learned straight away with local communities. To support them with more direct assistance, FAO decided to add an additional in-country visit by the MA&D trainer, Mr. Kanimang Camara, during the final stage of implementation. This mission was crucial to the facilitation and completion of project activities.

The result of the cycle of MA&D training, along with a consultation process with FAO technical experts who provided suggestions for some improvements to the Enterprise Development Plans (EDP), was the development of twenty (20) EDPs by the villages around the PAs. These EDPs formed the basis for development of small enterprises focused on the following products: palm wine; palm oil; furniture and handicrafts from rattan, bamboo, and dead- wood; honey, canne rat and weaving/country clothes making (see Tables 2 and 3 below for a breakdown of products selected by village).

After the finalization of the EDPs, a training needs assessment was conducted by the FFs and the MA&D trainer to reveal further training needs to be addressed before beginning implementation of the EDPS. Capacity development areas to be addressed included accounting and financial management and group management in all the communities. Some of the gaps had been expected as participants had often struggled with certain parts of the EDP development during Phase 3, such as calculation tables. These gaps were addressed directly through trainings convened by SLPP and LYEAP in each of the villages (20 target groups with 10 people in each meant that 200 people were trained – the same people trained on MA&D).

Other trainings implemented were specific for each enterprise, and were technical trainings on issues such as production and processing of specific items such as rattan furniture, simplified sustainable environmental management techniques such as fire and waste management. Trainers were drawn from a variety of sources, including the FDA (such as for honey and canne rat production) and from nearby local communities (such as for rattan crafts). The trainers were contracted and paid directly by SLPP and LYEAP. Trainings occurred in each of the villages and included the same groups as were trained on MA&D (i.e. 200 people) trained in the technical area relevant to each enterprise.

Below, in Table 4 and 5, is a display of the villages having undergone training, the products they selected, the capital needs they identified and the revenue they expected to take in within the first year of SMFE operation. More information about the figures used to arrive at the expected revenue figure can be found in the Enterprise Development Plans developed by each enterprise and available in the annexes.

Table 4. Enterprises in the Wonegizi area (OP LYEAP)

No.	Community	Type of enterprise	Capital needs (USD)*	Expected annual revenue (USD)*
1	Vetusu	Palm Wine	863	4315.17
2	Vetusu	Rattan Furniture & Handicraft	429	2921.54
3	Lutisu	Rattan Furniture & Handicraft	1097	3155.15
4	Lutisu	Palm Oil	1917	3018.80
5	Ziggida	Honey	591	1735.48
6	Ziggida	Palm oil	1611	7271.55
7	Zango Town	Palm Wine	386	3943.72
8	Zango Town	Palm Oil	1249	5517.28
9	Wakesu	Palm Wine	590	3867.93
10	Wakesu	Palm Oil	1731	3531.43

*Rate of exchange used: 1 USD = 72.5 LRD

Table 5. Enterprises in Lake Piso area (NGO SLPP)

No.	Community	Type of enterprise	Capital needs (USD)*	Expected annual revenue (USD)*
11	Bendu	Honey	543	2005.85
12	Bendu	Palm oil	1,146	1850.62
13	Falie	Honey	543	1958.69
14	Falie	Handicraft making(Ecotourism)	716	8910.76
15	Saah	Honey	591	3122.18
16	Saah	Bamboo Furniture &Handicraft	351	717.40
17	Sawelor	Honey	813	3095.90
18	Sawelor	Country cloths/weaving	837	3884.59
19	Weajor	Cane Rat production	418	2172.04
20	Weajor	Honey	489	2518.97

*Rate of exchange used: 1 USD = 72.5 LRD

Although Interest Groups are typically encouraged under the MA&D approach to contribute to the initial costs of their enterprises with their own funds, this proposal was not supported by the Liberian

project partners. It was therefore agreed that the target groups would contribute only in-kind with labor and land. The initial capital (monetary) needs of each enterprise were fully covered by an Enterprise Grant Fund, financed through the project budget and managed by LACE. On the basis of the financial projections expressed in the EDPs, a specific amount of funds was allocated for each enterprise. Each CBFO signed an Enterprise Grant Agreement with LACE to access funds, under presentation of the completed EDPs. Funds were not released to communities in the form of cash, rather one representative from each enterprise was accompanied by a LACE staff member in the purchasing of the necessary equipment and materials. This form of disbursement was recommended by local partners to better address the local situation, and to avoid a misuse of cash funds.

A particular note about the enterprise grants - the preferred type of grant amongst project partners was initially a revolving grant programme, with IGs expected to pay back LACE or FDA after one year of enterprise operations. It was thought that this option would have to create an increased sense of responsibility and commitment within the IGs to responsible enterprise management, and possibly have allowed for reinvestment and scaling up of the initiative by making grants available to new communities in future. Ultimately this scheme was not utilized as it was incompatible with specific World Bank requirements and policies on grants, and there was insufficient time within the project timeframe to allow for trying to change the revolving grant structure. The result was the use of the non-refundable Enterprise Grant system.

In June 2011, two marketing fairs were held to expose the trained entrepreneurs from several of the project communities to the marketplace. These “Contact and Collaboration Fairs”, held on 17 and 20 June in Voinjama in Lofa County and Vonzua in Cape Mount County, further served as opportunities for the MA&D trained entrepreneurs to link up with support and service provider organizations. During both fairs, relationships were established between the MA&D entrepreneurs and financial/service provider groups such as Eco-Bank, the County Development offices and local authorities. Several of the local leaders attending the fair encouraged the entrepreneurs to attend future market fairs to sell their products.

A terminal workshop was convened in June 2011 for all project partners and stakeholders to come together to discuss their experiences, learning, challenges and the way forward. 36 participants attended, including staff from the FDA, FAO, LACE, LFI, UoL, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, SLPP, LYEAP, WB, UNMIL, community IG representatives and others. Each of the organizations involved in the implementation of the project had the opportunity to present their own project experiences, challenges and suggestions for future action. After each presentation, the broader group had time to discuss what they heard and seek clarification and further information. By the end of the workshop, and in spite of the challenges met at various points along the way in implementing the project, those involved in the project itself, as well as outside stakeholders such as the participants from LFI and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, urged that the MA&D approach be applied in communities around other PAs in Liberia. Some participants also suggested that the approach could be used in other types of ownerships areas, such as in concession areas, as long as issues related to access/tenure and the enabling environment for small enterprises could be addressed.

This enthusiasm for the approach being applied elsewhere is indicative of the experience of the participants in the MA&D process. Besides the expected monetary gains (see Tables 4 and 5 above), the process left participants with a stronger suite of skills for improving their livelihoods and the economic condition of their communities. They learned a new way of entrepreneurial thinking, a different way of accessing and processing information and of reaching decisions. These impacts cannot be emphasized enough as these are the tools which the community members will continue to use well beyond the close of the project.

An additional issue was raised in the terminal workshop of the participation of the UoL CaF in project activities. The UoL CaF activities were, for the most part, rather inadequately managed by the University project coordinator, the Dean of CaF, Mr. Wollor Topor. Early on, several efforts were made, with a meeting being called to introduce and discuss MA&D to a large group of students (150) in October 2009. The capacity building on MA&D of the two students assigned to the project to follow field trainings was also delivered, but in a way not consistent with what was envisioned at the outset. Students participated in MA&D trainings as anticipated, however the same students were not involved throughout the process, with 2 different students participating in each training session, meaning that students received an incomplete understanding of the MA&D methodology. Unfortunately, there was also no student participation in the second part of the Phase 3 training. Additionally, under Mr. Topor's management of the project, no progress was made towards integrating MA&D into the curriculum, despite an other early meeting which he held with 50 students and colleagues (October 2009). Throughout the project term, Mr. Topor was contacted several times by FAO and by the project coordinators to try to understand the reasons for the lack of actions and results, but he never replied properly. In the beginning of 2011, Mr. Topor changed positions within the University and has since no longer been responsible for activities within CaF. A new dean, Dr. Roland Massaquoi, has taken over and has been briefed about MA&D methodology and informed of the pending activities under the responsibility of the University. Dr. Massaquoi expressed sincere commitment to producing results, even with limited time remaining. In late spring, Dr. Moses Gorpudolo assumed responsibility for the UoL CaF's part in the project. At the time of the Terminal Workshop, Dr. Gorpudolo could only discuss the plans they had for work they would carry out. Following the workshop, however, he carried out a meeting with UoL students, where the MA&D Methodology was discussed. Additionally, a meeting is in the process of being organized that will target faculty. Curriculum development, which includes the MA&D methodology, has resumed under Dr. Gorpudolo's guidance and it is anticipated that this process will carry on into the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012 at a minimum. All in all, while the earlier part of the project from the UoL CaF side did not go well, there seems to have been a real change in attitude towards the project with the change of staff at the UoL which took place. This resulted in further steps being taken during the summer of 2011, and clear plans for further action going forward.

C.3 Achievements, successes and challenges in carrying out the objectives for Component 2: FC

FC was officially launched in Liberia in March 2010. The implementation of the FC component started few months after the beginning of the project, because the FC implementing institution was not identified before project starting date. A regional consultant, Ms. Yarri Camara, was hired to conduct a stakeholder consultation and awareness raising session on FC and to adapt the FC concept to the Liberian context. During this process, the consultant identified the most suitable candidates for the role of FC institutional hub, and subsequent discussion amongst FAO and FDA lead to the selection of the SAMFU Foundation. SAMFU is an environmental and conservation foundation that has worked on crosscutting issues in the forest sector for over two decades.

Diagnostic of forest-based SMFEs

Ranking: Satisfactory

9

A diagnostic on SMFEs in Liberia was one of the key activities of the project. Its objective was to bridge knowledge gaps regarding SMFEs in terms of their contributions to livelihoods and challenges and opportunities related to SMFEs in Liberia. The diagnostic consisted of a desk study and field visits. The diagnostic was carried out by a consultant beginning in June 2010. It covered five counties including Bong, Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado, Nimba, and Sinoe Counties. The diagnostic

established that SMFEs remain an integral part of the informal sector of forest industry and economy in Liberia and that it provides 4 times more employment than the formal sector. The study defined, catalogued and examined four major plant-based SMFEs including charcoal production, furniture manufacturing from rattan and bamboo, chainsaw logging, and woodcarving which are most promising according to the report. The report did also mention a variety of other areas in which SMFEs specialize, including: (i) wild meat harvesting and sale, (ii) harvesting and sale of hewingsticks, (iii) collection and sale of medicinal plants (parts such as roots, leaves, bark, etc.), (iv) collection and sale of seeds and nuts, (v) firewood collection and sale, (vi) palm wine tapping and sale and (vii) palm oil production. In Component 1 (MA&D), the villages in the Lake Piso and Wonegizi PA areas selected a variety of products which seem in line with the above listed major products identified in the diagnostic report, especially rattan furniture, palm oil and palm wine. Those products that differ from the above-mentioned list are likely because some villages chose to develop SMFEs around products that could be considered as being not strictly forest byproducts, such as SMFEs based on weaving and country cloth development. The villagers were urged to select the best products for development based on their financial assessment and their particular needs and interests. Since the diagnostic focused on forest-based SMFEs, enterprises built around non-forest products did not come up in the diagnostic report.

With regards to opportunities and challenges, the study found that there is still a large amount of natural resources available for harvest, which would bring a variety of social and economic benefits to local people and contribute to improving their livelihoods. Policy and legislation in the forest sector also provide opportunities for growth and development of SMFEs. Key challenges identified by the study included a lack of credit opportunities, non-existent information systems for products, issues related to double taxation, an inability to add value to products, poor harvesting and processing practices resulting in a lot of waste, and over-exploitation of resources leading to detrimental environmental conditions.

Building Capacity for Forest Connect

Ranking: Satisfactory

10

Consultative meetings were held in preparation for the launch of FC Liberia. The first was an acquaintance meeting held at the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) in February 2010. It was intended to bring together representatives of the FDA, the World Bank and SAMFU. The FDA was represented by Mr. Edward Kamara and Mr. Lawrence Greene, representatives from the National Forest Programme (NFP) Facility/GFP and the Community Based Enterprise Development (CBED) project respectively.. This meeting provided the opportunity for FDA and SAMFU to discuss and agree on a plan and strategies for implementing the FC Liberia initiative and to commit themselves to the process. Though Mr. Lowe did not attend this meeting, he met with SAMFU and the FDA representatives on a couple of occasions and informally discussed and agreed to the decisions reached in the earlier acquaintance meeting.

In March, 2010 SAMFU had a meeting with Mr. Camara, Mr. Lawrence Greene of FDA and LACE. During that meeting, SAMFU provided updates on the planned FC Liberia project activities. Mr. Camara discussed the objectives of the CBED project and named key FAO/CBED partners and FAO staff who could provide advice for FC, including LFI, LYEAP, LACE, UoL CaF and Joseph Boiwu and Samuel Peters at the FAO Liberia office.

Establishing Forest Connect

Ranking: Satisfactory

11

Research and learning have been important part of the FC Liberia initiative. Three major studies were carried out by separate consultants; namely: diagnostic survey, policy and legal analysis, and survey on service providers of SMFEs in Liberia.

The purpose of the policy and legal analysis was to identify areas or provisions particularly favorable or unfavorable to the development of SMFEs and to present recommendations on how this could be improved for the benefit of forest dependent people. A consultant carried out the study starting in April 2010. The consultant reviewed and reported on context for SMFEs based on the major policy and legal documents pertaining to SMFEs in Liberia, including i) the National Forest Policy, ii) the National Forestry Reform Law of 2006, iii) the ten core forest regulations, especially the regulation on NTFPs, iv) the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and v) the Community Rights Law with Respect to Forest Lands (2009).

The survey on service providers for SMFEs in Monrovia, Liberia had as its objective the identification of local and national level institutions with the capacity to provide loans and services to SMFEs. A consultant hired to carry out this survey was hired and began work in July 2010. The survey focused on Monrovia, rather than on all of Liberia, due to funding constraints. The key findings of the survey were that:

- training constitutes most services provided to SMFEs by NGOs that are interested in building their capacity to improve upon their businesses;
- access to financial services are at times difficult;
- most of the SMFEs are self-funded or funded by family members;
- policies and regulations on forest sector governance provide opportunities for support for the sector; and
- training provided by NGOs is resulting in positive behavioral changes by owners of SMFEs.

On June 24, 2011, SAMFU convened a day-long workshop to present the findings of the diagnostic and of the studies to stakeholders. The study authors presented their results, and subsequently answered questions and carried out discussion with participants. Copies of each report were printed and shared with participants. The workshop was attended by fifty (50) individuals representing SMFES, FDA, FAO, RADIO VARITAS, the NGO coalition of Liberia, and FAO partners including those from the CBED project. Mr. Kanimang Camara, FAO consultant, also attended the workshop. During the presentations series of training needs were identified and recommended by the consultants. Those training needs identified included: marketing information systems, harvest and post-harvest management, team building and group expectations and starting and improving a business. Those needs formed the basis of follow-up trainings organized by SAMFU for some of the SMFEs covered by the research studies. During closing remarks participants termed the presentations as very valuable and stated that the workshop provided them opportunities to enrich their knowledge regarding SMFEs operations in Liberia. Notable among the remarks were those from Mr. Edward Kamara of the FDA who described the workshop as an eye opener and confirmed that though there were some policies governing SMFEs in Liberia, but they were not being enforced by relevant agencies of Government.

Following up on training needs identified by the consultants, a training workshop was convened on July 6 and 7, 2011. Four trainers provided the training. Dr. Sam Koffa delivered training in harvest and post harvest management; Mr. Edward Kamara (FDA) in marketing information systems; Ms. Maria Bongard in team building and group expectations; and Mr. James Makor in starting a business. 19 individuals from SMFEs in Montserrado County and its environs participated in the training workshop. The workshop was limited to the 19 person group size, as opposed to including all individuals involved in SMFEs in the County, in order to ensure that participants received sufficient personal attention and to

accommodate limitations in meeting space size. Some of the involved SMFEs had been mentioned before in the surveys. The participants of the workshops expressed that it had been highly useful and usable as it provided them with knowledge for harnessing their capacity in the establishment and operations of their enterprises. Many participants asked for follow-up trainings to further improve their skills, or for a repeat of the training for some of their colleagues that had not been able to participate in the training. Another outcome of the training was that the telephone numbers of participants were shared amongst them in order to facilitate networking. Finally, as a mechanism for monitoring and providing mentoring, it was agreed that SAMFU would carry out follow up visits to record any improvements in local SMFEs resulting from the training. This process is going on at the time of this report, and is planned for continuation without a precise end date.

With regards to the leadership structure of FC Liberia, it was anticipated at the outset of the project that a steering committee would be formed. It was instead agreed, over the course of several discussions, particularly with FDA and FAO staff, that a more informal task force should instead be set up. This task force would take responsibility for ensuring consistent communications between various actors working on small forest enterprises, in particular trying to connect Forest Connect better with actors involved in the use of the Market Analysis and Development approach. The task force would also focus on the identification of further capacity development needs, which could then be organized by one or more of the task force participants. The task force would hold regular meetings (monthly to quarterly depending on need and travel conditions). While the role of the task force would not ostensibly be to raise funds, it seems likely that increased communication and dialogue could provide an increased number of opportunities for collaboration and working together jointly on SMFE related separately funded initiatives and projects. The taskforce was decided upon as a better vehicle than a steering committee in light of the considerable number of steering committees dealing with forest issues in Liberia, most of which are also part of the National Forest Forum (NFF). Since the NFF is aiming to form one overall representative forest stakeholder platform in order to reduce the number of decision making/consultative bodies on forestry issues in Liberia, a taskforce of directly involved stakeholders can work together on FC Liberia specific issues, and then become involved as a member of the NFF. The task force was initiated on 27 June 2011 at the end of the presentation of survey findings workshop held in Monrovia. A few key institutions were selected to serve as members of the FC task force on SMFEs in Liberia, including the FDA, UL, LACE, CI, LYEAP, SLPP, the NGO Coalition of Liberia, the NFF and SAMFU. The membership in the taskforce is anticipated to include more SMFE entrepreneur members in the future as more SMFEs are identified and involved in future FC Liberia activities.

Another important achievement of FC in the project period was a high level of active participation in meetings, workshops and discussions, in Liberia and elsewhere. One key meeting was the international FC workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia which took place in February 2011. The workshop was focused on testing and enriching guidance modules for the facilitation of support to small and medium forest enterprises. The gathering was also intended to give a broader idea of activities of the FC network to ensure that incoming members could grasp the concepts of FC International and link SMFEs to markets in general. The gathering was attended by 12 countries with over 50 participants representing various institutions. In February 2010, FC Liberia was invited to attend the formal launching program of the GFP/NFP project in Monrovia, Liberia. The workshop was attended by more than 50 stakeholder organizations from the 15 counties of Liberia. In November 2010, the FC Liberia Focal Person from SAMFU met with the Sustainable Development Institute to discuss community forestry in Liberia. The meeting focused on understanding the activities of FC Liberia as well as the important roles SMFEs have to play in the community forestry sector in Liberia. In March 2011 the NFF was officially launched during a national workshop, in which FC Liberia participated.

A consulting firm, Greenlines Computer Solutions, was contracted to design, build, host and manage the FC Liberia website (www.forestconnectliberia.org). The website went live in mid-2010. Statistics for the number of individual hits to the website only began to be kept in mid-2011, however since then, the website has been recorded as having 73 visitors from both inside Liberia and internationally. The website has provided a platform for information sharing and networking which has better enabled FC Liberia to achieve its primary goal of fostering better connectedness. Affiliate organizations have been encouraged to link their websites with the FC Liberia web link. Additionally, the FC Liberia website consistently strives to provide good information about and links to other CBED efforts and initiatives going on in Liberia. The three studies carried out under the FC Liberia to date have been posted to the FC website to be accessed by all stakeholders and interested individuals. Additionally, the link to the website was given to participants at the training workshop with the hope that it can be accessed at their convenience.

A data base has also been set up for SMFEs to carry out information sharing and coordination. The data base can be accessed on the FC Liberia website and takes into account institutions that were captured in the consultants' reports. The diagnostic and the service provider studies identified some SMFEs while conducting the surveys. Some of them are service providers that are relevant to the FC activities in Liberia. That data base was used to contact those who attended the consultants' presentation workshop and training. During these events, the contact details were updated and shared with participants and have since been hosted on the FC Liberia website. The details of other stakeholders including NGOs and other CBED partners were also included on the primary list provided to the SMFEs, and the data base has served as a useful resource for SMFEs to remain in contact with one another.

C.4 Achievements, successes and challenges related to overall project implementation

Communication between project partners and with FAO **Ranking: Moderately Satisfactory**

A weak flow of communication was experienced in many areas of project implementation in both components of the project. Updates on project progress were irregular and many of the constraints faced by partners during implementation were not reported until FAO staff actually visited the country and talk with partners face-to face. This resulted in delays in the provision of the needed technical assistance and in the discussion and action to solve problems. Communications between partners, particularly between the partners involved in Component 1 with those involved in Component 2, was also minimal. This meant that the involvement of the partners carrying out MA&D related actions as part of Component 1 was minimal in the activities of FC (Component 2). The reasons for the communications difficulties were various. Internet access can be incredibly problematic for everyone in Liberia, but especially for the NGOs operating in the field. FDA went through a period of having particular problems with this, which ultimately prompted them to move offices. During that period, the cooperation between FDA and LACE shone through as LACE picked up the slack and communicated on behalf of both partners. Another obstacle is that local communities frequently lack phone service and phones, making it difficult to reach them regularly without making time-consuming visits to the villages themselves. This was done by the FFs, however, the form of work is slower than phone or electronic means, which cause delays in implementation. The partners are to be credited that, while the challenges to consistent communication are severe at times, they are diligent, even if a bit slow, in working to reach one another and FAO headquarters staff in Rome. Additionally, the partners in Liberia are remarkable flexible and willing to make changes at the last moment to schedules and work long hours to make up for time lost due to some of the communications challenges.

Fulfillment of reporting requirements

Ranking: Moderately Satisfactory

Related to the communications challenges laid out above, reporting from project partners was also frequently very slow in coming and deadlines were constantly in flux. This was particularly the case with partners involved in Component 1: MA&D, as SAMFU, the key partner involved in Component 2: FC, was very good about submitting timely reports as scheduled in the planning documents for the project. In some part, the reporting delays were simply a byproduct of larger project delays. In times in which little action occurred to move the project forward, there was little to report, thus the partners did not submit reports and FAO did not insist upon receiving them as frequently (originally, reports were scheduled to be submitted on a quarterly basis).

The quality of submitted reports was also low, especially at the beginning of the project. FAO and project partners worked together to try to improve the quality and build reporting capacity, however this process was time-consuming and frequently led to delays in financial disbursements. This is because FAO must clear specific reports in order to be able to release further funds in a project, and until reports are in a condition deemed as acceptable to project managers, such clearance cannot be authorized.

Payment schedule changes due to shortfalls

Ranking: Moderately Satisfactory

A big shortfall was reported in December 2010 in the LACE account. The LACE director proposed a new budget and conditioned the continuation of LACE commitment and involvement in the project on the release of additional funds. This fact was a source of several discussions and implementation delays, as the shortfall justifications did not seem reasonable to FAO and the budget LACE proposed was considered unreasonably high. A solution was possible thanks to funds availability in the Enterprise Fund under LACE responsibility - the total funds amount of 50 000 USD which had been set aside at the beginning of the project to cover start-up costs of the created enterprises, after the finalization of all the EDPs, proved to be far higher than the total financial needs of the enterprises, so funds were available to resolve the shortfall indicated by LACE. Another small shortfall was reported and motivated by the NGO LYEAP, but was able to be covered through the FAO portion of the budget.

Additionally, a change in payment schedules was granted to project partners to address their difficulties in pre-financing the third and last installment of budget (a requirement of FAO rules) and which represented a large sum given the NGOs' limited size and capacity. An amendment in partners' letters of agreements with FAO was therefore done to split up the amount in smaller amounts and allow for a lower burden of pre-financing on project partners.

Release of funds from UNDP to FAO

Ranking: Unsatisfactory

For this project, donor funds had to be released to FAO Liberia through UNDP. This process did not work well, because for bureaucratic and administrative reasons it was not possible for UNDP to release all the funds to FAO at the beginning of the project, with the result that FAO had to advance, almost until the end of the project, the funds necessary for project implementation. This circumstance caused delays, especially in the project final phase, when the advancing of funds from FAO Liberia was blocked and therefore payments to project partners were not possible until the UNDP disbursement to FAO.

Other obstacles to timely implementation of project activities

Ranking: Not applicable

In addition to the cause of project activity implementation delay described above, there were other reasons for delays which are important to be aware of in understanding the context in which partners in Liberia operate. These difficulties included:

- Access by FFs to resources necessary for field implementation, such as vehicles, fuel and DSA; and for documenting field experiences and drafting reports, such as laptops or desk-top computers;
- Bad road conditions in the project sites, especially during the rainy season; and
- Periods of low involvement of some IGs due to other competing activities, such as farming;
- Delays in activities implementation, which caused subsequent problems as the MA&D trainer was required to adjust his mission schedule numerous times to allow for activities to finish from an earlier phase before beginning training on a new phase.

Forestry Development Authority coordination and capacity

Ranking: Satisfactory

The FDA worked well and collaboratively with NGOs and project partners. There is however a lack of capacity in the FDA's ability to provide clear direction for project activities' implementation and to ensure the timely resolution of problems, which was also encountered during this project.

Additionally, there should have been a far stronger role of FDA in raising awareness at the community level about the PA management concepts introduced recently in the country by new Liberian forestry laws. The communities participating in the project, both in Lake Piso and Wonegizi, manifested several misconceptions, uncertainties and concerns about changes in their rights of access and use of forest areas which will become PAs.

In the last phase of MA&D trainings, the National Project Coordinator, Mr. Lawrence Greene, introduced to the project Mr. Aaron Kota (responsible for community empowerment in FDA), to assist him in the coordination of project activities, because he was unable to participate in all the field trainings on MA&D (his workload in FDA increased as a result of his promotion as Technical Manager on Community Forestry). This was both a challenge and an opportunity. On one hand, a new person entered the MA&D training quite late in the process, creating challenges for both that person and for the MA&D trainer and project participants in terms of trying to integrate and work with a new person, unfamiliar with concepts introduced in earlier stages of the MA&D training. On the other hand, if MA&D and enterprise development concepts are to be institutionalized into FDA, it is important that there be more than one individual trained on MA&D concepts and involved with communities utilizing MA&D.

Overall, it was clear that through his involvement in this project, Mr. Greene's capacity to plan and coordinate activities was risen. He expressed that the MA&D process had affected him and his thinking about planning, at the point that it had influenced his contributions to the writing of regulations for the community forestry law. It was also clear that this project had encouraged a much closer collaboration between FDA and the other project partners. There remain questions as to whether MA&D has been truly institutionalized in the broader FDA staff and structure, however, a clear start has been made in its uptake by Mr. Greene and his staff and programme.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

In this, rather short-term project, many issues were addressed and measures taken to favor the sustainability of the created small forest enterprises. Many lessons were learned and improvements made, however much remains to be done to foster capacities and an environment under which new and existing enterprises can thrive. The following lays out some of the lessons learned and suggestions for future action:

Improving small forest enterprise sustainability

The sustainability of the enterprises created through this project was addressed throughout the MA&D training process. The MA&D methodology is intended not only to encourage the creation of viable SMFEs, it also stimulates action in creating the conditions for local communities to be able to successfully continue enterprise activities after the end of project activities. Notwithstanding, the reality is that there are frequently difficulties for the pilot enterprises to lose the assistance of field facilitators once project was closed. To address this aspect, it was agreed that monitoring and follow up of created enterprises after this project closes will be continued by the two local NGOs (at least for one enterprise year) and by FDA. LACE, in principle, was not available to do this activity without the disbursement of additional funds, but finally agreed to do the follow up (for at least one year after the signature of the Enterprise Grant Agreements) while implementing another WB funded project on small forest enterprise development, the CHYAO project, which is set to start in late 2011. These commitments by FDA, LACE, LYEAP and SLPP to continue in supporting the created enterprises were stated in the Enterprise Grant Agreement (signed between the CBFOs and LACE). In the same agreement, the IG/CBFO committed to submit to LACE and FDA Quarterly Progress Reports (financial, technical, and monitoring reports on the implementation of the Enterprise strategies) and, within one month of the completion of the Enterprise year, a letter of notification of completion, together with a final report (describing the activities carried out, the actual earnings of the Enterprise, the problems encountered and related solutions adopted, the results of the Enterprise as against the EDP objectives, the lessons learned and the arrangements made to ensure continuation). There are, therefore, good conditions for the enterprises to be self sustained and successful, if they are well managed by the IGs and if there are not adverse external bottleneck (e.g. adverse market conditions or natural disasters). LACE and FDA are also expected to verify that environmental and social aspects (for example community participation and building of social capital) of the enterprise are properly addressed in all the enterprise activities on an ongoing basis.

Awareness raising on PA management

The concept of PA is fairly new to Liberia. Before the new Forestry Law of 2006, according to FDA, conservation aimed at preventing people from living in and around PAs. Many communities in the two PAs of Wonegizi and Lake Piso still believe that this approach is in place, and are still afraid their land tenure system will change due to the PAs. This and other misconceptions create uncertainty and could severely affect the life of the small forest enterprises created through the project. It is, therefore, highly recommended that FDA start an effective information campaign about “rules” and rights of local communities in the PAs of the project area. The awareness raising on PA management should be addressed in any other projects planned for PA designated areas. Additionally, when conceiving a new project, FDA should also explore and address issues related to unclear land ownership by some communities, unwillingness to use land as a common resource and lack of awareness about Community Forestry.

Documenting lessons for wider dissemination

It is highly recommended that project implementing institutions share what has been learned during the MA&D process and through FC with all the stakeholders, also in view of new projects being created related to small forest enterprise development. FAO has taken a step in working with the existing project partners by encouraging them to think and write clearly about the lessons coming out of their engagement in this project, and to share those as strategically and broadly as possible.

Scale up the MA&D initiative by applying it in other sites and communities

The capacity of partners to replicate and realize action on their own in an effective manner seems to have grown through their involvement with this project. It is advisable not to lose the knowledge acquired through the project and invest it in new activities soon, so as not to lose momentum. An opportunity already exists for some of the project partners with the new WB CHYAO project.

Actions for additional support to the enterprises

Some of the field facilitators of the project have suggested that they are interested in organizing the villages and enterprises with which they have worked into cooperatives. Many small forest enterprises in fact spontaneously work together in successful associations to reduce transaction costs, adapt to new market opportunities and support a more enabling SMFE environment. Entrepreneurs could also identify associations who represent their interests and become part of them. FC Liberia could be one such opportunity.

Field Facilitators could continue to work together to provide ongoing technical assistance that would be relevant to the communities and could assist them in various aspects of small enterprise development and associated challenges sure to arise in the future. For example, they could also serve as a reliable source of information for the entrepreneurs on issues like market demands and price changes. Access to information is difficult to access for small communities. The discussion and sharing of lessons learned in the group would favor the conception of new projects and activities, progressively better suited to the communities' needs. The FFs could link to FC Liberia for further assistance and support for such actions.

To give additional support to the created enterprises, FDA and NGOs could organize additional market fairs after some months from the starting of enterprise activities (anticipated to occur in Autumn 2011), to help entrepreneurs in getting more visibility and for new potential entrepreneurs to have information about possibilities offered by small forest enterprises.

Valorization of Non-wood Forest Products

FDA could organize studies and value chain analysis on NWFPs, in order to preserve these resources, and to show the potential for livelihood improvement if sustainably managed by local communities. It was reported by project partners that inadequate skills and knowledge on NWFPs are still prevailing in the field.

Strengthening the voice of local enterprises in policy and decision-making dialogues

There is a lack of representation of local communities and their enterprises in policy and decision making. A possible action to address this is the stimulation of local cooperatives and well organized enterprise groups (see recommendation made above). Additionally, it would help to have a greater presence by well qualified FDA staff in the field to be better aware of the concerns of local forest entrepreneurs, and also be able to provide technical assistance at local level. In this way, communities would be better equipped to advocate for their needs in dialogues and discussion fora.

Selection of adequate staff

The role of the field facilitators is fundamental in a project like this. When possible, it can make a project run more smoothly if the people recruited for the FF role are individuals who have already worked on previous MA&D or enterprise development projects, or who are known by the institutional partners to have worked on complementary issues. Recruiting known entities can help to reduce delays in project implementation.

Awareness raising from World Bank

WB safeguard policies and other regulations are not well known and understood by many of those not part of the institution. For future projects, it would be useful to have a training for all project partners on these safeguards and regulations of the WB.

Forest Connect

Currently, while FC Liberia is serving a critically important capacity, knowledge and network development role, it is not yet at the point of being self-sufficient. In order for FC Liberia to survive, it will need to continue to receive additional financial support and external coaching. Ideally, in

consideration of its aim to connect SMFEs, it would be good if FC Liberia could again be funded through a larger initiative, in which it would be a crucial mandate that FC Liberia had to work with partners beyond its current network.

It is also recommended to commission a nation-wide survey of service providers to provide information about existing SMFEs and service providers in the various regions and encourage the information to be used by SMFEs in those regions. If FC Liberia is funded going forward, this would be a good starting point for new research.