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Liberia Forest Development Authority

EVALUATION

Final Evaluation of the Land Rights and Community Forestry Program (LRCFP)

October 31, 2011

I USAID/Liberia Final Evaluation of the Land Rights and Community Forestry Program



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Preface and Acknowledgements

Attention to the importance of forests has increased dramatically in recent years. In addition to providing valuable commodities, forests are now seen as critical for mitigating the impacts of global climate change as well as maintaining other key ecosystem services. In terms of development, forests make major contributions to rural livelihoods especially in hinterlands where agricultural markets are weak. Better forest governance contributes to improved governance overall, reduces conflict and retains economic value in the hands of legitimate local and national actors.

New research highlighted in a recent article in *Science* finds that there is a **greater likelihood of a forest providing higher subsistence livelihood benefits to local populations, and also having higher levels of biodiversity, when local forest users have a right to participate in forest governance by making rules over the management and use of the forest.** This research, conducted by researchers with the International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI) Research Program looks at the relationship between a key pair of social and ecological outcomes from forests in human-dominated landscapes - the extent to which forests contribute to the subsistence livelihoods of local populations, and the conservation of forest biodiversity - to determine if it is possible to get livelihood benefits from forests and conserve biodiversity in the same forest simultaneously. "Participation rights for local forest users was a key factor in getting a win-win situation in our research," said Dr. Arun Agrawal, IFRI coordinator. "Similarly, we found a greater likelihood of a forest being below average for both subsistence livelihoods and biodiversity when local forest users do not have this right."

Community forestry is an important approach to achieving these outcomes but it is challenging to implement. There needs to be clear political will, technical assistance at all levels and clarity about rights and responsibilities. The process is never straightforward given the stakes involved for all actors. Negotiating boundaries, rules, enforcement, monitoring, benefits and other issues can take years and in many cases never get completely resolved. On top of these complex issues there is the intersection of land rights and individual property rights with collective rights to the forest space. Individuals and households want and need to derive benefits and feel secure that benefits will continue over time yet it is also necessary to manage for collective goals, such as continued ecosystem services.

In Liberia, a number of factors increased the complexity of promoting community forestry; these include post-conflict migration and land dispute concerns, lack of exposure to community forestry, a heavy emphasis on commercial forestry and the overall institutional challenges of rebuilding. Add to the mix in recent years the emphasis on fast economic growth in the agriculture and extractive industry sectors and one can begin to glimpse the challenges facing the Land Rights and Community Forestry Program (LRCFP).

While LRCFP faced multiple challenges it also had advantages, such as strong Mission and USG support for the program, USAID's extensive experience in community forestry and community based natural resource management (CBNRM) and its emerging body of practice in land tenure and property rights (LTPR) in relation to forest management. The Liberia Forestry Initiative (LFI) had laid the groundwork strengthening of the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) and, most critically, forest communities and other critical

actors in the forest sector recognized the legitimacy of community forestry and its necessity in Liberia.

LRCFP and this evaluation have to be seen in this wider context. The lessons from LRCFP are useful not only to Liberia but to the large group of actors grappling with how to better manage forests. Key messages for the wider audience include:

- It is possible to launch and operationalize community forestry in post-conflict countries
- To do so requires engaging with a wide range of stakeholders at both the national and community levels consistently and over time
- Capacity building and cross-site visits build political will and buy in
- Conflict mitigation strategies should be incorporated from the outset
- Livelihood support requires careful analysis and links to forest management and conservation objectives
- A landscape strategy is needed to address issues of displacement and cross-border pressures
- Adaptive management is imperative in such highly fluid environments

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Acronyms

ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
AGRHA	Action for Greater Harvest
AML	ArcelorMittal Liberia
ARD	ARD, Inc (now Tetra Tech/ARD)
ASNAPP	Agribusiness for Sustainable Natural African Plant Products
BOTPAL	Botanical Products Association of Liberia
CFDC	Community Forestry Development Committee (created by communities affected by timber concessions)
CFMB	Community Forestry Management Body
CI	Conservation International
CJPS	Center for Justice and Peace Studies
CFMP	Community Forest Management Plan
CMC	Co-management Committee
COP	Chief of Party
COTR	Contract Officer's Technical Representative
CPOP	Commercial Palm Oil Producer
CRL	Community Rights Law with Respect to Forest Lands
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
ENNR	East Nimba Nature Reserve
ETOA	Environmental Threats and Opportunities Assessment
FDA	Forestry Development Authority
FFI	Fauna and Flora International
FFS	Farmer Field School
FTI	Forestry Training Institute
GIS	Geographic Information System
GOL	Government of the Republic of Liberia
GPS	Global Positioning System
IP	Implementing Partner
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JFMC	Joint Forest Management Committee
LC	Land Commission
LPIS	Land Policy and Institutional Strengthening
LRCFP	Land Rights and Community Forestry Program
LTPR	Land Tenure and Property Rights
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTA	Midterm Assessment
NAEAL	National Adult Education Association of Liberia
NCE	No Cost Extension
NBST	National Benefit-Sharing Trust
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
PA	Protected Area
PLACE	Prosperity, Livelihoods and Conserving Ecosystems

PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
Q (Calendar)	Quarter
QR	Quarterly Report
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
STTA	Short-Term Technical Assistance
TO	Task Order
TOT	Training of Trainers
TT/ARD	Tetra Tech/ARD
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
WNNR	The proposed West Nimba Nature Reserve

Executive Summary

USAID Liberia initiated the Land Rights and Community Forestry Program (LRCFP) in December of 2007 to advance the policy and practice of land and forest management in Liberia. The program was designed to improve the legal and policy environment for community forest management, build the capacity of the national forest service and communities to develop and sustain community forestry programs and generate environmentally-sustainable and equitable economic benefits for rural residents. At the national level, LRCFP supported the passage of the Community Rights Law and associated regulations, and built the capacity of the Forestry Development Authority (FDA). At the local level, the program facilitated the creation of five community forests and introduced improved livelihood practices in Nimba and Sinoe Counties. Work of the primary contractor for LRCFP concluded on October 28, 2011.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the implementation and impact of LRCFP, identify strategies taken to adapt to evolving challenges and opportunities, and determine and report on the implications for further investment in Liberia and for USAID more broadly. A team of five specialists in agriculture, forestry, biodiversity and land tenure reviewed the available documentation and spent two weeks in Liberia engaging with national and community participants in the program. Although intense rains and time constraints limited access to community participants, the team nevertheless interviewed over 30 community representatives and 50 people total. Prior to returning to the US, the team presented initial findings to the USAID/Liberia Mission.

Key program level accomplishments

LRCFP launched community forestry (CF) in Liberia. In the face of significant challenges, LRCFP expanded community forestry from a handful of community level projects to a national initiative. The program advanced both the policy and institutional enabling conditions for community forestry, and directly resulted in the improved management of over 35,000 hectares of biologically significant forest. It strengthened the capacity of the FDA and local NGOs to create and support community forests. Because of LRCFP, community forestry has grown from a poorly understood, alien concept to a recognized and viable approach to forest management and biodiversity conservation in Liberia.

Facilitated the establishment of a legal and policy environment supportive of community forestry. LRCFP provided technical assistance to the development of the Community Rights Law with Respect to Forest Lands (CRL), facilitated discussion concerning the contents of the law, and informed its technical quality. The program also enabled the rapid authorization of the regulations necessary to implement the CRL through an inclusive, informed and participatory process. Throughout the life of the program, resources were dedicated to fostering broad discussion of critical policy issues among stakeholders at the national level, and between national and local level stakeholders. As a result of this work, formal community forests, recognized by the government, and authorized in law, are now possible.

Built institutional capacity for community forestry. LRCFP increased the capacity of the Forestry Development Authority (FDA), local NGOs and private sector actors to support the spread of community forestry throughout Liberia. By conducting its work in close

collaboration with the FDA and local subcontractors, providing relevant training, and developing manuals, LRCFP has created a cadre of field agents and decision makers comfortable with the concept of community forestry and skilled in many of the relevant technical and “soft” themes.

Effectively implemented a multi-level design. The program drew upon an approach of dual engagement to reinforce communication and collaboration between the national and sub-national levels of governance. LRCFP used knowledge and relationships gained in pilot communities to inform policy and institutional development at the national level. It also supported national level policy and institutional advances to reinforce field activities and set the conditions for their replication. LRCFP demonstrated the potential synergies to be created through the simultaneous and strategic implementation of activities at community, county, and national levels.

Maintained high-quality management practices in a challenging context. Over the life of the program, prime contractor Tetra Tech/ARD (TT/ARD) implemented a complex and innovative program in a challenging context. The evaluation identified no major work planning, financial management, reporting or staffing issues. With the exception of one contractor, TT/ARD collaborated smoothly and inclusively with international and national subcontractors. LRCFP achieved or surpassed all but one PMP target.

LRCFP set the context for further investment in CF in Liberia. LRCFP demonstrated the great potential for community forestry in Liberia. The country’s vast forest resources, fluid state of legal and institutional rebuilding, and rural community coherence present fertile grounds for growth. Further support could achieve results in the governance, economic growth, and biodiversity goals critical to the country. Due to LRCFP, Liberia possesses the basic legal and policy framework, institutional resources, and pilot community forest schemes to serve as a basis for further investment.

Key site level accomplishments

Launched pilot community forests. In four impoverished remote communities recovering from civil war, LRCFP overcame a climate of distrust and simmering conflict to facilitate the creation of functioning forest management institutions. Each of the five community forests formed and formalized by the program is now officially recognized by the FDA. With these pilots LRCFP raised national and local awareness of the range of values intrinsic to forests, and increased recognition of community rights with regard to forest resources. Through them over 10,000 hectares of biologically significant land are under improved management.

Established patterns of local representation. LRCFP enabled community representatives to attend numerous workshops and participate in working groups and committees at both national and county levels. Through this support provided to pilot community institutions, LRCFP accustomed national and county level government officials to receiving input from community representatives on decisions that impact their lives. It also helped local representatives learn how to effectively voice their concerns to government decision makers.

Brokered the co-management of the East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR). LRCFP overcame a history of conflict to bring two local communities and the FDA into agreement on boundaries and the principle of co-management of this reserve.

Introduced NTFP and agricultural practices. LRCFP also introduced the agricultural and forestry practices necessary for community members to farm and exploit their forests more sustainably. This introduction of improved agricultural practices, palm oil and cassava processing enterprises, and NTFP harvesting and domestication skills produced immediate benefits to the communities, established a basis for further development of income generation activities, and generated lessons learned relevant to other communities in Liberia.

Key challenges faced by the program

Tough country context. The development context in which USAID implemented LRCFP posed challenges that directly impeded the achievement of the program's intended results. Liberia is a post-conflict country with a severe lack of human capacity, weak institutions, and seriously disrupted rule of law structures. Powerful national and international commercial interests vie for the land, timber, carbon rights, and mineral resources of the same forestlands community members have claimed, inhabited and relied on for centuries, yet the resource poor government lacks the capacity to manage forest rights and resources in a transparent, efficient, and equitable manner. The extreme remote location and low level of development of the pilot communities also posed considerable barriers to building the entrepreneurial and managerial capacity to take over ownership of the community forestry process and strengthen agricultural and forest product value chains.

Two track treatment of community forestry and land tenure by the government. A distinct legal and institutional separation between LTPR and community forestry predated LRCFP. Although LRCFP was specifically designed to work across this gap, factors eventually inhibited the program from bridging this divide. The drafting of the CRL, which eventually excluded land rights from its scope, began prior to the launch of the program, and took place in a highly charged and politicized manner. LRCFP was one of many stakeholders, each of whom had limited influence on the final outcome. The program's necessary and close association with the FDA also hampered LRCFP's ability to address land tenure by working across the several ministries responsible for land allocation. Finally, the delay in the establishment of the Land Commission, and the pressing demands placed on that body once established, inhibited LRCFP from integrating secure land tenure into the community forestry process through work with that body.

FDA: a constrained collaborator. LRCFP was also limited by the fact that it was grounded in a resource-poor institution comprised of a staff severely limited in numbers, training, and community forest experience. Further, the FDA historically focused on facilitating and regulating commercial forestry and took an authoritarian approach towards the protection of forest areas. Progress on FDA capacity to appreciate and promote CF was achieved in the face of a firm skepticism towards the ability of communities to manage their own forests.

Episodic program funding. Initially designed as a two year program with the option for a third year, USAID eventually extended LRCFP three times, to a total duration of three years and 10 months. An additional "bridging period" of reduced scope has been approved to continue many of the program activities for an additional eight months. This choppy funding process inhibited long term planning, and limited or rushed the implementation of activities that could not be quickly realized.

Incompletely realized objectives

A model for the local creation of sustainable community forest schemes was not established. LRCFP did not succeed in developing a model that could be adopted by other communities unsupported by resources similar to those the program provided pilot communities. The regulations to the CRL, and the “how to” guidance provided by the program describe procedural and technical standards well above the current capacity of the average unassisted community to manage and the FDA to support.

Ongoing tenure insecurity of pilot communities. Early in the program USAID and LRCFP modified the initial objective of assuring property rights for natural resource users. At the time of the evaluation, various prior claims supported by land law and high-level GOL agreements continued to threaten the claims of pilot communities to forest lands. In addition, the regulations to the CRL, the drafting of which LRCFP facilitated but did not control, expose communities to the unlikely but possible risk of losing the management rights to their forests under several conditions, including non-compliance with the management plan, FDA decision to terminate the agreement on the basis of higher social and public benefits, and expiration after the management period.

The biodiversity approach was compliant but insufficient over the long term. While compliant with USAID’s standards for use of biodiversity funding, LRCFP activities, although *necessary* to better conserve the biodiversity of the two landscapes in which the program was implemented, may not be *sufficient* over time to improve their biodiversity.

Agricultural practices introduced risk not being sustained. A delayed start to introducing new cultivation and processing practices, and the free provision of resources and transportation by LRCFP limit the number of practices that are likely to be sustainably adopted by farmers. The use of grants to promote livelihood development, abandoned a year and a half into the program, forestalled the introduction of an effective approach to introducing improved agricultural practices and palm oil and cassava processing enterprises.

Strengthening of NTFP value chains limited. Fieldwork developing NTFP value chains began in earnest only in quarter eight of the program. By the time of the evaluation, participants had experienced only one successful season of NTFP domestication and two seasons of harvesting. In this time period the program was unable to demonstrate the environmental sustainability of harvesting practices and the economic viability of the marketing methods introduced.

Monitoring and evaluation not effectively employed. The initial two year design of LRCFP made unjustifiable the monitoring of impacts that would only be seen over the long-term. However, the program could have more effectively monitored communication, livelihood, awareness raising and training activities. Conducting and using internal evaluations and the effective use of the monitoring data that was collected also would have strengthened the program implementation.

[Key implications for future investment in community forestry in Liberia](#)

Continue support for Nimba County communities. LRCFP pilot community forests will very likely require continued yet much less intensive support to assure the

institutionalization of the practices introduced by the program. Ongoing engagement in these communities will also enable USAID, FDA, and their partners to continue to draw lessons from their experiences.

Continue to support Sinoe County pilot communities. Although USAID has made the strategic decision to focus on other counties, LRCFP investments, and potential important lessons regarding community forestry risk being lost if the Mission does not remain engaged, at least indirectly, in these communities.

Continue to work with the whole of the GOL to secure the land rights of communities. Communities cannot fully engage in the management of “their” forest resources while facing the risk of losing access to their land base. Recent progress on land tenure by the GOL creates a set of opportunities to provide communities with secure tenure unavailable to LRCFP. Progress will require collaboration across the government. Ongoing processes outside of the mandate of the FDA that may strongly impact the tenure of community forests include the REDD+ preparedness program, land law reform, and the development of concession policy. Along with the FDA and the Land Commission, the MIA and MLM&E will continue to play an important role in the allocation of concessions and rights in land.

Simplify the model. Further investment in community forestry in Liberia should focus on reducing the barriers for communities to establish and maintain community forests. The five community forests developed with LRCFP support followed a process that exceeds the capacity of communities to establish and manage their own. Nor is the FDA likely to soon be able to adequately fulfill the role it is currently designated.

Support review and revision of the regulations to the CRL. The CRL regulations should be reviewed with the intention of their revision. The procedural hurdles in the regulations act as a break on the widespread adoption of community forestry, and the secure continuation of agreements once they are approved. The technical requirements and procedural constraints of the current regulations effectively serve as barriers to communities to engage in rights granted by the CRL.

Adopt a landscape approach. To better address the displacement of activities being discouraged to areas outside of community forests, broaden program scope to include the complete mix of forest and non-forest resources community members depend upon to meet their livelihood goals.

Develop a strategy to address the potential for elite capture and marginalization. Despite the virtual impossibility of complete understanding of community power dynamics, the potential of community forestry to create permanent shifts in resource allocation demands an explicit strategy, impact monitoring, and failsafe measures.

Reinforce FDA capacity to support and defend community forests. The FDA needs to strengthen its capacity to provide technical assistance, but just as important is its capacity to advocate for and support community forestry. Without a strong governmental advocate, given the significantly greater resources dedicated to conservation and, especially, commercial uses of forest land, community forestry will remain a marginal player on the landscape. This extends to improving the country’s capacity to train people in community forestry; USAID should continue to support the FTI to provide short courses in CF.

Continue to address the forestry issues faced by communities affected by commercial timber concessions. Continued work on community rights with regard to timber concessions will broaden the FDA's capacity to work with communities, and may in the short run impact more communities than the process of scaling up authorized community forests from the existing pilot communities.

Coordinate with the decentralization process. As the country moves towards establishing democratically elected bodies of local jurisdictions, help Liberia prepare to fold community forest management institutions into the broader local government structure.

Revisit livelihood activity strategy. Future livelihood activities supported should address threats to biodiversity, such as chain-sawing, commercial hunting, and charcoal production through the creation of alternate, sustainable, livelihoods. Formalization of these value chains may also provide a source of revenues to be captured by community forest institutions.

Continue biomonitoring and adapt community forest plans to the results of this monitoring. Implementation by the FDA and communities in community forests and ENNR will need technical assistance and adaptive management. Building on the participatory threats analysis and monitoring forest tracks and plots are ways that communities can be directly engaged.

Engage fully with conservation NGOs. Progress in CF requires coordination with Liberia's strong conservation community. Harmonious collaboration will depend on a common definition of CF and the landscape approach used, as well as methods for demarcation and mapping, and criteria for the selection of trainees.

Section I Overview of the Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

USAID Liberia initiated the Land Rights and Community Forestry Program in December of 2007 to advance the policy and practice of land and forest management in Liberia. The program was designed to improve the legal and policy environment for community forest management, build the capacity of the national forest service and communities to develop and sustain community forestry programs and generate environmentally-sustainable and equitable economic benefits for rural residents. Work of the primary contractor for LRCFP concluded on October 28, 2011.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the implementation and impact of LRCFP, identify strategies taken to adapt to evolving conditions and opportunities, and determine and report on the implications for further investment in Liberia and for USAID at large. The objectives of the evaluation form two broad categories: documentation of results, accomplishments, challenges and problems; and assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of project management. They are presented in detail in the evaluation scope of work, Annex 4.

Structure of the report

Following an overview of LRCFP, sections focus on six aspects of the program: management, community forestry, land tenure, livelihood opportunities, biodiversity, and communication and awareness.

Methodology

Document review for the evaluation was conducted prior to, during, and after two weeks in Liberia during which team members engaged in interviews with the COTR, FDA staff, Nimba County officials, and representatives of Nimba and Sinoe County pilot communities. Team members conducted at least one interview with a representative of all LRCFP contract groups: TT/ARD, ACDI/VOCA, AGRHA, CI, NAEAL, except for Rutgers, CJPS, Virginia Tech, and ASNAPP. Team members also met with representatives of the Land Commission, ArcelorMittal, and the Forestry Training Institute. The team conducted numerous interviews with LRCFP TT/ARD and ACDI/VOCA staff.

Poor road conditions resulting from heavy rains limited the number of community members the team was able to interview in Nimba County. Nor did time constraints allow team members to travel to Sinoe County, although eight representatives from the Nitrian and Numopoh pilot communities graciously traveled to Monrovia for interviews with the evaluation team.

The evaluation team consisted of USAID/EGAT Biodiversity and Social Science Specialist Diane Russell; USAID/EGAT Biodiversity Specialist Andrew Tobiason; USAID/Liberia Agriculture Officer Kenneth Hasson; consultant and NRM Specialist David M. Miller; and consultant and Land Tenure and Property Rights Specialist Paul De Wit. Individual team members focused on different topics. Diane Russell focused on program management, M&E, and communication. Andrew Tobiason focused on biodiversity and site-level land tenure. Kenneth Hasson focused on livelihoods activities and agricultural activities. Paul De Wit

focused on land tenure and property rights. David Miller focused on community forestry. Despite this division of labor, team members conducted most interviews in pairs, and shared results through daily discussions.

Prior to returning to the US, the team members presented findings to the USAID/Liberia Mission. In the weeks after the fieldwork, each team member produced a first draft section on his/her topic. David Miller edited the draft sections and assembled and produced the final document.

Annex 9 presents the team's itinerary.

Fit with USAID Evaluation Policy (January 2011)

The evaluation team included the appropriate methodological and subject matter expertise. It proceeded on the basis of a written design that included a scope of work for each team member, an itinerary, key informants, and key questions for each stakeholder group and was shared with Mission and implementing partner staff. The large size, experience and technical expertise of the evaluation team roughly compensated for the limited duration of the time in the field for this evaluation. While no national counterparts participated in the evaluation, which was belatedly recognized as a weakness, the team was able to include a new USAID Foreign Service Officer (Ken Hasson) with the aim of improving his exposure to the country and to evaluation methodologies.

The evaluation assessed results against program workplans and objectives, taking into consideration unforeseen circumstances. The data collection and analytic methods used to do this brought objectivity to the findings and reduced the need for evaluator-specific judgments. To the extent possible, evaluation findings are based on facts, evidence and data. While transcripts of interviews were not produced, most interviews were conducted in pairs, with individual evaluators taking notes. To the extent possible, this evaluation identifies, in the text, the sources of information upon which findings are based. Because interviews comprised a primary source of information for the evaluation, opinions were a significant source of data; opinions that could not be verified were either excluded from the findings of the report or presented as such. The evaluation collected and worked with gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated data where available. The implications section of this report presents specific recommendations for both USAID/Liberia and USAID generally. The final draft of this report will be submitted by USAID/Liberia to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) and disseminated within and outside USAID as the Mission deems appropriate.

Section II Overview of the Program

The development hypothesis

The LRCFP development hypothesis may be stated as:

Forest management will be improved by increasing the authority and responsibility of communities to manage forests. The transfer of forest management to local broad based representative institutions will increase the transparency and equity of forest resource use. Expansion of the role played by people whose livelihoods depend directly upon continued forest productivity and ecosystem services will increase the consideration given to sustainability in forest management decisions. Stronger rights to producers who exploit forest resources will also increase investment in those resources. The benefits of this approach will spread beyond local communities. Strengthened community forestry will improve the practices of the local timber industry and reinforce value chains in overlooked and new non-timber forest products. It will also increase government revenue through increased taxes and fees.

Development context

When TT/ARD was awarded the LRCFP task order in December of 2007 only four years had passed since the conclusion of Liberia's fourteen years of civil war. The country was fast rebuilding from devastating civil strife that leveled infrastructure, pre-empted the educations, livelihoods, and careers of a generation, dismantled the country's institutions, and left a legacy of distrust and latent conflict. As part of the rebuilding process, the government was revisiting basic principles, and planning extensive reforms. A Governance Commission had recently been established to help design a more inclusive, participatory, just and accountable system of government, and a Land Commission to look at fundamental questions of land ownership was in the offing.

As LRCFP entered the scene, national expectations for the forest sector were very high. The private sector, the government, and the members of Liberia's communities were depending on the production, processing and sale of timber and other forest products to help launch the economy, resource the government, and increase incomes. The country's capacity to foster, support and regulate this growth in an even-handed manner stood in stark contrast with these expectations.

Indeed, the government was in the process of rebuilding the forestry sector from scratch. Just prior to LRCFP, the USG supported the *Liberia Forest Initiative (LFI)* which helped usher in the 2006 National Forestry Reform Law and, that same year, Liberia's National Forestry Policy and Implementation Strategy. The new law and policy represented a dramatic shift away from the country's historic emphasis on commercial forestry. The law emphasized transparency, accountability, and civil society empowerment and the policy articulated the "3Cs" approach which proposed that the country promote Commercial forestry, Community forestry and forest Conservation activities in an integrated and balanced manner. To provide an institutional home for these new governmental responsibilities, the LFI then helped reorganized the country's Forest Development

Authority, which had been established in 1976 to help govern the country's commercial forestry sector, to better support this "3Cs" philosophy.

So new was the idea that the state would assure communities rights in the forest, that it did not exist in law; the 2006 law required that within one year the FDA present to the legislature for consideration a "comprehensive law regarding community rights with respect to Forest Lands." This fundamental law, the first solid beginnings of a legal and regulatory framework for community forestry in Liberia was expected to be soon passed as USAID developed LRCFP.

Ambiguity, frailty and reform characterized the administration as well. Even if the legal and regulatory frameworks had been complete, the administration lacked sufficient staff and resources to effectively implement them. And even if staff was available in sufficient numbers, they could not be trained in the country's devastated training institutions, the University of Liberia's College of Agriculture and Forestry and the Forestry Training Institute. The government lacked the resources to inform the rural public of new regulations, and their new rights and responsibilities. Further, the government had yet to clearly coordinate the actions of ministries responsible for managing forest land use --for example, concessions allocated by the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy (MLM&E) overlapped commercial timber concessions.

Regarding the development context at the local level, Liberia's communities, composed of relatively cohesive populations deeply dependent upon their forests, have historically managed their relationship to forest resources through institutions with local representation, enforced rules of use, and mechanisms for dispute resolution. However, a history of inequitable growth has left the country's forest-dependent communities unprepared for contemporary forms of management. LRCFP found community members largely unschooled and possessing a limited capacity to establish enterprises, negotiate bureaucratic hurdles, manage legal instruments, or successfully negotiate contracts. A history of harsh tactics had created severe distrust of the national government, especially the FDA. To undertake community forestry, members of Liberia's communities would need to overcome traditional constraints based on gender and age, settle divisive tenure claims, aggressively gain technical and entrepreneurial skills, and master the functioning of new institutions created to represent their interests. LRCFP was attempting to devolve significant management authority to local communities in an unstable and weakened context; the program faced considerable hurdles, including a potential for local or elite co-optation and renewed conflict.

Program design

USAID, working with the US Forest Service, designed LRCFP as a two-year effort to advance community forestry in Liberia. The design proposed a two-pronged approach, working at both the national and community levels. At the national level, LRCFP activities were to focus on improving the institutional, legal and policy framework for community forestry. This was to include the strengthening of community tenure conditions on forest lands. Efforts at this level were also intended to build the capacity of the government and its partners to promote and sustain community forestry. The community level prong of the approach consisted pilot activities in two counties which would inform national efforts, and develop a model replicable across the country. Community level activities consisted of both the

promotion of forest management institutions, and the introduction of activities to increase the economic opportunities.

The design comprised three objectives, which formed the three components of the program. In their final form:

Component 1—Objective: Legal and policy framework developed and strengthened to support community management and sustainable use of natural resources and biodiversity conservation, particularly forests.

Component 2—Objective: Land tenure and property rights systems developed and strengthened to assure property rights for all natural resource users/owners.

Component 3—Objective: Management of community forests and conservation of their biodiversity improved, and economic opportunities increased for communities and other user groups.

Annex 2 presents the LRCFP Results Framework, revised component statements, and the major LRCFP Workplan Activities as of July 2010, Quarter 10 of the program.

Key actors

Contractors

Place IQC Contractors

TT/ARD	primary contractor
ACDI/VOCA	subcontractor
Conservation International	subcontractor
Virginia Tech University	subcontractor
World Resources Institute	subcontractor

LRCFP subcontractors

Rutgers University ASNAPP	subcontractor
Action for Greater Harvest (AGRHA)	Liberian subcontractor
Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS)	Liberian subcontractor
National Adult Education Association of Liberia (NAEAL)	Liberian subcontractor

Government of Liberia

Forestry Development Authority (FDA)
Land Commission (LC)
Forestry Technical Institute (FTI)
University of Liberia College of Agriculture and Forestry (UL-CAF)

Pilot Communities and Forests

Nimba County	Forest Size
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Zor Community. Two clans, 18 villages	1,137 ha
Gba Community. Two clans, 12 villages	TBD ha (potentially 14,000)
Zor and Gba Communities (JFMB)	Bleih forest, 638 ha
Zor and Gba Communities (CMC)	ENNR 13,000+ ha
Sinoe County	Forest Size
Numopoh Community, 36 villages	7,267 ha
Nitrian Community, 22 villages	959 ha

Phases and course corrections

Project duration and extensions: Although initially designed for two years, LRCFP has thus far received extensions to continue activities until May of 2012, a four year six month duration. USAID signed the two year Task Order with TT/ARD, Inc. in December 2007, with a one year option period. Following the Midterm Assessment (MTA) in July 2009, the original end date was extended from December 2009 to May 16, 2010 through a no-cost extension. In May 2010, USAID extended the program period through December 2010 with additional funding. In June of 2011, USAID approved a further eight month cost extension of LRCFP through October 2011. In expectation of a follow-on project, a “bridge period” grant to ACDI/VOCA from October 2011 through May 2012 will continue many of the activities.

Modifications to the TO and PMP: USAID made two substantive adjustments to the Statement of Work. Task Order modification number two, signed in the third quarter of the program, changed the first program objective to include the term “biodiversity” and to take account of the predominance of biodiversity funding in LRCFP. At that time, language was also changed to greatly reduce the emphasis on LTPR in the program, given the delay in the establishment of the Land Commission.

Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) modification. In program quarter 14, USAID accepted revisions to the PMP initially discussed prior to the end of the program’s first year. In the original design of the program, pilot activities were to take place in 10 community forests and, implicitly, 10 villages. During implementation, program staff quickly realized that the country’s forests are managed at the multi-village clan level. With the modification, the target was reduced to five communities, and the number of forest land management bodies from eight also to five. The communities with which LRCFP eventually worked comprised over eighty towns and villages. PMP targets for hectares under improved management were also surpassed.

False start with grants in livelihoods activities. In the initial workplan the TT/ARD proposed to support the creation of livelihood opportunities in pilot communities through a grants process. However, assessments of the pilot communities soon determined that an insufficient number of groups with the capacity to meet USAID grants-under-contract requirements existed in the pilot communities. After the midterm assessment in quarter six noted the lack of progress in the grants process, LRCFP abandoned the approach in quarter seven and refocused livelihood support through an approach emphasizing in-kind resources and training.

Reorientation of livelihood activities. An overemphasis on agriculture and the false start using grants contributed to a late start addressing forest-based livelihood activities. Once the midterm assessment noted this deficiency LRCFP increased work on NTFP value chains. In the eighth quarter LRCFP conducted an assessment of potential NTFP value chains and began work on developing four of them.

Support for the East Nimba Nature Reserve. LRCFP received requests from the FDA to work with communities around the ENNR in the early months of the program. Members of the nearby communities claim that the reserve, created through an act of legislature in 2003, overlapped with their customary lands. In 2008 FDA agents were chased from the ENNR by community members wielding machetes. Although ENNR did not figure in the initial LRCFP design, staff included the activity in workplans and eventually invested considerable effort in conflict mitigation and building a collaborative framework between the FDA and Nimba communities. Through this effort, LRCFP eventually helped establish the country's first ever co-management conservation agreement. The FDA, the co-management committee, and LRCFP staff were developing the co-management plan at the time of this evaluation.

Collaborative Forest Management. Initial assessments in Nimba County revealed that the two communities, Gba and Zor, claimed overlapping ownership in the Bleih forest. The LRCFP design did not include establishing the collaborative management of forests by two communities. As with the ENNR, the program invested considerable time in conflict resolution and negotiations and eventually developed institutions to jointly manage the forest. LRCFP was finalizing the management plan for the Bleih forest at the time of the evaluation.

Support for communities affected by commercial logging. USAID designed LRCFP to focus on community forestry. Support for the compensation of communities near large timber concessions did not fall within the reach of the program's initial objectives. Nevertheless, when Mission and LRCFP staff recognized an absence of progress on the issue, LRCFP began to work on the actualization of FDA regulation 106-07 which required that financial benefits to communities from commercial logging be disbursed to communities through a trust. The program organized a Benefit-Sharing Mechanism Working Group, which defined how the trust would work. And, in the months just prior to this evaluation, the FDA authorized the "Regulation on Procedures to Access and Manage Funds on Behalf of Affected Communities by Community Forestry Development Committees." The National Benefit Trust Board met for the first time on the Friday prior to the evaluation team's arrival. LRCFP also provided technical assistance in the review of Social Agreements between companies and communities.

Timeline of Program Implementation

Q1 12/07- 03/08

- Mid-December 2007 the Task Order awarded to TT/ARD.
- Program Launch Workshop
- Initial participation on drafting of Community Rights Law
- Initial contact with FDA and communities

Q2 04/08 – 06/08

- Nimba County communities selected and profiled

Q3 07/08 – 09/08

- Virginia Tech training assessment produced
- WRI “best practices” in CF report produced
- Co-management of Bleih proposed and agreed upon in principle
- ENNR co-management also agreed to in principle
- FDA staff seconded to LRCFP
- LRCFP staff commits to supporting Social Agreements work
- TOR modified to align with biodiversity funding and change LTPR objectives

QR4 10/08 – 12/08

- Offices opened in two counties
- Growing concern over grants in livelihoods component

QR5 01/09 – 03/09

- Forest Management Bodies created
- Profiles of Sinoe communities completed
- NTFP work planned to begin in Q7, due to growing/harvest seasons

QR6 04/06 - 06/09

- Assessment of Social Agreements
- Midterm Assessment

QR7 07/09 – 09/09

- First COP departs. Second arrives.
- FDA study tour in Cameroon.
- Reassessment of grants program

QR8 10/09 – 12/09

- Community Rights Law signed
- Land Commission authorized
- Farmer Field Schools begun
- ASNAPP sub-contract and assessment
- Reconfiguration of institutions to meet criteria of the CRL begun
- Four value chains selected

QR9 01/10 – 03/10

- Development of regulations to the CRL initiated
- ENNR demarcation begins
- Consultation on Benefits Sharing Trust
- First land tenure expert resigns

QR10 4/10 – 6/10

- Agreement signed on co-management of ENNR
- Extension approved
- Second land tenure expert hired

QR11 7/10 – 9/10

- ENNR co-management agreement signed
- UL-CAF and FTI Assessments completed
- Biodiversity threats analyses undertaken in villages

QR12 10/10 – 12/10

- Process for incorporation of CAs initiated
- Eight month extension to 8/11 granted
- Third COP arrives

QR13 1/11 – 3/11

- Land Commissioners visit pilot communities. Workshops held
- Nimba county CFMB constitutions registered
- Sinoe county demarcation begun
- Cassava mills introduced to communities

QR14 4/11 – 6/11

- Authorization of CRL regulations
- Authorization of the “Regulation on Procedures to Access and Manage Funds on Behalf of Affected Communities by Community Forestry Development Committees”
- Radio shows and national TV features begin
- Project donates vehicles, radios, and motorcycles to FDA conservation department
- Boundary demarcation completed in all five forests completed
- Zoning and inventories conducted in all five forests
- MOUs with cassava mills and oil palm presses signed
- Four cassava mills introduced

QR 15

- 7/11 Two month extension through 10/11 approved
- Bridge period grant to ACIDI/VOCA from 10/11 to 6/12 approved

Section III Management

Management Background and Evolution

LRCFP is a Task Order (TO) under the PLACE IQC. Managed by Tetra Tech/ARD (TT/ARD), the consortium includes the US based institutions ACDI/VOCA, Conservation International, Virginia Tech University (VTU), and World Resources Institute (WRI) as well as three Liberian NGOs: the National Adult Education Association of Liberia (NAEAL), the Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS) and Action for Greater Harvest (AGRHA).

The TO was awarded in 2007 for an initial period of two years. The MTA in July 2008 recommended that USAID exercise its option to extend for a third year. A seven-month extension was approved in mid-2010. At the end of 2010, another eight-month extension brought the project to its final closing date of August 31, 2011. The COTR granted a final two month extension until October 28, 2011. Thus a project initially designed for two years stretched out over almost four years. A “bridge period” grant to ACDI/VOCA from October 2011 through May 2012 will continue many of the activities and hopefully align with the awarding of a new project.

Over the four years, the total budget for this TO was \$104 million. LRCFP operated three offices—a main office in Monrovia and field offices in Nimba (Sanniquellie) and Sinoe (Greenville) and had a permanent staff of around 36 individuals. Throughout the Life of Project (LOP), Dan Whyner, Forestry Advisor at USAID/Monrovia, served as the Contracting Officer’s Technical Representative (COTR) with Brian Aaron as the lead Contracting Officer.

Management Timeline

Q1 12/07- 03/08

- Mid-December 2007, Task Order awarded to TT/ARD

Q2 04/08 – 06/08

- Land Commission not established. CRL delayed. TT/ARD requests TO modification
- Realization that can’t focus on just a few towns at county level
- Nimba communities selected and profiled

Q3 07/08 – 09/08

- TT/ARD supports nine page “framework” CRL. The Legislature approves 32 page version
- Continued negotiations in Nimba and exploration for pilot communities in Sinoe
- Co-management of Bleih proposed and agreed upon in principle. Idea of ENNR co-management introduced to the FDA.
- Two FDA staff seconded to LRCFP
- Midterm Assessment report completed
- Modification of TOR to align with biodiversity funding

QR4 10/08 – 12/08

- Offices opened in Sanniquellie and Greenville

QR5 01/09 – 03/09

- Sinoe office opened

QR7 07/09 – 09/09

- First COP Ian Deshmukh leaves. Second COP Allen Turner arrives.

QR8 10/09 – 12/09

- CRL signed
- LC authorized
- ASNAPP subcontract awarded. NTFP and assessment conducted
- SOW for STTA working on social inclusion, equity, gender
- Four months left in contract, waiting for extension to be confirmed

QR9 01/10 – 03/10

- STTA on gender
- Seven month extension not yet approved
- James Murombedzi, international LTPR technical staff resigns 2/10
- Training in gender capacity skill development to 19 people in the pilot communities.

QR10 4/10 – 6/10

- Support provided FDA to develop a template community forest management plan
- Extension approved. Second international LTPR staff Solomon Mombeshora on board.
- Team from TT/ARD arrives to assure compliance with USAID regulations. Most part in good shape but made some changes in accounting. Staff evaluations conducted. Staff put on annual six month contracts.

QR11 7/10 – 9/10

- Biodiversity threats analyses undertaken in villages
- Extension through 8/11 proposed

QR12 10/10 – 12/10

- ENNR co-management committee formed
- Eight month extension to 8/11 granted
- Second COP Alan Turner replaced by third COP Vaneska Litz

QR13 1/11 – 3/11

- Community forest demarcation in Sinoe County begins

QR14 4/11 – 6/11

- Final approval of CRL regulations
- USAID provides funding through LRCFP to enable the donation of vehicles, radios, and motorcycles to FDA in support of conservation activities in the four sector offices
- Again through USAID, LRCFP provides computers to FTI
- Boundary demarcation in all five forests completed
- Zoning and inventories conducted in all five forests

10/28/11

- End of TT/ARD management of LRCFP

11/1/11-5/30/12

- Bridging project (grant) implemented by ACDI/VOCA. SOW to be developed
- Likely add-on activities: Tree crops (coffee, cocoa)
- Most local staff agrees to continue employment with the bridging activities

Management Results

Program level results

Overall management relations. Staff of both the prime contractor and subcontractors commended Tetra Tech/ARD's (TT/ARD) participatory and inclusive management style. They valued, in particular, the technical assistance and coaching made available by TT/ARD. AGRHA Director Kemayah noted, "ARD does not force us to do things. We don't see a 'vertical style' of management, but a flat structure." FDA Managing Director Wogbeh, the key partner for LRCFP, remarked that FDA has "very cordial" relationship with LRCFP.

Contractor-USAID relations. LRCFP's third COP Vaneska Litz finds COTR Dan Whyner to be highly supportive, well informed and maintaining excellent relations with partners and other stakeholders. The evaluation team was told that Dan made the time to meet every week with the project, so that issues and questions did not build up and could be tackled immediately. This management style contributed greatly to the flexible adaptive management approach needed in the project and country context. When an issue emerged at a workshop on the national benefit sharing trust he dealt with it extremely well, skillfully avoiding conflict and misunderstanding.

Adaptive management. Overall LRCFP as a project exhibited a high level of adaptive management. This adaptive spirit was illustrated in the LRCFP response to the MTA findings on livelihoods and gender. Regarding livelihoods, as documented, LRCFP significantly revamped its strategy as a result of the MTA and other inputs. Although time constraints limited effectiveness, the strategy is now pointed in the right direction. LRCFP also responded to the recommendation in the MTA to develop a gender strategy through SSTA on the topic to conduct training of staff from FDA and NGOs. As a result, the FDA reports that they have made an active effort cultivate and recruit women professionals. For

example, women were trained and participated in biomonitoring. A woman led one of the FDA inventory and zoning teams.

Information also suggests that LRCFP has had an impact on the role of women in pilot communities. Constitutions require gender representation on CAs, and at least one woman on CFMBs. Management committees of the FFS, NTFP, and cassava and palm oil producer groups also include women. LRCFP staff and community members suggest that women had not held such positions of authority in the past. (Gender balanced staffing nevertheless remains an issue and is discussed below.)

Workplanning and reporting. From the COTR's perspective, trust and mutual understanding characterized the workplanning process. There were thus no big surprises in the workplan as they talked it through before the official draft came in. The number of things that went against expectations – delays and new opportunities -- required this level of communication to allow program management to adapt efficiently. Understanding and trust between TT/ARD and the COTR was sufficiently solid that it was not strained when, towards the end of the program, TT/ARD was requested to make a departure from plans and included a request for vehicles for FDA in a cost modification.

At the site level, according to the Nimba staff, workplanning was a collaborative effort among LRCFP staff, subcontractors and communities. Staff identified initial activities and next steps with the community and budgeted them out. They then returned to the community to review the budget. Office managers in turn submitted the workplan and budget to Monrovia for review and finalization. While the community was not privy to the whole budget they did get experience in budgeting through this process.

Clear and detailed reporting protocols were observed at the Nimba office, and at the program level, the COTR reported having no problems with the timeliness, quality, and detail of reporting. On the few occasions TT/ARD had to present reports slightly late, they informed the COTR. Quarterly reports and workplans reviewed by the evaluation team were thorough, clear, and provided a detailed history of program activities and progress.

Contracts Office overload. Litz identified one concern regarding the load on USAID/Liberia's Contracts Office. The fact that LRCFP priorities regularly adapted to changing conditions resulted in the need for additional STTA on relatively short notice. The necessary approval of daily rates for these STTA candidates placed additional burdens on an office that was already straining under a heavy workload. This task is not typically delegated to COTR, but perhaps authority could have been extended to him under the circumstances.

Budgeting and financial management.

The COTR reviewed vouchers and asked questions on vouchers. Key expenses included bank transfers, Internet costs, housing, and transport/vehicle wear and tear. Maintaining county offices cost much less than the Monrovia office. The local subcontracts undertaken in LRCFP also proved to be cost-effective; while they required TT/ARD oversight, they were performance-based and targeted deliverables to achieve results efficiently. On the other hand, the COTR notes that it is very expensive to work in Liberia and TT/ARD may not have fully grasped the extent of these costs going into the program. The decision to change the scope of field sites from four villages to the much larger clan areas resulted in further unanticipated costs in transportation and logistics.

It is hard to determine value relative to cost for other deliverables. In general, workshops and meetings were expensive, due largely to the cost of transporting people long distances in a country without public transport. The impact was felt in the process of public comment and consultation on the regulations to the CRL regulations. (Also, notices were sent out to many newspapers which increased the number of people, and raised costs beyond expectations.) In contrast, outreach and radio time were inexpensive, yet impacts were not thoroughly evaluated by the project.

LRCFP study tours proved useful and relatively inexpensive. On the Cameroon study tour, the FDA Director forged alliances community forestry actors in that country. LC Commissioner Brandy also reports having gained insights on that trip. LRCFP support for LC Commissioners to conduct workshops in the pilot communities provided commissioners their first opportunity in their positions to learn firsthand about tenure in the pilot communities.

USAID's decision to donate trucks and motorcycles for national level protected area management as well as four computers and internet access to the FDA all filled critical gaps in capacity and will improve biodiversity conservation. However, all but one of the vehicles are use in areas outside the LRCFP pilot communities, making this a less than strategic form of support from the perspective of the program.

The high level of petty corruption in Liberia required LRCFP to manage finances strictly and be constantly vigilant. Management reported that every new expense created opportunities for padding. TT/ARD has been careful to monitor this and instituted a zero tolerance policy on financial transactions. On occasion they have suspended staff for presenting false receipts. TT/ARD has discussed the issue frankly and shared their policy with USAID.

In the Nimba Office, Edward Paye, the finance manager, has a degree in accounting. Office Manager Nuah Biah was an agricultural services manager on a farm and learned bookkeeping and finances in that job. All financial transactions are recorded and verified on project forms. Money and accounting materials are kept under lock and key under control of Mr. Paye. Joshua Williams, financial manager based in Monrovia, comes to Nimba every two to three months to conduct audits. LRCFP has also worked with community members to strengthen financial management skills and systems. The staff procured food and materials alongside community members and site-based staff to help them learn how to manage finances. According to Nimba Office Manager, Nuah Biah, there have been no problems of fraud.

Staffing

Given the difficulty of working in rural Liberia and the challenges of the technical areas supported by LRCFP, the program surprisingly experienced high personnel rates of satisfaction and retention. The evaluation team witnessed genuine commitment and enthusiasm by the Nimba office staff. It is also a testament to LRCFP management that, with the exception of the first international Senior Land Tenure Specialist and the first Office Manager in the Nimba Office, the program lost only low-performing individuals.

LRCFP has paid relatively high salaries for its senior non-American staff. Retaining this staff may pose a problem for ACDI/VOCA during bridging period especially in the presence of the newly awarded FED project, though that has not appeared to be a problem to date. Other

incentives, such as capacity building and computer training in particular, appear to be a possible useful means to strengthen employee incentives in Liberia.

Gender issues in staffing. LRCFP has had limited success in hiring women staff. No women applied when the program rehired for the livelihoods and M&E positions. Currently the COP and the Administrator are the only women on TT/ARD's staff, while a woman holds one of the CJPS community organizer positions; a female GIS analyst from FDA led field teams, and female FTI students participated in the demarcation of forests. As recommended in the MTA, a proactive strategy of identifying and mentoring women is needed to fill these gaps.

Short Term Technical Assistance (STTA). According to COP Litz, LRCFP has struggled with STTA in Liberia due very low levels of capacity of potential TA candidates who have sufficient knowledge of the country and pre-existing trust by local stakeholders. Longer consultations, such as the eight months Peter De Waard has spent in the country, work much better. Nevertheless, the program frequently used STTA to contribute to the team's expertise, especially when the program moved in new directions or confronted stubborn issues. For example:

- LRCFP called upon a consultant to assist in work outside initial scope, addressing Social Agreements and the management of affected community benefits. These reports and this assistance enabled the program to establish the National Benefit Sharing Trust Board.
- Brief home office support to address conflict management issues in the Nimba pilot communities provided outside facilitation and moved the program forward during a very tense period.
- GIS training provided through STTA launched and enabled the demarcation, inventory, and zoning of the community forests.
- Assistance in community profiling early in the program helped the program realize the need to move from a village-based approach to a clan-based one.
- The alternative proteins study has informed program design. For example, it has clarified for the livelihoods team questions about livestock management.

In other cases, the program used STTA less strategically.

- The program did not use the results of the initial assessment of NTFPs and eventually relied upon a second assessment and technical assistance of ASNAPP to implement field activities.
- LRCFP could have taken greater advantage of international experience to raise governmental and NGO awareness of land tenure issues relative to community forestry.

Subcontractors

Integrated programming can be carried out by one institution or through a consortium, as was done in this case. There are clearly tradeoffs and transaction costs when a consortium implements a program. In the case of LRCFP it seems that the consortium structure generally worked well. COTR Dan Whyner attributes some challenges with the subcontractors to the nature of the IQC that put into place a fixed group of institutions. He and the contractor were constrained to work within the existing consortium rather than reaching out to the best partner available. Timelines and incremental funding also reduced flexibility. In the end, most subcontractor performance issues were resolved, with the exception of the ongoing challenges with Conservation International, discussed below.

International Subcontractors

ACDI/VOCA. In the first stages of LRCFP, ACDI did not embrace CF as a business and the livelihood approach did not directly support CF objectives. The MTA identified this as a significant issue. At that time, virtually no results were visible in the field. In the two quarters after the MTA, the program abandoned the grants approach, and began to implement the field activities.

Further into the program USAID decided that implementing the livelihoods component through STTA was not cost-effective and approved an expatriate LTTA position. With the arrival of Peter De Waard, management issues decreased and better results were produced. The ACDI representative worked well with the TT/ARD COP, and the livelihoods team took on new focus and adopted new approaches and new tools. The long-term presence added energy and experience to the livelihood activities and LRCFP in general. These efforts represent a significant turnaround in the performance of this subcontractor, but they come late in the project.

TT/ARD subcontracted AGRHA, whose staff implements the Farmer Field School (FFS) activities that ACDI supervises. Despite these indirect lines of responsibility no major issues were reported to the evaluation team. ACDI did not bring any issues to TT/ARD for resolution.

ACDI manages seven projects in Liberia with only three COPs and four expatriate staff. The COPs of these programs coordinate and share information. De Waard is working with other specialists on tree crops, for example. These exchanges have broadened De Waard's perspectives of possible livelihoods options in LRCFP, such as cocoa and fish farming.

ASNAPP. TT/ARD directly subcontracted with Ghana based Agribusiness in Sustainable Natural Plant Products (ASNAPP) after a trip to Ghana. ASNAPP was an excellent choice to help develop markets for non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Concrete evidence for this improvement is the increase from 700kg to 9,000kg of *Griffonia* exported over one year.

ASNAPP has conducted the initial assessment and conducted training while ACDI and AGRHA performed the follow up support. Evaluators sensed that the ambiguity of this division of responsibilities may have caused friction between the two organizations. Further, Rutgers makes proprietary claims on compounds they discover, which may also increase tension.

Virginia Tech and WRI. Neither subcontractor performed substantial work for LRCFP since the MTA. None was planned. While their analytical resources contributed to the initial implementation of the program it was not necessary during the latter portion.

Conservation International (CI)

The evaluation team found that the underperformance of CI as a subcontractor was a serious administrative challenge for LRCFP. There were several factors to consider in assessing the performance of CI and of TT/ARD as the prime contractor managing CI:

- The responsibility of TT/ARD to assure performance of a subcontractor.

- The fact that CI is an established institution within Liberia with its own agenda and set of partners.
- Existing relationships between CI and USAID. For example, CI has provided an overall framework for conservation in the Upper Guinea forest region that USAID adopted. Within Liberia, CI is implementing a project in and around Sapo National Park.
- The lack of attention to CI performance in the MTA due to other pressing concerns, little time to meet with CI and belief that misunderstandings could be addressed by changes in the focus of the subcontract agreement, where clearly there were more fundamental problems. Lack of coordination and clarity persisted in the case of CI after the MTA whereas much improvement was made in the ACDI/VOCA subcontract. In that case during the MTA the livelihoods team led by ACDI/VOCA spent half a day hashing out problems and possible solutions.
- The changes in personnel in both LRCFP and CI.

With these factors in mind, the bottom line is that CI significantly underperformed as a subcontractor in LRCFP. Deliverables were late and had to be returned for improvement. There was poor communication and lack of clarity on what was expected as well as on logistics and training approaches. As the prime, TT/ARD bears responsibility for overall performance of LRCFP. They were very conscious that CI's underperformance and lack of integration posed a vulnerability to their overall good management and results record. Deadlines were set and TT/ARD provided oversight on the deliverables. However the hard work on both sides seems to have come at the end of the project, too late to significantly improve the deliverables and the relationship.

This underperformance led to a less than strategic approach to biodiversity conservation, as detailed in the section on biodiversity. TT/ARD took some important steps to improve the LRCFP biodiversity approach by conducting a participatory threats analysis (recommended in the MTA) but it is not clear that this was discussed with CI or linked to the biomonitoring activities. Biomonitoring approaches clashed, leaving in question how to proceed in a way that is both locally sustainable and integrated with regional biomonitoring protocols.

TT/ARD struggled to determine the right approach to managing CI, given the organization's international stature on the one hand and its lack of local staff capacity on the other. There may have been shifting viewpoints on what to do among the LRCFP COPs, or just not enough attention to the issue until the final year. Below we present some of the key performance and technical issues and recommend some next steps. These next steps will only be feasible, however, if CI significantly strengthens its capacity in Liberia.

TT/ARD reported that during the LOP CI did not integrate well into the consortium and this problem (also identified by CI) together with lack of staff capacity and weak home office support resulted in poor communication, substandard deliverables and missed deadlines. For instance, a deadline for a final report on August 15, 2011 was missed and the final report that was delivered needed to be substantially rewritten.

According to CI, their budget was cut without notice when Allan Turner came in as COP. In addition, they were not invited to partner meetings until CI Technical Director Jessica Donovan attended the 13th partnership meeting. It is not clear if these meetings were largely for local partners but Jessica believes ACDI attended at least some of the meetings. LRCFP management admits that they have some responsibility for the poor integration.

There has thus been little cross-fertilization between CI and other LRFCP partners, with the exception of interaction on the development of the CRL.

CI differed on technical grounds with the prime contractor on some activities and deliverables. For instance, TT/ARD and CI had differences of opinion and misunderstandings over biomonitoring training and methodology. CI took the position that all institutions should use the methodology promoted by the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF) throughout the region. TT/ARD supported the use of a GPS-based methodology that was used in forest demarcation and built on training already conducted under the program.

Reports on the CI biomonitoring work in Nimba provide insight into the organization's performance. CI proposed to conduct monitoring in the Zor forest, but stopped after 14 days. Although they requested further time to complete monitoring of the Bleih forest, they did not complete the task, sampling only 19 plots out of an initial 36 planned. The Liberian Nimba Office manager seconded to LRFCP from FDA monitored the training of community members and felt that the scientists conducting the training did not listen to community members, and that the approach used undermined trust. CI on the other hand felt that some trainees identified by TT/ARD were not qualified and that logistical support was inadequate, hampering operations. Boxes 1 and 2 illustrate differences of opinion and approach between CI and other LRFCP partners.

TT/ARD reports that CI did not deliver the survey design, but CI thought it was delivered. TT/ARD wanted a methodology but the nature of the deliverable was unclear. In general, deliverables in the contract were not clear to CI. CI also felt that there was no real counterpart to work with on biodiversity activities on the TT/ARD side and this limited communications.

The two groups also differed in their overall approach to the reserves in Nimba County. CI supports taking a particular landscape approach for both the East and West Nimba Nature Reserves. TT/ARD and other subcontractors believe that this approach would give too much control to the FDA and, although it would be a co-management system, would provide fewer rights to the communities. Based on experience with the Bleih and Zor forests, TT/ARD supported an approach that they believe granted more rights to communities. They also believe that the LRFCP approach is a landscape approach. The bottom line is that there has not been an accord on what a landscape approach means and implies for local actors.

On the administrative side, CI perceived that TT/ARD was moving quickly and pushing everyone on deliverables in the PMP as the end of the project neared. This pressure could contribute to miscommunication. For instance, Jessica Donovan thought the biomonitoring

BOX 1: Perspectives from the Nimba Office on the CI biomonitoring work

- LRFCP said time was running out to finish the biomonitoring but CI asked for more time
- Zor forest biomonitoring was planned for 30 days but stopped after 14 days
- CI requested more time for the Bleih forest but only did a portion
- CI sampled 19 out of 36 planned sampling plots
- It was necessary for the Nimba Office Manager Biah to monitor community member work despite the presence of two scientists CI sent to train community members
- CI was late in submitting their report; it had not come out at the time of the evaluation
- The CI approach would not provide real rights to local community members.

BOX 2: CI perspective on biomonitoring and the management plan for ENNR

- The Sinoe team was not trained because they did not come to participate in the ENNR demarcation
- The management plan for ENNR was not in their subcontract
- TT/ARD managed the demarcation; CI was very little involved
- LRCFP consultant John Waugh held a meeting on ENNR, but there was no follow up
- Miguel Morales of CI developed an Action Plan for ENNR earlier
- Funding cuts prevented CI from doing biomonitoring for ENNR; the number and identity of people to be involved was not clear
- Only six people showed up first (AML funded) training
- Transects were supposed to go be conducted for a month but lasted two weeks
- Trainees, selected by other contractors, had no literacy skills or equipment
- CI was asked to do data analysis although they had understood it was to be done by other contractors
- CI feels that if they have more time to get involved with communities, they will be more independent to do the monitoring
- More integration is needed in addressing threats to biodiversity and solutions
- Northern Nimba needs to be looked at a single landscape from both FDA and community perspectives
- The “leakage” issue is of central importance, and requires a landscape approach and cross-border focus

report was going to wait until she had reviewed it after vacation but it went out from the office allegedly due to pressure from TT/ARD. It was not supposed to be the final report. Now CI feels they have addressed the issue and will come up with product they stand behind. There has been improvement since Vaneska Litz’s arrival. CI did not feel they were really engaged in the work until the final months of the program when there was much more interaction. Borwen Sayon was attending meetings at the time of the evaluation.

Both parties should have prioritized a comprehensive review of the terms of reference of the subcontract, the level of effort needed, personnel and trainee qualifications, standards and methodologies to assure that the deliverables could be produced on time and be of sufficient quality. It seems that performance and technical issues were addressed in a piecemeal fashion.

On the positive side, TT/ARD found much value in CI STTA Sean Griffin’s work on land use assessments and mapping to understand forest cover.

LRCFP staff feels that engaging with the conservation sector (CI, FFI) is essential for CF to advance in Liberia as they have a strong voice and independent resources. A larger discussion about the CI approach in Nimba is needed as it is unclear how they define and support CF around West Nimba. The Nimba Office Manager feels it is essential to listen to the Gba people in the process and that CI’s approach is undermining trust. Similarly there is confusion and contradiction in the definition

of “communal” forests as promulgated by Fauna and Flora International (FFI) around Sapo National Park (SNP).

The evaluation team finds that although the TT/ARD-CI relationship was dysfunctional throughout the LOP, there is hope for expanded collaboration between CI and any successor to LRCFP. The team documented the issues above for the record but the follow up is much more important. Future partnership should rest on:

- Consensus on the importance and definition of community forestry
- Agreement on a landscape approach in Nimba, throughout Liberia and across national boundaries

- Harmonizing of biomonitoring, demarcation and mapping methodologies
- Joint training approach including clear criteria for individuals selected for training
- Collaborative workplanning
- Clear scopes of work with detailed deliverables

Liberian Subcontractors

The three Liberian subcontractors, AGRHA, CJPS and National Adult Education Association of Liberia (NAEAL) brought different skills and experience but worked closely and smoothly as a team. They had previously collaborated together on a Mercy Corps project. CJPS also worked on the USAID-funded Community Conservation Corps (CCC) project in and around Sapu National Park. Their strengths were complementary and resulted in a well-rounded development package. The subcontractors sought assistance from each other when needed. For instance in the Gba community, water and sanitation were key issues in the peace building effort and CJPS turned to AGRHA for help. The subcontractors also developed an integrated training manual. All subcontractors have staff in the pilot communities. Neither TT/ARD nor USAID reported significant delay in the achievement of deliverables. Key to the quality of their performance was the quality of their personnel, as none of the institutions are strongly resourced.

NAEAL. LRCFP adopted the NAEAL “aspirational learning” approach. Given the size of their organization, it is reasonable that the organization would have certain weaknesses. In this case, NAEAL trainers had limited involvement in LTPR and did not conduct much training on tenure related topics. Also, field level staff had limited capacity in outreach and communications, and had to rely on support and direction from their Monrovia office.

CJPS. This local subcontractor performed much of the heavy lifting in developing relationships with communities in the early years of the program. In interviews Director Joseph Howard expressed a nuanced appreciation of the origins of conflict in Liberia, and strategies to address them. Evaluation team members found that in Nimba this knowledge was shared by staff in the field, as interviews with his ex-staff member Dominique Kweme demonstrated a clear understanding of institutional and power relationships in those pilot communities. In Sinoe, CJPS conducted conflict/stakeholder mapping and established “peace committees” with the FMCs and other bodies.

AGRHA. AGRHA trainers began establishing the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) during the harvest in Nimba in October of 2009, giving them less than two years to work prior the evaluation. For the limited duration of their activities the two trainers produced significant results. FFS participants appreciated the AGRHA trainers in Nimba County and their lessons. Farmers spoke knowledgeably both about the practices they had learned and applied to their fields, and about the larger purpose of learning these skills, the importance of limiting their exploitation of forests and limiting the expansion of field agriculture into forests.

In interviews with the evaluation team the trainers proved to be both technically proficient and aware of and responsive to the needs of the FFS students. They had a sharp sense of what students would continue after their support left, and what practices needed ongoing support and experimentation to be adopted. And they were dedicated; once the program was decentralized, training for the FFSs required constant travel by both trainers. Both trainers had certificates in agriculture and had worked on development for donors such as the EU, World Vision, and IITA in Nigeria. The one significant gap in their training was

NTFPs. Neither had worked with NTFPs before. Their NTFP training came solely from visits from ASNAPP.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Overall Program Monitoring

This section, like other sections of this report, identifies a large number of possible changes that could have been monitored by LRCFP, including training outcomes, socio-economic changes in communities, biodiversity indicators and others. As these absences are described, the reader should keep in mind that LRCFP was initially designed as a two-year pilot program and there was little expectation that significant changes would occur and could be monitored over this time period.

LRCFP achieved or surpassed all but one Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) target. According to the COTR, the PMP made people think about what constitutes success in all the elements. The PMP informed decisions and helped the program to stay on target. At the same time, it did not serve as a straightjacket. As LRCFP evolved, the LRCFP team worked with the Mission to cautiously refine indicators.

Over the course of the program, however, staff did not routinely discuss indicator achievement and M&E in general. The use M&E data was not systematically incorporated into the program decision making process. USAID conducted a Data Quality Analysis (DQA) but it is unclear if or how DQA findings were transmitted to LRCFP staff. The USAID/Liberia M&E project currently conducts the DQAs for all projects so there is even more distance between data quality issues and the field.

Program M&E quality improved in recent months with new expertise. M&E specialist Peter Mah was on the job less than a year but greatly improved the M&E system through his own diligence supported by review and recommendations from consultant Mike Richards. Prior to his arrival, the program had no standardized format for data and double counted beneficiaries. Nor did the program maintain the PMP system sufficiently. It has taken considerable effort for Mah to improve the system and collect the necessary data.

Mah took a number of steps to improve the PMP in the last five months of the project. He:

- standardized data collection forms at both sites;
- trained officers to collect data;
- addressed double counting;
- filtered out information that was not useful; and
- created a reporting format.

Despite these efforts, the evaluation identified the following concerns regarding M&E:

- Lack of a system to track the impact of training in this program which has heavily relied on training.

- Lack of economic and market indicators to gauge returns to labor on technologies and livelihood activities. Among other things, this information would help the program and communities decide between potential livelihood activities.
- Absence of internal evaluations (other than audits) conducted by STTA.
- Absence of consideration of how staff and other users will interpret sophisticated indicators such as policy index and percentage of steps toward a goal.
- Lack of understanding of Data Quality Analysis (DQA). Project staff could not say when last DQA was conducted.
- Lack of use of monitoring data by project staff to learn and improve the program.

Staff could have reviewed and revised indicators together, as proposed by Mah. All field staff should be part of indicator process. Mah also suggested a number of measures that would have been useful in capturing results of the program:

- Qualitative information on impact
- Expansion of farms
- Nutritional status
- Impacts of training
- A measure of confidence and trust

Monitoring of specific activities

Livelihood monitoring. Data collected includes champion group production records and number of people trained. During the course of the program, staff analyzed the data and trends. Program staff believes FFSs provide increased economic benefit for people beyond trainees themselves. The program considered conducting a household survey to verify increases in incomes due to the FFS, but was unable to do so prior to the bridge period. Such a survey however would not have been able to demonstrate more than a temporary bump in production incomes, a rough indication of possible long-term gains.

Training monitoring. The project developed no standardized system for evaluating the impact of training. Interviews do suggest that training was appreciated and influenced behavior of both community members and FDA staff. Members of the CF division of the FDA, for example, used skills they learned through the program to help establish institutions in 27 communities near commercial timber concessions, CFDCs. However, LRCFP collected no quantified data to measure how many trainees in individual training sessions, workshops, or OJT situations utilized what they learned, and if their use of this information helped achieve program objectives.

Biodiversity Monitoring. [See Section VII for information on biodiversity monitoring.]

Monitoring demand for community forests. Program staff tracked and updated PMP Indicator 2.0.1. “Number of requests made by communities to FDA to assist establish community forestry programs“. They recorded an upward trend months prior to the evaluation as adjacent communities have become aware of the program. Recently a distant community, located in Grand Bassa, also expressed interest. The program did not achieve the target of 30, and reports only 13 communities. This target, in many ways outside of the manageable interests of the program, was strategically included in the PMP as an important element of sustainability.

Monitoring communications and awareness activities. For some activities, program staff has directly measured impact, though not in surveys. For example, in Nimba County they track the residence of people who call into answer questions in the community forestry radio program Green Beat. Staff also witnesses participation in events in which theater groups spread communication messages to adjacent communities.

Box 3: Evidence proposed by Nimba staff that LRCFP activities are leading to threat mitigation

- After the community demarcated, they have rules and regulations, not open access
- Community members don't go to the forest without permission of CFMB
- Farmers are growing crops in one location
- LRCFP has reduced pressure on ENNR because people are using their own forests (ENNR is in between CFs)
- CFMBs have their own guard who reports violations
- Outsiders cleared a large portion of forest to cut trees but the community did not know them. The cleared area was not planted.
- Pit-sawing continues around ENNR and the CFs but not in the CFs
- Zor forest is one of the richest forests around; its high value is now recognized by the community and others
- However, the management plan needs to be operational.

M&E in the Nimba Office. The first M&E officer in the Nimba office was Edward Paye, who took on the role in April of 2011. His tasks appear to have been limited to data collection. Paye checked the data and assured quality, and focused on financial management rather than technical M&E, for which Mah takes responsibility. Payne entered data, then forwarded it to Monrovia each month. He conducted data analysis almost every day.

Examples of data management and use in Nimba

- Number of hectares determined by GPS during demarcation
- Data sent back to the community for their management plans
- Community members trained in sustainable harvest of *Griffonia*. Staff monitors quality of the application of these practices.

GPS data was used in discussions with ArcelorMittal concerning overlap with

concession

For the most part, LRCFP draws on narratives, case studies, and anecdotes for reports and coordination meetings. The Nimba Office assembled some of this information, such as a story of woman who used money gained through *Griffonia* collection to send her daughter to school. Her first sale netted \$385 and that freed her from debt.

Conclusions on M&E in LRCFP

In sum, the PMP was adequate and achieved its purpose in reporting to USAID. LRCFP improved data collection and strengthened the monitoring system. It does not appear that LRCFP conducted internal evaluations, aside from audits. Consultancies such as Mike Richards work on M&E could have been used to engage staff in

Box 4: Nimba staff proposals for threat monitoring

- Threats have been identified with the community
- Conduct transects to monitor gun shells found
- Monitor new clearings in Bleih, which is all old growth
- Ask people the origin of bushmeat they bring to town
- Cut transects deep into forest to see impacts

understanding and buying into M&E. Perhaps that was done, but the effects were not strongly felt. Despite these weaknesses it was interesting to note that field staff had good notions of what could be done to better monitor threats to biodiversity, communications and training impacts and livelihoods benefits. With more training and focus on local utility and capacity building, M&E could provide significant utility to any future program.

Challenges and adaptive management strategies

Remote conditions

The remote conditions of Sinoe County proved a management challenge. LRCFP initially purchased vehicles that were not up to the task, and had to expend significant funds that could have been invested elsewhere on new ones. Sinoe also required more resources than expected because community members were less educated and informed and had been severely dislocated during the civil wars. LRCFP also had difficulty hiring staff of high quality that knew the region well.

Episodic funding

USAID extended LRCFP four times, which created uncertainty and duplication in program management. It inhibited program management to undertake long term planning and activities that could not be quickly implemented, and rushed activities that would have taken time to be well implemented. The project achieved more than might have been expected considering all the obstacles, but less than it could have under a five-year planning cycle. Each of the three project phases had a different COP, and creating a coordinated project approach including branding appears to have been a continuous challenge.

Slow progress by the GOL

Unexpected circumstances have required a constant juggling of program activities as LRCFP has adapted to changing (and unchanging) conditions. Principal government actions that took longer than expected include: the passage of the CRL, the creation of the Land Commission, and, more recently, FDA approval of community agreements.

Implications for future programs

Community forestry in Liberia

Challenges working with the FDA. Relationships and communication between the FDA Conservation and Community Forestry departments are not strong. Better interaction takes place between the Commercial Department and Community Forestry. The Conservation department has not worked with communities. These weak ties are in part because community forestry has not yet been accepted by all. FDA staff including the Director of Research and Development John Kantor, and retired Director John Woods are not fully convinced of the feasibility of CF. They argue that community institutions in Liberia are very weak and given the power may rapidly degrade forest resources.

Engage with the conservation NGOs. Conservation community members such as CI and FFI have a strong voice and independent resources in Liberia. Coordination with them is

essential for community forestry to advance. A larger discussion about the CI approach in Nimba is needed as it is unclear if they support CF around West Nimba.

Harmonize approaches through a revitalized Community Forestry Working Group.

USAID/WA-USFS Sustainable and Thriving Environments for West African Regional Development (STEWARD) program will continue to work in Liberia and certainly on its borders. There is concern that STEWARD is adopting a different approach to livelihoods and to community forestry. These differences have to be addressed immediately. This point holds for any other donor or NGO action on CF. Alternatively, USAID could help GOL meet with civil society and private sector representatives in a working group that meets regularly at CF sites to hash out policy issues, make recommendations and monitor the implementation of recommendations. This approach was highly successful in the Philippines during the initial stages of CF.

Implications for USAID

The structure of PLACE IQC. Because LRCFP was implemented through an IQC the Mission was unable to change subcontractors as necessary. As a result much management time was invested in addressing issues with subcontractors. Working through the IQC also elevated costs. One example was the Learmonth visits. Implementing major components through subcontracts also costs more. Some positions require expat LTTA.

Section IV Community Forestry Institutions

Background

The context for community forestry

Prior to the launch of LRCFP, Liberia had almost no experience in community forestry. Although the vast majority of the population drew its livelihoods from the forests, the government's relationship to this resource had been primarily to facilitate and regulate timber concessions and, to a much lesser degree, identify and manage protected forest resources. By 2007 national policy posited the idea of rough parity among the three "Cs" of the forest sector, but community forestry nevertheless remained little more than a discussion point.

At the program's launch, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) had explored the relationship between communities, forests, and biodiversity, as had the association of local NGO called Community Forestry Partnership (CFP). And a number of Liberian NGOs such as the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), the Liberia Democratic Institute (LDI), Green Advocates, and the Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU) had promoted the rights of the men and women of forest communities through advocacy, training, and information collection. But in terms of the actual creation of local forest management institutions, only the NGO Fauna & Flora International (FFI) working on the periphery of the Sapo National Park had fostered the creation of state recognized community forest institutions. In December of 2005 the Liberia Forestry Initiative, a program supported by USAID prior to LRCFP, had sponsored The First International Workshop on Community Forestry in Liberia in which founding principles for community forestry in Liberia were articulated in the Monrovia Declaration. Yet the country still had limited knowledge, minimal technical skills, a skeletal legal framework, little public awareness, and few examples of community forestry.

The GOL faced challenges at the cessation of hostilities in 2003 that, despite progress, continued to create an unstable and difficult environment for community forestry in 2008. The economy remained feeble, and the government was still barren of financial and human resources.

Perhaps equally important, the power balance between the urban power elite and rural communities had not been sorted out. The history of the relationship between local communities and the exterior was characterized by distrust and dependency fostered by the expropriation of resources, and a succession of relief projects. A thin presence of local administrators receiving orders from Monrovia represented the national government and created a weak interface with the rich web of local institutions that governed the towns and villages and managed people's relationship to their forests and forest resources.

From a starting point of virtual ignorance (exemplified by a wild overestimation of local institutional capacity and the gross misunderstanding of the units of forest management), the LRCFP attempted to create transparent, accountable local institutions with the organizational capacity and credibility to interface with national government and represent the interests of the men and women of their communities. Through the pilot communities, the program was to explore the opportunities and challenges faced in the introduction of CF in Liberia and through this experience identify and record the opportunities and obstacles

created by the characteristics of forests, communities, their context, and their partners. Through pilot communities, the program was to clarify the prospects and strategies for the expansion of community forestry with an eye to national policy and institutional reform.

Implementation of the component

At the national level, from the first quarter of the program, early in 2008, program staff engaged in the deliberations over the Community Rights Law, which they expected to soon be passed. This support – in the form of hosting and contributing to working groups and providing technical input -- continued until the law was enacted almost two years later, in October of 2009.

LRCFP staff also began to explore potential sites for their pilot communities from the program's first months. The FDA directed their focus to Nimba County because the FDA itself had come in conflict with community members while establishing the East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR). Program staff also began building relations with members of the Sinoe County communities. Soon after these initial contacts, program staff realized that the intended town-based approach would not work, and enlarged their definition of the social units they would work with to the clan level. By the end of the second quarter, the two Nimba communities were selected and profiled.

By the third quarter of the program community members had agreed in principle to the collaborative management of the Bleih forest and were ready to explore the idea of the co-management of the ENNR. Two FDA staff had been seconded to the program, and shortly thereafter, in quarter four, program offices in Sanniquellie (Nimba) and Greenville (Sinoe) were opened. Program staff reports that they encountered significant resistance and stonewalling in the communities, and very tense relations between the FDA and communities, and between communities. For this reason the program provided staff and community leaders training in conflict management, and held numerous conflict mitigation meetings and workshops.

By the beginning of year two, the program began creating local Forest Management Bodies (FMBs) in Nimba, and the next quarter began to develop constitutions for the FMBs. The profiles of the Sinoe communities were completed by this time. Despite these concrete beginnings, LRCFP continued to be concerned about the FDA capacity and overall commitment to community forestry. Quarterly report six states, "LRCFP will need to make sure that all of FDA is squarely behind community forestry and the LRCFP approach: support is needed from all FDA units." In Nimba disagreements over rights to forestlands were arising with ArcelorMittal Liberia (AML) in western Nimba County, while the FMCs and FDA signed a letter of common interest concerning ENNR.

In the beginning of the program's third year, LRCFP supported public awareness raising on the CRL and reorganized the FMBs to accord with the conditions of the recently passed law. Members of Community Assemblies (CAs) were elected by the communities, and the CAs elected members of their Executive Committees, and established Community Forest Management Bodies (CFMBs). CFMBs, guided by the Executive Committees, represent the interests of the CA on a day to day basis. The program introduced them to county officials in Nimba (Sinoe came six months later) and began to invite them to meetings of the national Community Forestry Working Group.

By September 2011, quarter 11 of the program, the co-management agreement for ENNR was signed, and the Forest Management Bodies of the communities were developing rules for the management of their forests. The program also completed assessments of the capacity of the University of Liberia College of Agriculture and Forestry and Forestry Training Institute at this point.

LRCFP continued to raise awareness of the CRL and support the development of the regulations in the final quarter of the second year of the program. The ENNR co-management committee was formed; and over the next months, the constitutions were finalized and CAs incorporated with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. By quarter 14, the quarter prior to this evaluation in August of 2011, the CRL regulations were approved by the FDA, and demarcation, zoning and inventories were completed in all five forests. By the time of the evaluation, all communities had submitted requests to establish community forests to the FDA, and the FDA had approved all except the Gba request in western Nimba County. Drafts for management plans for all communities were well underway, but none had been submitted to the FDA.

Results

National level results

Increased understanding and appreciation of community forestry. LRCFP not only supported the enactment of new legislation and development of regulations enabling the implementation of those regulations, the program has also facilitated the creation of five community forests under the new framework. In this process, complemented by communication activities, government officials at the national and local levels, as well as community members and the general public have been given real-life examples of community forestry in action.

Increasing the voice of community members in national policy. By regularly inviting representatives of community institutions to national level meetings, and bringing national level decision makers to the communities, LRCFP has helped the government incorporate community concerns and perspectives into the development of policy and regulations. It has also introduced a pattern of behavior that could be continued in the future. Community members have participated in both meetings on specific regulations, such as the National Benefit Sharing Trust Working Group, and more general meetings, such as the Community Forestry Working Group.

Increased FDA, local NGO and private sector capacity to work with communities and support the creation of community forestry institutions. By conducting its work in close collaboration with the FDA and local subcontractors, and providing relevant training, LRCFP has raised the knowledge of these institutions about CF and introduced relevant technical and soft skills. If they are finalized and used in training, the two “How To” manuals produced will help to keep this information available to practitioners in Liberia.

Progress on the creation of the ENNR. LRCFP worked with the FDA and community members to overcome a history of conflict over the rights to the resources in the reserve. While the management plan, and thus the specific rights and responsibilities had not been determined at the time of the evaluation, the progress made, including the signing of an agreement to co-manage the forest significantly moves forward the status of this national reserve.

Assessment of the capacity of two national forestry training institutions. The assessments of the FTI and CAF-UL have established a baseline for further support to these two institutions.

Site level results

Launched CF in pilot communities. LRCFP successfully worked with four communities to establish five community forests. This entailed significant training across a wide range of themes, from conflict mitigation, to literacy and management skills, the cultivation, processing and marketing of NTFPs, and conducting forest demarcation, inventories and zoning. The program not only increased local sense of the value of their forests, but helped establish the necessary institutions and skills to assert rights and manage those forests. While program reports and interviews suggest that these institutions are currently robust, they are still nevertheless at the beginning state. No management plan had been submitted to the FDA, and no community had demonstrated a capacity to continue without program support.

Increased local awareness of the CRL and the regulations. Members of the CAs and CFMBs interviewed for this evaluation were aware of the existence of the CRL and the regulations. Most were versed in the details of the law and regulations, and even people not able to discuss provisions in detail had a firm grasp of their basic purpose.

Piloted alternate funding mechanisms for community forests. Through the introduction of palm oil presses and cassava mills, under the condition that MOUs be signed stating that CFMBs would receive a portion of the revenue of the machines, LRCFP provided an additional source for long term funding for CF institutions. Time will determine whether this innovative relationship will strengthen or weaken the sustainability of the mills and presses.

Networked community and county institutions. LRCFP has undertaken to link communities with county officials. This has not only raised the understanding of local officials of CF, but has provided local communities a means and channel to tap into county resources. In Nimba County CFMB members have participated in meetings of the County Development Steering Committee, and the Economic Revitalization Pillar of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. CFMB representatives have brought to the attention of these committees the incursions of farmers from across the border in Guinea into the forests of northern Nimba. At the time of the evaluation, CFMB members and local county representatives were planning a joint visit to the sites as an initial step to address the situation.

Challenges and adaptive management strategies

A number of characteristics of the context in which LRCFP was implemented posed serious challenges to the creation of stable, strong and equitable community forest institutions. Some of these were known from the outset, but most arose or were discovered during the implementation of the program.

Challenges originating at the national level

Slow and contested development of the CRL. The Mission and LRCFP staff initially believed the CRL would be passed in the first months of the program; it eventually passed 22 months

later. While LRCFP progressed differently as a result, it did not come to a halt. From the beginning of the program, LRCFP staff engaged in the ongoing national level processes and also advanced work with the communities. As time went on, the program drew on this local experience to establish credibility and provide informed support to the CRL drafting process. The delays nevertheless brought certain costs. Once the law passed, staff was required to spend time reforming with the institutions they had helped establish to create new structures that conformed to the new law. More important, had the CRL passed earlier, the regulations would have been drafted earlier and their application further tested and integrated into the creation and management of pilot community forests.

Initial misunderstanding of forest ownership. As stated above, at the outset of LRCFP program staff intended to work with individual villages and “their” forests. It quickly became apparent that clans, or groups of clans, manage forests in the pilot areas. Clusters of towns and villages compose clans. Once this was realized, program staff revised their approach to work at this level, vastly increasing the number of villages involved. Rather than working with five villages as initially planned, the program worked with 88. The new approach also increased the amount of forest land involved. Following the various extensions, the initial EOP target for “number of hectares under improved NRM management” was raised to 8,000 ha from 3,000 ha. The program has brought 10,000 ha of forest under improved management. If Gba community forest (14,000 ha), and ENNR (13,000 ha) are included the total will be 37,000 ha. Finalization, approval, and implementation of management plans will further reinforce this progress.

The tension between administrative standards and community capacity. Given the very low level of development of Liberia’s rural communities, seemingly simple requirements for authorization may in fact pose significant barriers. LRCFP staff has been aware of this issue. The review of community forestry best practices conducted by the program in 2008, “Lessons Learned Elsewhere” states that, “Liberia will do well to ensure that the CRL and any implementing regulations and guidelines reflect community interests, capacity, and ownership in community forest management.” Later, as the CRL was being drafted, program staff argued against a longer “prescriptive” version of the law which set out, “[t]ime-consuming and complex procedures that may exceed community capacity or manageable interest” (LRCFP Quarterly Report 3). Eventually a shorter “framework” law was enacted. But even this law and, especially, the regulations developed to implement it and the process LRCFP employed in the pilot sites, are not within the capacity of Liberia’s communities.

It is normal for requirements to be more detailed as they progress from law, through regulations to guidance. In this case, they also became more challenging to implement. The CRL specifies what appears to be a very low threshold for communities, declaring among its principles that “All forest resources on community forest lands are owned by local communities.” The CRL also excludes the FDA from the regulation of these resources (Section 2.2.b). While the law imposes responsibilities on communities, principally to establish certain institutions and develop forest management plans, the regulations establish stiff requirements to meet these responsibilities. To be authorized, communities must first submit a written application and pay a \$250 application fee. The development of applications can entail considerable work. For just this first step of the process, LRCFP staff conducted a one day workshop to explain the law and regulations and develop the demand document for the Gba community.

Authorization comes in the form of a Community Forestry Agreement which contains a map of the forest, names of management bodies and a constitution. The community must then submit a forest management plan for approval by the FDA. The regulations also require communities to open two bank accounts and have annual audits conducted. LRCFP has determined that CAs must also be incorporated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Few if any of Liberia's communities would be able to negotiate this process without assistance. A partial list of support LRCFP provided pilot communities includes:

- Workshops and training to develop community capacity in: forestry management planning, demarcation, the CRL, zoning and inventories, relationship building, natural resources use & management, finance & procurement, conflict mediation, and NRM rule making;
- transportation to meetings outside of the community;
- a portion of the \$250 application fees;
- the services of a lawyer to review pilot community constitutions and by-laws;
- the services of a lawyer to facilitate the probation of constitutions and by-laws; and
- the drafting of the community management plans.

The LRCFP 2008 "Lessons from Elsewhere" document describes governmental requirement of a management plan as "micro-management" that may impede the creation of community forests and unfairly favor better-resourced communities. The paper argues that "only the most basic," information should be required. This contrasts with the management plans developed through LRCFP. The program document "How to Create a Community Forest Management Plan" is a 114 page manual that proposes a 105 line, eleven chapter management plan outline. The 62 page rough draft "Numopoh Community Forest Management Plan" also suggests that the model being developed contains a level of complexity considerably beyond the imaginable means of the members of the four pilot communities. (Evaluation team members were told that the Numopoh document is a draft and that LRCFP staff intends to simplify it.)

Not only will these procedural requirements test the capacity of communities, they will challenge the FDA who prior to authorizing communities must conduct socio-economic surveys, demarcate the forest land area, consult with adjacent communities and assist in the resolution of any conflicts. They must also review applications and management plans. During the implementation of the agreement, the FDA must monitor and evaluate the communities and maintain a central registry of the documents produced, as well as resolve conflicts, and provide capacity building support and technical and financial advice to communities. In the pilot communities where the FDA has performed these responsibilities it has done so with strong hands-on support from LRCFP.

As it stands, the process described in the regulations and implemented through LRCFP sets a model which may hinder the growth of community forestry in Liberia and disadvantage communities faced with the rapid expansion of commercial concessions. It may prove, in effect, to work against the principal stated in the CRL that "All forest resources on community forest lands are owned by local communities."

The centralized approach to government administration. Members of the Nimba and Sinoe CF institutions interviewed clearly feel they have gained control over their forests relative to the FDA. Interviewees repeatedly stated, "This is [now] our forest!", and that FDA agents

can no longer “come into your house to check your soup” (to see if you are cooking bushmeat.) This transformation has not been easy. LRCFP reports and interviews with staff indicate that the program has been working with a government agency reluctant to lose its authority.

International experience on the success of community forestry efforts has nevertheless demonstrated that national policy must grant significant authority to communities for them to succeed, including macro-level policy limits on efforts by line-ministries to retain control or extract benefits from newly formed groups (Agrawal, 2007 ; Dietz et al. 2003; Ostrom 2009). LRCFP had limited success in this regard, starting with the regulations to the CRL which grant the FDA hands-on authority to:

- Review and approved the authorization of community forests
- Renew agreements every 15 years
- Review management plans and require CFMBs to modify them
- Review detailed project proposals prior to any timber harvesting activities
- Veto any third-party businesses for medium or large-scale timber operations
- Impose fines, suspensions and sanctions on persons and forest communities
- Revoke authorized status of communities

With regard to this power to revoke authorization, the “Learning from Experiences” document produced under LRCFP (December 2008) expresses concern that it may, “lead to fragile and revocable rights, and can create uncertainty and insecurity in the CF and Management Agreement.”

The regulations posit that the FDA has the capacity to play a supportive, objective role relative to communities, providing technical assistance and strengthening the sustainable management of forests unbiased by powerful governmental or private interests. As experience in other countries has shown, including those reviewed in the Learning from Experiences document produced under LRCFP, this is unlikely.

Powerful political interests. The most contentious element of the enacted version of the CRL, according to interviews and LRCFP documentation, was the participation of Senators and Representatives in community institutions. LRCFP, FDA staff, and members of CF institutions all expressed the fear that such national level politicians would influence the CF institutions to their own advantage. Yet, despite the efforts of civil society institutions, the community members mobilized by them and LRCFP, the intentions of FDA staff, and the advice of LRCFP staff themselves, the CRL includes the requirement that members of the legislature be included in both the CA and the Executive Committee of the CA.

Interviews suggest that LRCFP efforts played a significant role in this weakening of the position of national legislators, both by supporting the public vetting of the draft regulations, and through provision of technical and legal advice in the drafting of the regulations. While the regulations follow the CRL on this point, they severely undercut the influence of the members of the County Legislative Caucus by excluding them from leadership positions. This also may be attributed in large part to the efforts of LRCFP staff.

Challenges originating at the local level

Existing claims on pilot forest lands. In establishing community forests, LRCFP has had to work with communities to clarify tenure relationships. These challenges considerably slowed down the progress of the program; they also set the stage for important achievements. The collaborative management of the Bleih forest by the Zor and Gba communities represents significant success in this regard, as does the co-management agreement of the ENNR, which had been a locus of conflict between communities well prior to the launch of LRCFP. A number of individual claims and deeds have also been noted and addressed by the program. The overlapping claims of the Gba community, ArcelorMittal Liberia and the FDA in northern Nimba County remain the most stubborn, unresolved, example.

Biophysical constraints. LRCFP has faced a number of challenges in establishing successful community forests resulting from the nature of the forests themselves. 1) The most obvious biophysical factor is the absence of clear physical boundaries – such as streams or ridges – between forests. This has cost the program time as staff worked with communities to mitigate conflict over the limits of their control. 2) Shifting cultivation presents another yet more subtle boundary issue, as it blurs the difference between forest and agricultural land, creating in forests agricultural rights that have had to be renegotiated as farmers lost rights in the fallow lands found in secondary forests. The quarterly reports note this challenge in the Bleih forest in particular. 3) Monitoring and patrolling the forests may also pose a challenge to community forestry institutions; it has already been a point of debate in the rule creation process in the pilot communities. Community members identified hunting at night as especially difficult to monitor. 4) The small size of the forests and the low value of their resources – stemming in part from of the distance to markets – have made it more difficult to design institutions “light” enough to be supported by the limited funding that may be drawn from them.

Challenging characteristics of the pilot communities. International research has identified a number of factors that commonly challenge local community forestry schemes. While the evaluation team was unable to interview community members, documentation review and interviews with staff, CFMB, CA, and champion group members suggest characteristics that made fostering healthy local CF institutions more difficult.

1) *Level of development.* While development projects often target remote underdeveloped communities, the LRCFP pilot sites, especially Sinoe, have attributes that challenge all communities attempting to manage collective resources. Ease of communication, for example, has consistently proven important internationally (Dietz, T. et al. 2003). The dispersed nature of these communities and the absence of vehicles and all-season roads inhibit the creation of dense social networks and a climate of trust. No roads connect the Sinoe villages to each other, nor is there phone coverage. The members of the pilot communities self-define themselves into clan and multi-clan groups with a clear, recognized, tradition of unity; they are nevertheless geographically dispersed, and were severely disrupted during the country’s civil conflicts. These conditions have slowed the work of LRCFP staff as the program has staff found it necessary to provide extensive training in cooperation and conflict management.

Community resources to overcome these challenges are also limited. In addition to social capacity, a certain level of education and technical capacity also facilitates community forestry (Agrawal 2001). The LRCFP pilot communities fall very low on the scale in both these regards, and have required extensive investment by the program in literacy and

technical training. This low level of community development not only challenged LRCFP staff, it will challenge communities to manage and monitor their forests in a coordinated manner well into the future.

2) *Heterogeneity and power relationships.* “Community forestry can risk asserting primacy to local power elites, despite widespread celebration of its democratic principles” (Charnley, 2007). New institutions developed to manage community forests can be greatly weakened by clear social divisions (Agarwal, 2007). As elites take control of the new resources introduced, existing inequalities become exaggerated. In recognition of this fact, the midterm evaluation suggested, that the program “consider developing an explicit plan for understanding and mitigating elite capture”.

LRCFP documentation provides little insight into power and wealth relationships in the pilot communities. The draft community profiles produced in 2008 do not address wealth within the communities thoroughly enough to draw any conclusions. They do suggest, however, that striking visible differences in the distribution of status and wealth are not present. Perhaps on this basis program staff made the assumption that no entrenched differences in wealth and power were present in such small, remote and underdeveloped communities. Numerous studies give little doubt that they nevertheless exist (Richards: 2005). Potentially significant social divisions in the pilot sites include:

- **Gender.** The program did not conduct extensive analysis of gender relationships in the target communities, opting, it appears, to assume that gender issues would be addressed by quotas stipulating women’s participation in community forest institutions and livelihood activities, and by selecting activities that will benefit women. Although the profiles do describe general differences in land ownership by gender, as well as gender division of labor, this information will not be sufficient to monitor any changes, either negative or positive in women’s status as a result of the program’s interventions.
- **“New” community members.** Nor did the program address the standing of “strangers” in communities. In interviews members of the CAs in Sinoe stated that “even if a stranger stays 1000 years, he still will be a stranger.” LRCFP staff reports that members of the Land Commission, through interactions with communities supported by the program, came to the realization that access to land by newcomers could be an issue. Sinoe CA members report that in their communities “strangers” must access the community through his or her host, the Town Chief. This is true even in the context of the new institutions. If a stranger seeks a permit to harvest NTFPs in a community forest, he would have to go through the Town Chief, who would ask the CFMB.
- **Differences between towns.** Any assessments program staff made of the differences in characteristics of the towns and villages composing the communities have not been recorded in program documents, and it is unclear how seriously this issue was considered. Important differences do exist, however. In Numopoh, only five of the 36 towns and villages have direct access to the forest; the remaining 31 towns and villages are closer to eight other “unmanaged” forests. In Nimba County, a town called Camp 4 borders the Gba forest, but is not included in the forest community. It is composed primarily of persons who moved to the area before the wars to work the now-closed LAMCO mine. LRCFP staff reports that they have limited access to farmland and rely heavily on hunting. The average population of the towns and villages of the Nitrian community is 30 people, except for Kabada Town which has a population of 1125.

- **Links to persons living in Monrovia may be of greater importance.** The influence of such distant family members may imbalance even the smallest, apparently homogenous village. As was noted in the midterm evaluation: “Through extended socioeconomic profiling, LRCFP could map outlines of power and authority at the sites, including patron-client linkages that would show where pressure for quick return is likely to come from when community forests are allocated.”

Given the time and resource constraints, and the challenges program staff faced in building relationships of trust with community members, it is not surprising that they did not document and address these differences more thoroughly. These differences may, however, become important and lead to greater inequality or institutional stress if the forest management institutions in these small communities are successful and perceived as a source of significant wealth.

Sustainability

The challenges presented above have rendered more difficult LRCFP’s task of establishing community. Many of them also threaten the continued existence of the pilot forests. In this sub-section we review an additional set of challenges that commonly weaken the long term viability of community forest institutions. They include the integration, or lack thereof, with existing governance institutions; the burdens of management costs; the internal integrity of the CF institutions; and the nature of the rules that define those institutions.

Institutional plurality. The regulations to the CRL require that authorized communities maintain an effective management structure. For this, the CRL requires the creation of new single-purpose institutions -- Community Assemblies, their Executive Committees, and the Community Forest Management Bodies. The establishment and functioning of these new institutions will create new costs, costs that would not exist if existing local governments managed community forests through the addition of powers and responsibilities. In addition to creating new management burdens, the formation of new independent management bodies risks creating overlapping authorities. The midterm assessment noted, “There is confusion over local (county level) government role and accountability in CF and as the program evolves this may turn out to be a major bottleneck.”

While we assume LRCFP staff was aware of these considerations, prior to the enactment of the CRL, LRCFP facilitated communities in creating Forest Management Bodies that too were not integrated into the existing structure. The composition of local government in Liberia helps explain this decision, and why the eventual CRL did not grant formal local government institutions the authority to manage community forests.

First, we must recognize that the country’s decentralization initiative has not advanced to the point that democratically elected government structures exist at the local level. The local governmental structure that does exist -- the town, clan and paramount chiefs -- are elected government officials -- although elections haven’t been held in over fifteen years -- they receive a salary and are accountable to the national government. Community members interviewed did not describe them as representatives of their interests.

In the face of this absence of viable local government institutions and the historical distrust between rural populations and the national government, first LRCFP staff, then the CRL and the regulations, supported the creation of new institutions independent of the existing government, despite the additional costs and potential confusions this would create. The Community Assemblies of the pilot communities do not contain Town, Paramount, or Clan Chiefs; they are composed of locally elected elders and leaders elected specifically for the CA in a general assembly. This adaptation to the challenge of creating CF institutions in the context of weak and distrusted local governance institutions may be the only solution for now. As Liberia's governmental reform decentralizes government authority, it will be important that the roles and responsibilities of institutions are absorbed into the functions of local governing bodies.

Management costs. The draft outline of a management plan included in the document "How to Create a Community Forest Management Plan" proposed eight sub-committees of the CA. The Zor agreement with the FDA includes four sub-committees, in addition to the CA, the CA Executive Committee, and the CFMB. Financial resources will be necessary to support the functioning of these subcommittees and their parent institutions. Their members are dispersed across dozens of villages and their responsibilities cover a large array of topics concerning forests.

Internationally, the ability of community forestry institutions to manage benefits generated from their forests has proven to be a critical factor for success (Dietz et al. 2003; Menzies, 2007). The regulations list a number of possible sources of income. Communities may draw upon fees and charges from community forest activities and penalties paid by people who breach community forest rules. LRCFP has provided an additional source of financing these institutions by placing the cassava mills and palm oil presses the program introduced into the villages under the management of the CA and CFMB, and including in the MOUs with these groups the stipulation that the CFMB receive 30% of use fees. However, when asked how they would finance their institutions, members of the CAs and CFMBs interviewed hardly mentioned these sources. They don't consider them sufficient.

Instead, CA and CFMB members cited another potential source of income, based on the fact that the CRL and regulations allow communities to establish contracts with timber companies to log their forests. The regulations provide that communities receive 55% of bid premiums and 55% of land rental fees. They may be disappointed. Pending the Gba agreement, only the 36 towns and villages of Numopoh have a forest larger than 5,000 ha., and that is only a little over 7,000 ha. Despite the hopes of the community members, larger companies will have little interest in the forests of the pilot communities. Indeed, the regulations make this supposition, and state that "because small scale commercial activities are undertaken by communities themselves," logging of areas smaller than 5,000 hectares are subject to less strict conditions of management plans agreed upon with the FDA.

The pilot communities are likely to be obliged to scale-back their hopes and rely on small-scale "pit sawyers." Even there, though, LRCFP staff have proposed that communities wait five or ten years before engaging in the logging of their forests, and some, though not all, of the CA and CFMB members interviewed repeated this cautious plan. The pilot communities, rather than being overwhelmed by new resources, may be challenged to produce enough resources to sustain the working of the institutions that keep community forestry running.

(NB: Other community forests may not have this same challenge. While commercial logging companies may not be interested in forests of the size of the LRCFP pilot communities, Liberia's timber companies *are* interested by the possibility of logging community forests. The regulations define community forests as areas under 49,999 hectares, yet they also describe the conditions for logging lands up to 250,000 hectares. If powerful interests exploit this ambiguity and other loopholes and find they can create community forests of sizes near 50,000 the LRCFP model will no longer apply. Although the legislation and regulations were developed with LRCFP support, community forests created at this scale will most likely not be community forestry as conceived by the program nor USAID.)

Internal institutional integrity. Liberia's community forestry institutions will be unable to perform their tasks successfully if they do not fairly and openly represent and respond to the interests of the members of their communities. An absence of this capacity will threaten their sustainability (Dietz et al. 2003; Menzies, 2007). Program staff faced the challenge of fostering authentic institutions, owned and established by communities for their own sake, and not on the expectation of rewards from the program. And staff needed to foster these institutions on a timeline, meet certain equity and gender expectations, and then help communities restructure them once the CRL was enacted.

Program staff approached this challenge by reviving and repurposing existing institutions, then formalizing them. The LRCFP profiles cite numerous town and clan-based institutions. The quarterly reports indicate that three of the communities, all except Zor, had existing community forest management institutions prior to the program. For example, the Nitrian Development Association, created in 1937, managed a forest in that community with support from the Society for Conservation of Nature of Liberia prior to 2000. Also noted were the little understood "secret societies" that may form an important force in local power structures and, according to the Nitrian profile, play a "key role in forest management and conservation." Although LRCFP staff did not have the time and resources to fully study any of these institutions, they considered none of them to be particularly vibrant, and believe the FMBs largely replaced them in personnel and responsibilities.

With the enactment of the CRL, LRCFP worked with communities to create their CAs and CFMBs following the guidelines of the law. The original FMB members were elected by the communities, while the CFMB members were selected by the CA. Representatives of the Sinoe communities reported that this resulted in a moderate change in membership. Of the ten CFMB members in the two communities, six were previously members of the FMBs of the two communities. CAs are new institutions, required by law. Their members are elected by secret ballot in general meetings of the communities. CA members interviewed report that their Assembly is composed of elders, women leaders, and leaders of youth groups.

Given these requirements, will the CAs and CFMBs represent and respond to the needs of the communities? Will they distribute forest resources equitably? The evaluation team, who in the end was able to visit only one of the communities, and spoke only with program participants, did not find indications to the contrary. Interviews with community members in Nimba County indicated that the CFMBs are expected to use their resources to support public works, such as clearing community roads. This indicates a certain acceptance of the institution, although more research would be necessary to answer the question definitively.

On the other hand, LRCFP clearly drove the creation of the institutions of the pilot communities, to the point of seeking legal assistance in drafting their constitutions. When

asked why the Town Chief accepted these new upstart institutions, one AGRHA trainer who had worked closely in one of the communities for two years, responded that the CFMB was respected because it attracted donors, NGOs, and government officials. LRCFP created a model with the expectation that it be replicated. But it was not a model for communities themselves. Indeed, the manual “How to Establish Community Forest Management Institutions” is a facilitator’s manual. It assumes that an outsider will foster the creation of these institutions, not someone from the community. It is questionable that external agents can foster legitimate local institutions in this way. In the long term, the process that creates them may decrease their capacity to remain grounded and stable.

Locally enforceable, easily understood community rules. The origin and quality of rules make a difference in the sustainability of community forestry institutions. “Rules that are easy to understand and enforce, locally devised, take into account differences in types of violations, help deal with conflicts, and help hold users and officials accountable are most likely to lead to effective governance” (Agarwal, 2007). LRCFP staff took pains to work with communities to develop the rules written into the constitutions and forest management plans of the pilot communities. Just as forest management institutions existed previously, all of the communities had rules regarding use of forest resources prior to LRCFP’s arrival. Community profiles indicate a number of these, including the fact that that Nitrian had a “forest reserve,” and charged pit sawyers 20% of the value of timber they extracted from other forests. Workshops in the communities helped articulate and revise rules. (See Section VIII, Communications, for further details.) In the process of developing the co-management plan for the ENNR, co-management committee members conducted a survey, to learn uses of the forest and help them decide out how to compensate for those uses. The “Resource harvesting and use rules and penalties” for the Nitrian community reviewed for this evaluation consist of bans on hunting or harvesting specific animals and products, seasonal limits, and limits on methods. They appear clear, uncomplicated, and similar in nature to rules found in other forest communities. At 24 pages, the constitution for the Zor Community Assembly reviewed for this evaluation, presents a more complicated, less self-evident, set of rules. Nevertheless, it appears that in making these rules LRCFP staff have to a large extent succeeded in “formalizing the informal.”

Yet, so far, only their first iteration has been produced. Much yet remains to be done to raise community awareness of their new rules and test them through their application. They must be translated back from legal documents to local knowledge in a form available to these largely oral cultures. So far, they are not well known. In interviews for this evaluation, CA and CFMB members were well aware that they had constitutions, but as the program reached its close at the time of the evaluation, they were able to cite only a few of the various “resource harvesting” rules. Indeed, evaluators encountered one rule, a ban on poisoning fish, over six times in separate situations, to the virtual exclusion of any other rules. (Informants were not questioned on their knowledge of their constitutions.)

In fact, many CA and CFMB members interviewed were not aware that forest management rules even had been written down, or that FDA approved management plans were required of the communities. People will need to understand these rules, if only to adapt and modify them over time. Very few sets of rules can remain static and newly developed sets of rules in rapidly changing contexts often need extensive tinkering. Unfortunately, much of that malleability has been removed because these rules were printed on computers and approved by both the FDA and LRCFP. Communities are unlikely to rewrite these documents, given that they did not write them in the first place. The sustainability of these

systems of rules will depend on an ongoing balance between local origins and articulation, presumably by outsiders, so that they can continue to be “locally devised.”

Demographic changes may destabilize community forest institutions. Population growth over time may increase pressure on agricultural land and forest resources and challenge management institutions, especially if it results in increased cross-border incursions from Guinea. Other demographic changes may have greater immediate impact. Since November 2010 over 150,000 Ivorian refugees have also crossed the border into Nimba County. While many of these refugees stay in camps, many also reside with family and friends – some of whom they hosted as refugees from Liberia when the tables were turned. According to LRCFP staff, a refugee camp – the Zorgowee Refugee Camp -- was initially established in one of the pilot communities, before it was resettled. Such dramatic changes in population increase pressure on forest resources and the demand to clear forest for agriculture.

Tenure claims. (Discussed in Section V)

Implications for future programs

Continue to support pilot forests and continue to use as models and sources of lessons learned. While LRCFP has made significant progress in supporting the development of community forests in the pilot communities, much work is necessary to support the communities while they institutionalize the new changes. At the time of the final evaluation, management plans had not been finalized, submitted to the FDA for approval, or presented in their final forms to the communities. Further, it may still be necessary to provide communities support if elite interests from either within or outside of the community attempt to gain control over forest management.

Revision of the regulations. The findings of this evaluation suggest that USAID should consider initiating a process of reviewing the regulations for potential revision. To the weaknesses in the regulations described in the next Section on LTPR, in this section we have identified the procedural hurdles in the regulations as a break on the widespread adoption of community forestry, and the secure continuation of agreements once they are approved. Given the clear lack of capacity of the FDA to manage the forest, the global research on the relative success of communities to manage their own forests when given the leeway to determine their own rules, the technical requirements and procedural constraints serve effectively as barriers to communities to engaging rights granted in the CRL.

Reinforce FDA capacity to support and defend community forests. Future USAID support for community forestry in Liberia must address this challenge. More than technical capacity, the FDA needs to define and establish its role as an advocate for community forests and forest communities. Without a strong governmental advocate, given the significantly greater resources dedicated to conservation and, especially, commercial uses of forest land, community forestry will remain a marginal activity in the landscape. While a strategy of “three Cs” suggests equivalence between commercial forestry, conservation, and community forestry, equilibrium is hardly being implemented on the ground. Among other activities, future CF funding in Liberia should continue to work with FTI, helping to build FDA support for and capacity in CF through more short courses.

Work to reduce procedural barriers. Further investment in community forestry in Liberia should focus on developing means to reduce the barriers for communities to establish and maintain community forests. As explained above, communities not receiving program support will not be able to implement the rigorous model required by the regulations, and implemented by LRCFP without substantial support – a situation which only creates a bias towards communities with significant support, potentially from timber companies.

Develop realistic systems for forest management. In addition to enabling communities to more easily gain rights to own and manage the forests they have used and occupied for centuries, future work on community forestry in Liberia should develop realistic systems for forest management that are simple and direct enough for communities and the FDA to implement. Management plans should be based on open community deliberations, drafted by CFMB members, understood and agreed upon in their entirety by the Community Assembly. Given the oral nature of the communities, one might expect that much of the plans be transmitted orally and committed to common understanding in that form. Given that literacy is limited in these communities, plans should be as brief, direct, and simple as possible. (As noted in the best practices in CF document, the 2004 FAO document “Experiences with Developing Simpler Forest Management Plans” provides guidance and examples).

Build local documentation capacity. All official documents (constitutions, management plans) have been drafted by LRCFP. Begin building local capacity through NAEAL support to teach people to document events at the local level. This would help peace building as well as strengthen local ownership of institutions. (NAEAL can begin working on this in the bridging period.)

Further exploration of the chainsawing and hunting value chains. These two most prevalent means of extracting wealth from the forests of the pilot communities are potential sources of financing for community institutions. Chainsawing Regulation 115-11, recently promulgated by the FDA requires chainsawers to obtain a permit from the FDA to work in community forests. Future USAID investment in CF in Liberia should include effort to clarify the role of these two value chains in community forestry in Liberia.

Include affected communities in the mix. Currently, many of Liberia’s communities are losing forest rights to timber concessions. Despite the fact that program objectives focused on community forestry, LRCFP staff found it necessary and useful to provide assistance to the FDA in their work on defining and protecting the rights of communities situated near timber concessions. The program established the National Benefits Sharing Trust because “no one else was doing it.” Using skills provided by LRCFP, the Community Forestry division of the FDA has helped establish 27 CFDCs. Work in this domain may indeed impact many more communities for fewer donor resources than establishing community forests.

Section V Land Tenure and Property Rights

Background

The origin and early evolution of the LTPR component

The clarification of land tenure and property rights poses serious challenges for governments in post-conflict situations. In Liberia, the stakes are high, as disputes over land could provoke a return to broad conflict. Yet the government has had limited means to address this problem. Upon the conclusion of the civil war, the GOL had only a weak and incomplete legal framework and scant institutional resources to respond to challenge.

When establishing community forests, it is essential that governments provide clear and secure rights to communities -- rights over land as well as forests, and trees. The high potential value of Liberia's forest lands and projects, and expected competition over those resources, increased the urgency of clarifying the distribution of these rights. The approach taken by the GOL in tackling land tenure issues has seen significant clarification in recent years. When LRCFP was designed it was reasonable to think that the program, working with the FDA, could address land tenure issues facing community forestry.

The inclusion of a specific objective dedicated to LTPR was both important and timely. The Governance Commission (GC) had declared the need to create a Land Commission (LC) to address land tenure and property rights issues. For its part, the FDA had initiated the process to develop a Community Rights Law (CRL) concerning rights over land and forests at the community level. The LRCFP design assumed that a land tenure and community forestry program could work with these initiatives to develop a successful community forestry program in Liberia, fortified by a legal and institutional framework and process for securing rights in forest lands to communities. Thus, the objective of Component 2 was stated as: "Land Tenure and Property Rights systems developed and strengthened to secure rights for all natural resource users/owners."

However, in the first months of LRCFP, USAID and the prime contractor TT/ARD realized that delays in the establishment of a Land Commission would impact on the program's ability to achieve this element of LRCFP. It also became clear relatively early on in the program that other arms of the government would resist a law granting FDA unilateral authority in the distribution of forest land. As a result, TT/ARD requested a modification to the document defining their SOW, the program Task Order. Task Order Modification 2, signed in the third quarter of the program, recognized the new constraints and shifted LTPR activities to "focus on informing policy development with emphasis on forest lands, supporting the Land Commission, and assisting in public information and participation in policy development." The modification replaced the goal of creating secure rights in land and property with the goal of strengthening rights in forest access, use, and management. LTPR issues were to be clarified, not resolved. In fact, Modification 2 defined LTPR itself as "agreed community rights to access, use, benefit from and potentially own forest land." At the county level, the objective was stepped back from resolving claims to land to resolving forest conflicts. Quarterly Report 3 describes this very significant deflation of Component 2

this way: “land ownership issues are unlikely to be resolved during the life of the program. Nevertheless, codification of customary rights to forest resources (Component 1) and pilot implementation (Component 3) are a significant step in recognizing land and resource tenure.”

The context: land tenure and property rights and institutions in Liberia

Liberia has not articulated an integrated LTPR policy. Numerous laws deal with land, property and natural resources. They provide some policy direction, but are disparate and overlapping and remain to be harmonized into coherent policy. Some of them also need to be updated. Major laws that deal with LTPR include the Hinterland Law (1949), the Aborigine Law (1956) and the Public Lands Law (1973, but actually dating to the 19th century). The Hinterland and Aborigine laws provide communities the valuable option of registering either ownership of land (Hinterland law) or use rights in land (Aborigine law). The status of the Aborigines law reflects some of the ambiguity over Liberia’s legal framework. Legislators did not include this law in the Liberian Codes Revised in 1973. This omission has provoked debate over whether the omission was intentional, and constitutes the repeal of the law, or unintentional. The question remains to be tested, as no community has registered land under either of these laws.

Currently, the Public Lands Law constitutes the only modern legal tool for groups and individuals to acquire secure tenure rights over land, including customary land – land claimed through occupation and use over time. Yet this law is also in flux. In February of 2010 the President declared a moratorium on the sale of public land at the request of the Land Commission. Interim Guidelines and Procedures for the Sale of Public Land, drafted by the Land Commission and approved in March 2011 take the place of the 1973 Public Land law.

Bruce and Kanneh (2011), in a review of current civil land law in Liberia, observe that revision of the whole framework is required as “many of the more fundamental laws have been rendered seriously inadequate by changing conditions, needs and values”.

Confusion characterizes the mandates of the institutions that are slowly emerging to address these weaknesses in defining rights in land. The FDA, created in 1976, remains weak but is rebuilding. It administers rights to forested lands, as does the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy (MLM&E). The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), through their county land commissioners, addresses land administration at the county level. The Governance Commission recently initiated research in decentralized governance and local institutions. And the Land Commission, with the mandate to address and clarify key land tenure issues, officially launched only in March of 2010.

Nor does the government project a strong presence in land tenure regulation at the community level. Town chiefs alone represent the central government in villages and towns. Their presence simultaneously brings the national government close and alienates rural communities. Indeed, some observers argue that the centralized decision making, much of it relating to land tenure, marginalized local communities, and formed a root cause of the country’s prolonged conflict.

Analysis of the CRL and Regulations

The Community Rights Law with Respect to Forest Land

The process to develop the CRL

The CRL development process was well underway when LRCPF launched in December of 2007. Program staff found themselves amid a polarized process in which two groups had formed each with its own ideas on the objectives for the law. One group, composed largely of a sub-set of the country's NGOs, sought to address the marginalized position of communities through a rights-based approach. One foundational principle of their argument was that communities already own their land and the forests. Land and forest are interlinked; communities have established ownership over both of these resources through historic occupation. Land that is not deeded should be considered community land, and consequently, the CRL should recognize ownership rights over land as well as forests, and include mechanisms to formalize this ownership. This strategy created conflict with governmental representatives, especially the FDA, who argued that all non-deeded land is public land, not community land.

Another group, which included the FDA, and some conservation NGOs such as Fauna and Flora International (FFI), argued that the CRL should limit its scope to rights in forests and not address land ownership, under the argument that the CRL should not anticipate the future work of the LC. The GC which was pushing for the creation of the LC supported this position. The provisional five year work plan of the Land Commission included policy and legal land tenure reform activities to address community land. This group also argued that the CRL should be written as a broad "framework" law, which would be able to incorporate lessons learned through practical experience through amendments at a later stage.

The confrontation between the two groups took alarming proportions. Different drafts of the law were developed through isolated parallel processes and several drafts made it to various levels of the legislature. Both the House and the Senate passed one version before it was ultimately held up before being signed by the President. Finally, a compromise version passed the legislature in September 2009, which President signed in October of that year.

LRCPF engaged in these deliberations and played an important role enabling the law to be passed. Although some program staff clearly had a position – program quarterly reports describe the version not signed by the President as overly proscriptive – they also played a role in clarifying issues, convening meetings and facilitating discussions among the various actors.

The President signed the CRL in the third quarter of the second year of what was to be a two year program. The program's design was built on the expectation that the law would be passed in the early months of LRCPF. Program staff had not waited for the passage of the law to create forest management institutions, and once the law was passed it provided a legal basis for the existing pilot community forests.

Assessment of CRL Contents

Passage of the CRL put community forestry strongly on the agenda of the GOL and the FDA. Whereas the National Forest Management Strategy of 2007 presented community forestry

as confined to few selected areas, based on a land suitability analysis, the CRL extends the potential of community forestry to all lands over which communities have established rights. While the CRL does not deal with ownership rights over land, which it refers to the Land Commission, it does provide guidance on how communities can establish rights to use and manage certain areas of forested land, for a determined period of time.

Notwithstanding this limited scope, the CRL can be considered as a law that advances the rights of communities over forests and lands significantly beyond those conferred by the NFRL (2006) for two main reasons:

- The definition of “community based forest management” establishes a link between community land rights and community forestry missing in the NFRL. Through this definition, the CRL serves as a basis for asserting existing community rights in community forestry not dependent upon permit by government. Further, the CRL definition of “community forest land” uses the term “ownership” to characterize that tenure relationship. The definition also states that “community forest land” is interchangeable with “community forest” which further tightens the relationship between land and forest. The definitions of “community land area” and “customary land” also convey that the control of this land is not by permit but by historic right. Thus, through these definitions, the CRL suggests that communities can claim rights over forested land by establishing evidence of their traditional occupation or traditional ownership. (Bruce and Kanneh, 2011)
- The CRL also broadens the potential use communities may make of their forests and takes community forestry out of the narrow sphere of self-sufficiency. The law supports the idea that communities may exploit forest resources in a commercial fashion and participate fully in markets as entrepreneurs rather than as subsistence actors. This major shift from the NFRL acknowledges that forest communities depend largely on certain forms of commercial exploitation for sustaining their livelihoods. On the other hand, the law implies that communities themselves are not capable to engage in the commercial exploitation of forest resources on their own. The CRL allows for commercial activities established through partnerships and the possible outsourcing exploitation to commercial entrepreneurs.

The Regulations to the CRL

Process to develop the regulations

In contrast to CRL, the LRCFP played a defining role in the development of the regulations to the CRL; in fact it took a lead in the process. There is no doubt that without the program there would be no regulations at this moment, and that community forestry would be supported less forcefully in law.

After the enactment of the CRL the LRCFP established a sub-contract with a national legal/policy consultant who is also the Chairman of the Inter-Ministerial Concession Commission, Willie Belleh of Subah-Belleh Associates. Belleh first carried out two stakeholder consultation workshops in April and May of 2010. These forums vetted the CRL and sought input into the development of implementing regulations. The April workshop reviewed the law and analyzed areas of conflict between it, the NFRL (2006), and the

Authority's "Ten Core Regulations". The workshop identified the following areas of possible conflict:

- FDA powers to regulate forest resources located in community forests;
- the obligation of forest communities to openly bid contracts with commercial interests; and
- the benefits communities are to derive from commercial operators on community forests.

While it would have been better had these conflicts been identified and addressed prior to the law's enactment, identification by the consultant advanced the process. In his review, Belleh suggested specific means of addressing these inconsistencies in the regulations.

LRCFP continued work on the development of the regulations with Subah-Belleh Associates for the remainder of the program. It also relied strongly on the international LTPR expert to facilitate the process, and on the program's third COP who is well acquainted with the process of law development. The steps taken are as follows:

- Workshop in May 2010 to identify specific CRL issues that required further regulation.
- Production of a "zero draft" by the national consultant.
- Discussion of the draft in four regional workshops held in October 2010, and one national workshop in December 2010.
- Production of a final draft incorporating comments from the workshops.
- Application of FDA Regulation 101-07 to the process. This regulation stipulates the procedures on Public Participation in the Promulgation of regulations, Codes and Manuals. It prescribes that new regulations are subject to, among other things, (i) public notice in three national newspapers; (ii) discussion in three regional meetings; (iii) advertisement of regional meetings on regional radio at least two weeks before the holding of the meetings; and (iv) a public review and comment period.

Assessment of the contents of the regulations

The evaluation team has identified the following weaknesses in the regulations:

1) They do not reflect the spirit of the law they interpret and introduce new elements not found in the CRL itself, including:

- The regulations grant FDA the power to grant rights to access, management, use and benefit from forest resources on community forest land. This erodes the assertion in the CRL that communities have rights in their forests not by permit but by historic right.
- The principles of "Authorized Community" and the "Community Forest Agreement" are not developed in the law itself and are against its fundamentals. These concepts even put in doubt whether community members are allowed to access their "traditionally owned lands" or their "forest resources for which the community has acquired customary tenure or other forms of proprietorship or guardianship".

2) While the CRL characterizes the major role of the FDA to be one of support, the regulations give "participation" a meaning different, if not the converse, from international best practice. They propose leadership roles for the FDA, with support and consent from communities:

- The regulations substitute a socio-economic survey conducted by the FDA for the self-identification by the community. Communities may participate in the activity and provide consent. The community also has the opportunity to provide input on the final report.
- The FDA conducts the survey, demarcation and mapping of the area, with the participation of the community and other public institutions.

3) Several articles and provisions of the regulations are inconsistent with the CRL, including:

- In the law, communities may allocate medium-scale commercial activities on a non-competitive basis, while in the regulations they are subject to the stricter provisions of the Public Procurement and Concessions Act.
- In the CRL communities receive 55% of all revenue/income generated from large scale commercial activities, whereas in the regulations communities receive 55% of the bid premiums and 55% of the land rental fee.

4) The regulations do not address three important issues:

- Procedures to identify customary lands over which communities can extend a community forest management right.
- Rights in forests and forestland of communities not under formal CF agreements with the FDA. While the CRL makes broad assertions regarding the rights of communities, the regulations grant rights to a severely limited number of communities by establishing requirements constituting what it terms a “program,” to which communities must apply to participate and which requires significant effort on the part of both the communities, and just as important, the FDA.
- The need and procedures for Community Associations to incorporate. (This absence was recognized by LRFCF staff, and the incorporation procedures included in the manual “How to Establish Community Forest Institutions.”)

Both LRFCF staff and the FDA are aware of some of these issues. Indeed, some of the inconsistencies are the result of an effort to mitigate provisions of the CRL considered less desirable, such as the absence of a requirement to openly bid medium-scale commercial activities on community forests. However, although they are well intended, these attempts to modify enacted law through regulations promulgated by one agency may give grounds to annul, or seriously weaken, the regulations. “Fixing” the law through the regulations may also rationalize inaction, and weaken momentum towards amending and improving the CRL itself. Interviews of LRFCF and USAID staff indicated some reticence to initiating the process for making the necessary changes to the CRL, mainly based on perceived risk that this would open the door to politicians interested in further weakening the current law.

While the regulations themselves are flexible and can be amended by the FDA, it is doubtful that the Authority will undertake this task in the near future. Indeed, LRFCF has already printed and distributed a draft form of the regulations in a booklet.

Implementation of the component

Timeline

Q1 12/07- 03/08

- Task Order awarded to TT/ARD (mid-December 2007)
 - Provides input to development of the Community Rights Law
 - Expectation that Land Commission will be soon established
- Q2 04/08 – 06/08
- Continued participation in, influence on, and financial support for, CRL discussions
 - Continued collaboration with the Governance Commission.
 - TT/ARD requests TO modification
- Q3 07/08 – 09/08
- LRFCFP supports nine page “framework” CRL. Congress approves 32 page version, which is not signed by the president.
 - Modification 2 approved, LTPR objective in program sharply limited
- Q4 10/08 – 12/08
- LRFCFP shares tenure information from pilot communities with GC
- Q5 01/09 – 03/09
- LRFCFP collaborates with GC. Brings GC to training, provides info from pilot communities
- Q7 07/09 – 09/09
- Consensus CRL and act to create Land Commission passed 9/09.
 - Members of the LC appointed. Workshop with LRFCFP experts
- Q8 10/09 – 12/09
- CRL signed
 - LC authorized
- Q9 01/10 – 03/10
- FDA begins work on regulations
 - Public consultation, legal analysis of the CRL
 - LRFCFP discussion with LC on looking at rural land issues
- Q12 10/10 – 12/10
- Regulations vetting process continues
 - Four regional workshops on the CRL seeking input
- Q13 1/11 – 3/11
- Land Commissioners visit pilot communities. Workshops held
- Q14 4/11 – 6/11
- Final approval of CRL regulations

Description of implementation

LRFCFP workplans evolved as the program was implemented. Here we describe program implementation against the activities of Workplan Five (January–August 2011), component

2: “Land tenure and property rights systems for forest lands developed and strengthened to secure rights for natural resource users/owners “.

Activity 2.1: Develop working relations with the Land Commission, relevant national-level agencies and other donor efforts

Prior to the creation of the Land Commission, the Governance Commission was dealing with emerging land issues in Liberia. Program quarterly reports note collaboration and information sharing with the GC at this point. In particular, LRCFP provided support and advice to technical staff of the GC contributing to the creation of the future LC.

Because the Land Commission was established much later than expected, by the time of this evaluation the program had only 18 months to engage. At the end of 2009, the LC invited the LRCFP LTPR specialist to contribute to a one week retreat to discuss the LC workplan which was still getting organized, and in November of 2010, the program included one Land Commissioner and one technical support staff in a study tour in Cross River State, Nigeria. This was the first real opportunity to expose the Commission to protected areas and community forestry policies and institutions.

LRCFP increased engagement with the LC in 2010 by inviting two commissioners and one technical staff to visit the pilot communities. The commissioners presented the findings of the visits to the LC and one commissioner visited Nimba County a second time and presented findings discussed by the LC in Monrovia to the local authorities and community representatives. At the time of the evaluation, LRCFP had also been participating in the Land Stakeholder Consultative Forum.

Activity 2.2: Strengthen working relationship with local governments

From the onset of the program, staff developed working relations with local governments in the pilot areas. LRCFP focused on informal institutions below the level of the Town Chief. While the program maintained contact at the county level, relationships were not extensive, particularly with land commissioners. In fact, the Nimba County Land Commissioner stated that he was only “aware of the existence of the project” since the end of 2010.

Activity 2.3: Build capacity in LTPR

LRCFP quarterly reports do not present a clear picture of training or other capacity building support for LTPR specifically. Under this activity heading, until the end of 2009 reported capacity building in LTPR consisted mainly of the development and demonstration of a model for community LTPR in community forest lands, and providing training to a cadre of individuals to address LTPR in forests lands. Since 2010, quarterly reports under this heading include activities that might fall better under other objectives and outputs, such as activities directly related to the implementation of the CRL, support to local forest institutions, general leadership training, and support and interaction with LC.

LRCFP developed a number of practical tools that address LTPR in community forestry, though sometimes only peripherally. Briefly, their LTPR content:

- *Community Profiles.* The four profiles LRCFP conducted and documented early in the program include information on land and resource tenure. Limited time was allotted to conduct the profiles, and they provide only a basic introduction to local issues.

The profiles remain in draft form, and CFMB members informed the evaluation team that these profiles were not yet restituted to the communities.

- *How to Establish Community Forest Management Institutions (draft)*. Developed in close collaboration with FDA, this manual takes the user through the process as outlined in the CRL and regulations. The manual includes a chapter on community boundary mapping which refers to possible overlapping claims between different communities, but is void of references to possible land rights and claims within a community's territory.
- *How to Create a Forest Management Plan (draft)*. The community profiling and boundary demarcation and conflict management sections refer to land commission data for compilation and analysis. This manual also includes important guidance on land use planning and the development of management plans, but does not refer to the need to better identify and understand different tenure situations. This omission is striking, given the number of other tenure rights and claims that often overlap with community forests. Examples of other such claims include private deeds, requests for group deeds, Tribal Land Certificates (for initiating a public land sale), claims to land on the basis of first clearance, claims on the basis of planted trees, commercial concessions, and state protected area.
- *Policy briefs*. LRCFP's second LTPR specialist produced four policy briefs. They have significant potential for future and broader use, not only for the FDA but for a larger public. Unfortunately, they represent a missed opportunity in capacity building as they were prepared without national expert involvement and appeared only at the end of the program. These well written briefs and highlight the following topics:
 - *Harvesting of NTFPs in Protected Areas*: addresses a core issue of community rights in Protected Areas, based on direct LRCFP experience. It can serve as a background document for the discussion between the LC and FDA on the possible future recognition of these rights and their nature.
 - *Creation of a buffer zone in Sapo National Park*: highlights issues of rights in and around protected areas, and identifies the need for further tools to be developed such as procedures for the creation of buffer zones, and the application of free prior and informed consent.
 - *Community versus communal forest*: highlights discrepancies on community rights between NFRL 2006 and CRL 2009. The note stresses that different laws are used by different interests groups (FFI as a proponent of a restrictive communal forestry model and LRCFP promoting a broader community forestry model as stipulated in the CRL) to achieve their objectives and recommends harmonization of concepts. The communal forest concept intends to exclude communities from exercising their management and use rights over certain areas under their jurisdiction, in contradiction to the provisions of the CRL. This goes back to the basic idea that community land may be considered as a residual category in the future.
 - *Harmonized training and capacity building for CFDC and CFMB*: whilst CFDCs and CFMBs are institutions intended to empower communities, they have different rationales for their existence. The note highlights well a number of challenges, differences of concept and their potential impact. It fails however to put the discussion in a wider context of decentralized governance. This note can be an important entry point for a future engagement with the Governance Commission.

Activity 2.4: Provide demand-driven STTA to support the Land Commission

LRCFP staff included a senior international LTPR specialist for the duration of the program. The first specialist to fill this role resigned in quarter nine of the program and was replaced the next quarter by a second, international specialist who remained until the end of the program. Apart from a temporary national legal consultant with very specific legal tasks, the program engaged no other national staff with experience in LTPR.

Workplans planned for visits by TT/ARD home office staff and in 2010 TT/ARD provided two weeks' worth of technical backstopping during the transition period between the two long term international specialists. This was followed the same year by a one day visit. Program records report no similar backstopping in 2011, a year of significant work in LTPR and the finalization of analysis and documents.

USAID/EGAT LTPR staff also provided a limited amount of technical support, although they primarily worked with the MCC threshold and preparation of the USAID land conflict management program.

Results

Policy level results

Input on the CRL. Had LRCFP not existed, the CRL would probably exist today, but it would very likely be different than the one the President signed in September of 2009. LRCFP contributed to the discussions concerning the content of this law, provided technical analysis, and supported forums for discussion of potential text.

Production of regulations to the CRL. If not for the support of LRCFP, it is very unlikely that the regulations would exist today. All too often, legislation passed by governments in Africa languishes for lack of implementing regulations. The program provided significant support to drafting the regulations, including contracting the lawyer who drafted them. The existence of the regulations also insures that the program pilots continue with a legal backing.

Vetting the regulations. LRCFP played a significant role in making this process inclusive, informed and participatory, with the LRCFP as a strong process manager.

Public awareness of the CRL and the regulations. LRCFP has played an important role in making government officials and the members of local communities aware of the existence and content of the CRL and the regulations, both through dedicated awareness raising activities, and collaborative CF activities with FDA staff.

Site level results

Greater security in forest resources. The communities of the pilot sites have increased their management of forest resources. There is no doubt that members of forest communities consider the laws and their institutions as real tools of empowerment. This increased sense of security can be expected to increase community investment in the health of their forests. In interviews the evaluation team heard: "If the government comes, we may say no"; "They cannot come in our forest for 15 years"; "When decisions are to be made they have to come

to us”; “they [the Ivorian refugees] have to talk to us first” and “Now, even the President knows [this is our forest]!”

Challenges and adaptive management strategies

Challenges at the national level

Two track treatment of community forestry and land tenure by the government. A distinct legal and institutional separation between LTPR and community forestry predated LRCFP. Although LRCFP was specifically designed to work across this gap, factors eventually inhibited the program from bridging this divide. The drafting of the CRL, which eventually excluded land rights from its scope, began prior to the launch of the program, and took place in a highly charged and politicized manner. LRCFP was one of many stakeholders, each of whom had limited influence on the final outcome. Finally, the delay in the establishment of the Land Commission, and the pressing demands placed on that body once established, inhibited LRCFP from integrating secure land tenure into the community forestry process through work with that body.

The institutional landscape also treats forestry and land tenure as two separate arenas. The program’s necessary and close association with the FDA also hampered LRCFP’s ability to address land tenure by working across the several ministries responsible for land allocation. In the time available, the program was able to promote interaction between the FDA and the Land Commission, but not to productively bridge the vast institutional divides between these two institutions at different stages of different mandates in an approach coordinated with the MLM&E and MIA.

As noted, the Land Commissioners from Sinoe and Nimba were involved in field-level and national level activities and had the opportunity to work closely with the FDA in that context. During visits to Nigeria and Cameroon, LRCFP worked together with the LC and FDA staff to look at the forestry and land tenure concerns. The LTPR Advisor also prepared a number of presentations with the LC to which FDA was invited, although their attendance is not recorded. Opportunities were also missed. Joint de-briefings for the FDA and the LC by the two long term LTPR specialists could have been useful. At the field level, coordination with the county based land administration (land commissioner and surveyor) was also limited.

Limited engagement with the Governance Commission and the Land Commission. GC staff believes that they should have been more involved in the design of the program, and that they started off on the wrong foot with LRCFP staff and as a result collaboration was limited.

As for the Land Commission, once it became functional, LRCFP was unable to get community forestry squarely on their agenda. This is in large part due to the low priority the Land Commission gave to community forestry relative to the other items it was addressing. LC staff also reported to the evaluation team that the LC was under pressure from higher levels in the government to work on other issues and did not have the staff time to work more with LRCFP. LRCFP quarterly reports indicate that the LC initially tended to focus on urban, rather than rural, issues. The Land Commission 2010 Annual Report only mentions LRCFP once, citing the Nigeria study tour.

Poor government coordination. The importance of coordinating with Ministry of Lands Mines and Energy has become clear in Nimba County where AML holds a mining concession. Like the FDA, the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy has the responsibility to allocate rights in forested land yet the MLM&E and FDA do not coordinate in their land allocation decisions. LRCFP would have had to also develop strong relationships with this ministry to engage them in addressing conflicting claims in Nimba County, yet the evaluation team found no evidence of interaction with the MLM&E, or the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This may have been a strategic decision on the part of program staff; the USAID COTR for LRCFP reports that the Mission itself has been unable to develop a strong working relationship with the very centralized MLM&E.

Capacity building of subcontractors and institutions. LRCFP identified, contracted, and collaborated with a number of high-performing subcontractors. As part of an effort to coordinate and reinforce LTPR elements of the program, their capacity in LTPR issues could have been reinforced, and a common language and approach concerning the topic developed. One representative of a national subcontractor suggested to the evaluation team that LRCFP could have engaged a Liberian individual to work at the local level to reinforce and coordinate efforts in LTPR. Recommendations regarding curriculum development at the University of Liberia College of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Forest Training Institute do not include LTPR in any significant manner.

Limited provision of STTA. The program workplan describes the strategy for providing short term LTPR support as “demand driven,” yet expected support as projected in annual workplans far surpassed actual support delivered. While there is no doubt that the delivered STTA was of high quality, in the end, the program received a limited amount of LTPR support from international experts. Waiting for Liberian institutions to request assistance may have been too passive an approach, especially since the FDA deferred LTPR issues to the LC, and the LC either didn’t exist or was inchoate and beleaguered with other concerns for much of the early years of the program. LRCFP did not develop a close enough working relationship with other institutions such as MIA (including the land commissioners at the county level) and MLM&E to expect them to request STTA through the program. As a result, it was up to LRCFP staff themselves to determine the STTA provided. In the end little STTA focused on LTPR, even though it would have been useful for the program to expose the FDA and LC to the wealth of international experience in the land sector. The fact that the CRL deferred tenure issues to the LC did not alleviate the need to begin reflection on land tenure in community forestry, and this could have been a fruitful topic. International STTA could have also greatly informed the process of the development of the regulations to the CRL.

Challenges managing the regulation development process. The evaluation team found a general consensus among LRCFP and FDA staff that the process itself was inclusive, informed and participatory. Interviews at the FDA indicate that the regulations are considered to be a national product more so than other forest legislation, especially the NFRL. LRCFP appears nevertheless to have been challenged in creating a balance between national ownership, and high technical quality.

The reports by Belleh highlight the poor knowledge of the CRL and the draft regulations on the part of FDA staff, the national legislature and other public agencies and ministries. Well into the process the FDA was not even aware of the specifics of FDA Regulation 101-07 stipulating Public Participation in the Promulgation of regulations, Codes and Manuals. And

there are even indications that the consultation process, rather than seen as an opportunity to strengthen the draft, focused on seeking approval of the existing version. In this regard one community participant reported to the evaluation team that during a regional consultation meeting, the message given was that “the law is the law and it will not be changed”. While LRCFP did not (and should not) have had control over the drafting of the regulations to the CRL, the program played an important role in the regulation development process, and bears some responsibility for the quality of their final content. As noted above, the provision of international STTA could have been one means of strengthening this process.

Challenges at the local level

Overlooked local opportunities. The delay of the creation of the Land Commission clearly derailed the implementation of activities as planned. However, even with the late start of the LC, LRCFP could have followed international best practice and worked on tenure issues at the level of the pilot communities, prior to the passage of relevant law. This would have paralleled the work on forest institution building LRCFP conducted prior to passage of the CRL. For example, while LRCFP conducted a land tenure assessment with the Land Commissioners for Sinoe and Nimba counties to assist them to better understand the land tenure issues in their counties it could have also have conducted a more detailed analysis of land tenure conditions, on both forested and non-forested land, both formal and informal and presented the results to county land commissioners and the LC and in policy briefs. LRCFP could have also pursued the regularization of the stalled deed requests Nitrian and Numopoh had initiated during the Taylor regime and the strengthening of community land rights through the purchase of public land. The program could have researched existing Tribal Land Certificates within the community areas and drafted a policy brief on the critical relationship between community forestry rights in land and the rights of concessionaires. The program’s focus on community forestry pre-empted progress on land tenure at the community level.

Documentation of community LTPR issues. It is very likely that each of the pilot communities will face tenure challenges in the next few years, yet government records and capacity to produce records and resolve conflict are limited. Pressure will come from concessionaires, extension of protected areas, and private sector actors and groups. These challenges have not been well documented. A final status report detailing current claims and analyzing the threats, perhaps based on the initial community profiles, would be useful information for the government, other partners, as well as USAID in the post-LRCFP period.

Implications for future programs

Risk of community loss of rights to forests. Because land rights have not been included as an integral part of community forestry the pilot communities face the risk of losing their lands and forests. In the absence of land ownership, the rights conferred through the present process are weak in the face of other claims underwritten by pre-existing land legislation a high level GOL agreements. The policy briefs on the Sinoe situation note that forest communities are exposed to the threat of the expansion of the Sapo National Park, including the use of the buffer zone. The concession agreement between the GOL and Golden Veroleum Inc., a multinational oil palm growing company, affects at least Numopoh. Specific concession conditions can increase this threat to other communities. The concept of “gross

concession area” gives the company ample leverage to operate where it seems fit. The Gba community in Nimba is similarly affected by the protected area creation of Western Nimba Nature Reserve, and the ArcelorMittal concession.

Risk of loss of rights to manage community forest. As written, the regulations expose communities to the risk of losing the management rights to their forests under several conditions. While the chance of any of these occurring is difficult to estimate they are real:

- Upon non-compliance with the management plan, FDA may decide to terminate the agreement and eventually delegate the management of a community forest to another party for the remaining period to outsiders.
- FDA can always terminate a community forest agreement on the basis of the vague defined principle of “higher social and public benefit to the community and/or the people of Liberia” of the community forest.
- The FDA may withdraw community management rights after the expiration of the 15-year management period.
- Parties representing the community contract to a commercial interest to log for timber.

A broader vision for future programs. Future programming in community forestry will only directly address the risks above by helping anchor community forestry in secure land rights. This will require targeting the eventual integration of community forestry into local government and simultaneous work on both community forestry and land tenure.

1) A livelihood landscape approach. Rather than focusing on the forest resource base, with alternative livelihoods as a mitigation strategy, programs should define the overarching objective as improving livelihoods of forest-based people. This would entail a shift from a focus on forest areas to areas that correspond with community management territories over which local institutions have management jurisdiction. Members of forest-based communities depend on territories much larger than the forest itself for meeting their livelihood goals. They draw livelihoods from a shifting mix of forest and non-forest natural resources, and LTPR issues are best considered at this scale.

Expanding the target area in this manner would better enable community forest management institutions to be aligned with the existing governmental institutions of the jurisdiction and better take into consideration and address broader, related, governance issues. For example, equity factors come into play when considering the question of displacement by community forests. The MTA recommended taking a measured approach to demarcation, because of the existence of multiple users and rights holders in given territory and resource. While critical to countering open access situations, boundary clarification or zoning can reveal simmering conflict among users of different resources in the same territory, and/or create haves and have-nots where previously a resource provided multiple benefits. Boundaries, rules, and relocation decisions managed by local elites may well disadvantage already disfavored resource-poor persons, pushing them to exploit other marginalized agro-ecological zones outside of the community forest. A broader perspective would enable projects to work with local governments to address this effect.

2) Address land and forest rights together. While much conceptual and practical work remains to be done, new means to secure land rights of communities and individuals are in the process of being developed in Liberia. Communities cannot fully engage in the management of “their” forest resources while facing the risk of losing access to their land base. A combination of a strong community land and regulated community forest

management based on genuine consensus would represent significant progress. FDA and other public forest administrators will continue to play their role, but in a more balanced fashion, with partners who have acquired a stronger negotiation voice.

Reform the CRL and the regulations. Outstanding discrepancies between the NFRL (2006), the CRL (2009) and the draft regulations (2011) expose these laws to contestation. A new law dealing with community lands, once passed, will also require the modification of these existing laws.

Work broadly across sectors having an impact on land tenure. A number of ongoing processes outside of the mandate of the FDA have the potential to strongly impact the land tenure of community forests. These include the REDD+ preparedness program, land law reform, and the development of concession policy. The FDA in general and the community forest sector in particular could well benefit from engaged participation in these processes. Work on community forestry cannot advance solely through work with the Community Forestry Department of the FDA.

Section VI Livelihoods Component

Component Background

Objective

Component 3: Management of community forests and conservation of their biodiversity improved, and economic opportunities increased for communities and other user groups.

Evolution of the component

LRCFP opened offices in the two counties in the fourth quarter of the project, yet project staff was already working in Nimba and Sinoe counties to identify potential livelihood activities. Tree crops and livestock were considered, as well as various NTFP options. At this point, the project was also attempting to identify groups with the capacity to meet USAID grants-under-contract requirements. During this quarter, the final of the first year, the project negotiated with prospective subcontractors NAEAL, CJPS, and AGRHA for support in building the capacity of local organizations to receive and manage grants. Nevertheless, by the end of the first year staff was clearly concerned that even with the assistance of these subcontractors the project would be severely challenged to bring groups in the pilot communities up to the minimum standards required for administering USAID grants. The midterm assessment conducted in quarter six concluded that the project should “revise the small grant process as it is cumbersome and not appropriate for local groups,” giving the project the footing to do away with the grants mechanism. Quarterly report seven states: “It has become painfully clear that the requirements of TT/ARD’s USAID-compliant grant procedures are not conducive to community group activities in Liberia, given their prior experience and education levels.” Thus, almost two years into what was initially a two year project, and well into the growing season, LRCFP refocused from grants to support through in-kind resources and training.

The midterm assessment half way through the second year also recommended that the program broaden the livelihoods approach and “reorient livelihoods actions to encourage forest based livelihoods but not abruptly transitioning from agriculture-based livelihoods.” Thus, in quarter eight TT/ARD executed a sub-contract with ASNAPP. This Ghanaian NGO, working with Rutgers University, conducted a second assessment of potential NTFPs. Over the next six months, work with NTFPs began in the pilot communities. LRCFP also began to implement the Farmer Field Schools in quarter eight and soon formed Commercial Palm Oil Producing groups, and Cassava Producers Groups. In quarter 10 eight oil palm presses were introduced – two in each of the four communities, and in quarter 11 the local buyer’s group Botanical Product Association of Liberia (BOTPAL) was formed.

In quarter 13 eight cassava mills were introduced – two in each of the four communities – and the project decentralized the Farmer Field Schools, so that, rather than coming to central locations, graduating farmers initiated demonstration plots in their own communities. In quarter 14, an additional eight mills were introduced and MOUs were signed between the Community Assemblies, the CFMBs, and the cassava mill and oil palm groups.

Description of component activities

Farmer Field Schools. Each community FFS trained a group of 25 students, which consisted of two to five representatives selected by each of the towns or villages within a given community. Selection criteria included an understanding of Liberian English, possession of a farm producing one or more of four staple crops, a willingness to assist their communities and approval by the community chief. In total, 50 FFS students were trained per county. The agriculture methods that were taught centered on improving overall production of four traditional staple crops (rice, cassava, plantain and peppers) that had been selected by the communities. Emphasis was placed on site selection, planting methodology, composting, irrigation methods, use of improved plant varieties, seed or cutting selection, pest and disease management, harvesting methods to reduce loss, collection and recording of data and land re-use to minimize or curtail the practice of shifting agriculture. From the resulting 95 FFS alumni (five left the program) a total of 20 “master farmers” (5 per community) were selected. These advanced students or master farmers were chosen by the LRCFP staff based on having demonstrated excellent agriculture results following their FFS training, leadership traits and a willingness to share their experience and newly gained knowledge with others. Their role within the LRCFP was that of extension agents, assisting fellow FFS students and other farmers within their communities to learn and implement the new farming methods. Decentralization of the FFS halfway through the third year of the project put the transportation burden on the two trainers, who travel to visit the master farmers in their fields. In their own fields, farmers were encouraged to plant demonstration plots – both “control” and “test” plots to demonstrate the effectiveness of new methods.

Palm Oil Presses and Cassava Mills. The introduction of two motorized cassava grinders and one palm oil mill (“Freedom Mill”) into each of the communities resulted in the formation of two additional champion groups per community, the Cassava Producers Group (CPG) and Commercial Palm Oil Producers group (CPOP). The cassava grinder is used to pulverize cassava used to make *farrinah* or *garri* and cut processing time from three days to one. Both groups were responsible for the maintenance and management of their respective mills with processing proceeds used to pay members and maintenance costs, as well as support the local CFMB. MOUs signed between the Community Assemblies and the producer groups typically entrust the CFMB with the selection of the producer group members and oversight management. The CFMB also ensures proceeds generated from processing be apportioned among the producer group (50%), the CFMB (30%) and maintenance (20%).

Non-Timber Forest Products. NTFP group members were trained to identify, sustainably harvest, and culture economically valuable NTFPs present in Liberia’s forests. In the early months, the project considered a wide range of products. As early as the first quarter of the second year LRCFP conducted a study and organized workshops on the topic. (“Community Forestry as a Business Training Manual: NTFPs” April 2009) The study recommended palm oil, country spice, and bush pepper as primary target products. The midterm assessment conducted soon thereafter, in June of 2009 (quarter six), nevertheless found that the “livelihood component should be increasingly targeted on forest based livelihoods.” The greater emphasis on NTFPs began with the ASNAPP evaluation, which identified four species: *Griffonia simplicifolia* (a “mood enhancer” and “appetite suppressant”), *Piper guineense* (bush pepper), *Xylopia sp.* (country spice), and *Afromomum meleguetta* (grains of paradise, a spice). Community members were trained in forest collection and how to raise

NTFPs in community nurseries. In the second season a joint nursery was created, and plants were transplanted to farmer fields. In quarter 12, BOTPAL, having organized other groups of collectors/harvesters in Bong, Grand Gedeh and Lofa Counties initiated the sale and transportation of approximately 700 kilograms of *Griffonia* to international buyers in December at a total value to farmers of \$2,450 US.

Results

Policy level results

No policy-level objectives and no results at this level.

Site level results

Increases in production and income

- Farmers report that training through farmer field schools has improved their rice, cassava, plantain and hot pepper production.
- FFS training has also reduced post-harvest losses.
- Cassava mills and palm oil presses have been introduced into each of the four communities, reducing labor and processing times.
- Demonstrated increased community knowledge and practice in the sustainable harvest of NTFPs and their cultivation.

If increases in production did occur, and are not counterbalanced by opportunity or other costs, they have resulted in an increase in income in the pilot communities. Although specific income data was not available, some participants indicated that they have purchased a motorcycle, roofing materials, or food or paid school tuition costs as a direct result of their improved incomes stemming from the agriculture training received from the LRCFP. One NTFP member from Nimba indicated that his profits from *Griffonia* sales permitted him to build a new home.

Other results include:

- Wide distribution of benefits through the implementation of different activities (FFS, NTFP, mills) in each community with different sets of people.
- Spread effect: the FFS approach, especially once it was decentralized, facilitated farmer-to-farmer dissemination of the practices introduced. Trainers and FFS participants reported non-student adoption on their own fields.
- Clear ability on the part of project participants to articulate the value of their forests. When asked why the forest is important to them most participants cited numerous economic benefits that could be derived if properly managed.

Challenges and adaptive management strategies

Especially low level of development of the communities. The LRCFP livelihood component faced a number of challenges familiar to agricultural projects in the developing world. Trainers could not assign reading or hand out technical sheets due to illiteracy. Nor could they teach farmers to track their inputs, harvests, and expenses without also providing training in literacy and numeracy. Nor could trainers assume local mechanics would be

available to maintain the machinery they introduced. Poor transportation not only limited visits by LRCFP staff, but also limited community access to markets.

While these challenges are common to rural development programs, the fact that the project took place in forest communities of Liberia seriously raised the bar, adding new challenges to the already difficult task of introducing new technologies and practices into a poor rural society. The pilot communities, especially in Sinoe, were particularly remote, small and dispersed. (The average size of 18 of the 19 villages in the Nitrian community is 30 people.) Community impoverishment and the absence of financial institutions restrict access to capital for both farmers and mill groups. Trainers had a slim knowledge platform to build upon due to the smaller role field agriculture plays in these largely forest-dependent communities, and no extension service to hand off to once they finish their training.

Unsuited grant mechanism. LRCFP staff also faced the challenge of a faulty design. The initial workplan, approved by the USAID Mission, included the use of grants to support rural livelihoods. Staff became aware from the first months of implementation that the requirements of USAID grant administration surpassed the capacity of communities. They were nevertheless unable to abandon this approach until a year and a half into the project. This false step significantly drained staff time and delayed implementation of livelihoods activities.

Start-up of the NTFP activities came late and stumbled. The false-start of the grant program delayed the implementation of the livelihood component, yet NTFP extension activities, which did not depend on the grant mechanism, were also slow to be implemented. After the midterm assessment concluded that LRCFP over-emphasized agricultural activities, LRCFP relatively quickly signed a contract with ASNAPP. Yet, in Nimba County, when demonstration sites were created, and AGRHA staff, who had not previously worked with NTFPs, provided the training, no shade was provided, and the plants in the demonstration fields died. By the time of the evaluation, participants had experienced only one successful season of NTFP domestication.

Unclear definition of the component's objective. The wording of LRCFP objective three does not make clear the relationship between the opportunities and the sustainability of forest management. While this relationship may have been clarified elsewhere, LRCFP documents change in their articulation of the relationship between livelihood activities and community forestry throughout the project. The program's second workplan, describing the activity, emphasizes the selection of commodities that will have a positive impact on forest conservation. The program's Third Workplan emphasizes the contribution of livelihood opportunities to sustainable forest management. The description of Objective 3 used through the latter half of the program emphasizes the value chains of sustainably managed livelihood activities. In fact, LRCFP required two strategies, one for the agricultural activities being promoted, and one for NTFPs. With regard to agricultural activities, interviews with program staff indicate that the commonly understood goal of this activity was "increased economic opportunities" independent of any direct impact on the sustainability of forest use or biodiversity.

Episodic project funding. Agriculture activities are particularly sensitive to seasons. The initial project duration – two years – effectively gave the project two chances to introduce, demonstrate, refine, and get farmers accustomed to agricultural practices and NTFP

activities. Although the project was eventually extended, this threat of discontinuation affected long term planning. For example, the initial NTFP study conducted for the project identified *Griffonia simplicifolia* as a promising product, yet it recommended against targeting because not enough time was believed to be left in the project to develop this and other similar products. *Griffonia* eventually became one of the project's four target NTFPs. With the delay of the livelihoods component, even given the extensions finally accorded the project, the Farmer Field Schools had only been running for two seasons by the time of the evaluation.

Sustainability

For the moment, the mills are working, and farmers have adopted many of the agricultural practices. Community members are collecting and planting the NTFPs. But will farmers continue to use the practices they have been taught? Will palm oil press and cassava mill groups continue?

Lasting adoption of agricultural practices – inconclusive evidence. Both the FFS trainers and trainees state that they believe that they will continue to employ the practices they have learned.

While the AGRHA FFS trainers recognize that some of the practices farmers learned through the school may not catch on, they believe farmers will continue to practice others, and that other farmers in their communities may also adopt and continue them. The pest management practices requiring a sprayer, for example, they don't believe will continue once the sprayer breaks. In fact, much of the adoption of practices was supported through the provision of inputs by LRCFP. In quarter 11 LRCFP provided 50 bundles of cassava, 700 bundles of improved plantain suckers, one kilogram of hot chili pepper seed, 40 kilograms Nerica 14 seed rice, and 250 kilograms of other seed rice. In project quarter 14, 540 kilograms of seed were procured by the project and distributed to farmers. Tools were also provided.

The trainers believe that farmers are more likely to continue with crop spacing, planting in rows, and seed selection techniques. They, nevertheless, believe that in order to perpetuate and augment gains, it is necessary to further educate the communities in the areas of income generating tree crops (cocoa, palm oil and rubber), crop rotation, marketing, soil fertilization and management while continuing to reinforce previous lessons and supply inputs to further increase household incomes.

For their part, Nimba residents interviewed indicated that what they have learned and already implemented in terms of agriculture methodology, exploitation of NTFPs and postharvest processing is self-sustaining and will continue in the absence of the LRCFP. In the case of Sinoe, where the programs did not advance as quickly, beneficiaries felt that the gains made to date would be lost without additional training.

Despite these overall positive responses, interviews with strangers rarely provide more than opinions, and both the trainers and FFS participants had good reasons to provide these particular responses to the evaluation team. The only way to know if the practices have been adopted is to visit the communities in the future. And even then, given that LRCFP established no baselines, it will only be possible to imperfectly measure the lasting impact.

Economic and institutional viability of mills and presses. The cassava mill and palm oil groups face a number of challenges that have undermined the sustainability of similar activities elsewhere:

- *Conflict over funds or theft.* The treasurers of the press and mill groups store funds in their homes because there are no banks near the pilot communities. The project did not train the groups to utilize alternatives such as safes with multiple keys. Nor have they been trained in book keeping.
- *Mechanical failure.* The market for the mills and presses is limited and parts scarce. Shortly after the introduction of the mills, in quarter 13, the bearings gave out and LRCFP decided to supply local dealers with parts to spark the value chain and improve accessibility for communities. As has happened in other similar instances, a prolonged breakdown in one of the machines could result in collapse of the group.
- *Lack of ownership.* The producer groups did not grow out of community efforts. Although the project worked closely with the communities in identifying the appropriate activities, and in planning their implementation, in the end LRCFP contributed heavily to their creation. The communities built the shelters, yet LRCFP gave the mills and presses to the communities. Presumably, the delay in the implementation of this component, the pressure to produce visible results by the end of the program, and a desire to provide a source of resources for the CFMBs contributed to the decision to gift these machines to communities.
- *Complex institutional arrangements.* The fact that the mills and presses are run under the authority of the CAs, with oversight authority of the CFMBs, creates complexity. If the CAs or the CFMBs function poorly, this may impact the mill and press groups. The authority and resources of the CAs and CFMBs may also serve to strengthen the producer groups. For example, the *MOUs make the CFMBs responsible for funding larger repairs of the machines, and resolving conflicts over payment or leadership.*

Implications for future programs

For the bridging period

Work up the value chain. The agricultural livelihood activities have focused on production. Additional AGRHA staff focusing on business development service would help address this.

Broaden governmental contacts. LRCFP is conducting agricultural activities in isolation of the Ministry of Agriculture, and international research institutions. Develop links with the Ministry of Agriculture (they have a representative in Sanniquellie) and research organizations such as WARDA, IFAD, IITA.

Additional training topics. Interviews with participants and program staff suggest that alternative sources of protein and methods to address erosion and farming on a slope are potential additional livelihood activities.

Promote NTFP – to – NTFP producer exchanges. Master harvesters/cultivators are gaining experience and knowledge they could share with others interested in NTFPs.

Implications for USAID

Support rapid management adaptation. It became clear very early in the program that the communities in which LRCFP worked did not have the capacity to manage USAID grants. It nevertheless took the program a year and a half and the results of the MTA to shift from this approach. A false appreciation of the context in the planning stage became a fixed constraint seriously delaying a major component of the program.

Set clear objectives. Ambiguity in the objectives concerning the relationship between the livelihood activities and community forestry weakened the focus on activities that add value to forest production or more directly reduce threats to sustainable forest management. Livelihood activities initially focused on agricultural activities. Not until the MTA did the LRCFP team clearly receive the message that NTFPs comprised an important element in the total approach.

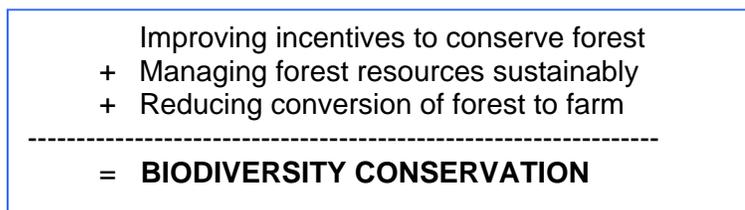
Section VII Biodiversity Conservation

Background

The theory of change

Biodiversity conservation represents a core element of LRCFP, therefore the final evaluation considered both compliance with biodiversity criteria, and the program's potential long term impact on biodiversity. Although LRCFP included specific activities and measures explicitly associated with wildlife and ecosystems, this evaluation considers the entire program from a biodiversity perspective. LRCFP was funded with money earmarked for biodiversity conservation and so it is appropriate to consider how all the various components -- from the development of forest management bodies, to national policy engagement, to investments in more sustainable livelihoods, to public awareness and monitoring of biodiversity values -- collectively contributed to biodiversity conservation.

The overall theory of change for biodiversity conservation is not new to USAID:



LRCFP program components as they evolved in the program reflect this theory. Components one and two both supported an enabling environment in which communities have the governance incentives to conserve forests, by securing rights to manage and benefit from land and trees, and reducing the risk of expropriation by the state for commercial concessions. Component three supported the implementation of community forest management and protected area co-management and enhanced economic incentives for maintaining a healthy, productive forest (including development of NTFP value chains). It also introduced farming techniques intended to reduce pressure from unsustainable shifting cultivation.

Most of the activities in LRCFP advance the theory of change, but to what end? The process-oriented program overall objective did not specify a biodiversity conservation result, but the advancement of "policy and practice of land and forest management." This absence may presage the answer. This assessment reveals that LRCFP activities were *necessary* to better conserve demarcated community forests and a nature reserve, but may not be *sufficient* over time to improve the outlook for biodiversity across the two pilot communities.

USAID biodiversity criteria: from compliance to best-practice

All USAID biodiversity programs must meet four minimum criteria:

1. The program must have an explicit biodiversity objective
2. Site-based programs must have the intent to positively impact biodiversity in biologically significant areas
3. Activities must be identified based on an analysis of threats to biodiversity
4. The program must monitor associated indicators for biodiversity conservation

As a program with both policy and site-based components, supported with funds earmarked for biodiversity, LRCFP should have met or exceeded these requirements. For each, we consider below whether minimum compliance was achieved, as well as ways in which the program applied or advanced best practices in conservation.

1) Biodiversity Objective. USAID and TT/ARD had to initiate adaptive management very early in the program, beginning with modifications to the program objectives to include biodiversity conservation. Although LRCFP was designed as a biodiversity program, the original objectives did not explicitly include biodiversity aims, focusing instead on governance and livelihoods results.

Task Order Modification Two, signed in the third quarter of the program, changed the first and third program objectives to include the term “biodiversity” and to take account of the predominance of biodiversity funding in LRCFP. From the first months of the program, staff recognized that biodiversity funding would necessitate changes from the initial program design. In the first quarterly report, TT/ARD noted that this modification should influence the selection of pilot sites and livelihood activities supported, and that it might necessitate biodiversity assessments. By the second quarterly report TT/ARD requested modifications to the SOW and the PMP to accommodate the biodiversity emphasis. As detailed in the following pages, it took LRCFP the duration of the program to satisfy the new criteria formalized the following quarter.

2) Biologically Significant Areas. LRCFP started the effort to address biodiversity funding criteria by clarifying a strategy to do so. An initial articulation of this strategy is presented in Attachment C to the fourth quarterly report which discusses issues of compliance with the USAID biodiversity code. An assessment of the biological significance of the forests of the counties in which LRCFP would be working forms a large part of this discussion. The paper concludes that improved forest management in the two pilot communities of Nimba County would “have a positive impact in an area specifically designated as biologically significant”. Sites in Sinoe County had not been selected, but the attachment committed the program to selecting areas of biological significance in Sinoe County.

Community forests in Sinoe County eventually selected by the program are part of a high-biodiversity landscape that includes Liberia’s only national park, Sapo. Both Nimba and Sinoe forests are part of the Upper Guinean Forest hotspot. Community forests in Nimba County are part of a tri-national forest of high conservation value, including the East Nimba Nature Reserve, which though declared in 2003 was little more than a paper park prior to LRCFP support for a co-management agreement between FDA and the neighboring communities. According to ArcelorMittal Liberia. (AML), which has supported the most recent and perhaps most comprehensive environmental impact and ecological studies in the county, Nimba is one of the highest biodiversity priorities in Africa due to the number of endemics, about 700 butterflies, 400 birds, and possibly the highest diversity of snakes on the continent – all despite 30 years of mining and careless spoil disposal ending in 1989. In Nimba, the FDA recommended prioritizing communities around ENNR. Subsequent work to demarcate and development management plans for the ENNR and Zor and Bleih forests, as well as support for WNNR or a Gba Community Forest in the same area nearby, all contribute to forest connectivity.

TOR modifications also addressed the capacity of PMP indicators to capture this focus. Until Quarterly report seven, LRCFP reported to the standard USAID indicator, “Number of

hectares under improved natural resources management as a result of USG assistance.” But biodiversity funds require that a target for “Number of hectares of *biologically significant* area under improved NRM” be set. Following discussions, the program began to modify PMP indicators in quarterly report seven, and finalized the transition in quarterly report nine with the addition of the indicator 3.0.2, “Number of hectares of biologically significant habitat under improved management,” with an EOP Target of 13,600. In quarterly report 13 LRCFP reported 10,000 hectares under this indicator, a figure which does not include the Gba CF (14,000 ha) and ENNR (13,000 ha).

3) Threats-based approach. The abbreviated 118/119 analysis used in the design of LRCFP, (Russell and Sieber 2005), was written soon after the cessation of the country’s civil war, at a time when it was not possible for the team to venture into the Liberian countryside and the Mission’s activities were focused largely on humanitarian assistance. For that reason, LRCFP was not designed to address a clearly defined set of biodiversity threats. LRCFP nevertheless had an impact, though in some cases marginal, on each of the “underlying causes for environmental degradation” cited in the more recent complete ETOA for Liberia (2008). The ETOA lists the following: lack of alternative financing, lack of capacity, weak law enforcement, lack of a holistic approach to environment/natural resource management, barriers to alternative livelihoods, insecure land and resource tenure, absence of a strategy to address the compromises between environment and economic development, absence of any land use planning.

The MTA conducted in July of 2009 identified two key areas for improving the threats-based approach of LRCFP. First, carry out site-based threats analyses of both immediate and root cause threats (especially open access), potentially with the communities to tap into their knowledge, build their skills and get them involved in monitoring. Second, assess program actions in light of threats, through triangulation of what people are saying with reasonably available data, such as market data on traded items (timber and bushmeat); satellite imagery of forest cover; catch per unit effort estimations from local hunters; data on how many farms are being opened in the forest, and estimations of farm sizes.

LRCFP undertook the first recommendation, implementing a Threat Reduction Assessment (TRA) in Sinoe, and a modified and less rigorous version in Nimba. (See the full description of the TRA in the “monitoring” sub-section which follows.) The second recommendation from the MTA was only partially addressed. While the majority of LRCFP activities have addressed the proximate or ultimate threats to biodiversity, demonstrating a threats-based approach, the program did include activities with potentially negative impacts on biodiversity. These include:

NTFPs. While promoting the sustainable harvest and sale of NTFPs in Nimba County helps add value to standing forest, promoting the intercropping of NTFPs with field crops could actually reduce the incentive to conserve natural forest while providing a perverse incentive to clear more land for NTFP agriculture. Putting in place the nursery for *Griffonia* required the clearing of land, albeit already degraded. In Nitrian, 55 hectares were “brushed” (cleared) for transplanting *Griffonia* in an agroforestry system with plantains for shade. The domestication of other NTFP transplants (grains of paradise, black pepper) requires similar clearing.

Labor-saving machines for communities. The establishment of community enterprises pressing oil from wild palm nuts, and grinding cassava for meal helps ordinary citizens

receive a tangible benefit from and perhaps better appreciate the systems for forest management introduced by LRCFP. They also provide a central location for sharing information, and a source of revenue for CFMB operations. In general, they appear to be greatly appreciated; according to cassava processors from Sinoe, people will walk five hours to use the grinder.

On the other hand, members of local communities may invest gains from these well meaning interventions into activities that negatively impact conservation. There is evidence at the international level of this phenomenon occurring in several countries. Advances in processing could encourage a preference for growing crops that can be processed easily; the increased cultivation of cassava or oil palm; and the unsustainable collection of wild palm nuts. A production increase may result in the expansion of the cultivated area, especially in the absence of the adoption of new technology. In Sinoe, interviewees report that people are indeed collecting more palm nuts but not (yet) clearing land for oil palm. FFS participants in Nimba County reported clearing land for fields dedicated to cassava.

Farmer Field Schools. Loss of access to community forests for farming is made less onerous for some farmers by the training provided through FFS. Yet, as with the other livelihoods activities, farmer field school training in agricultural intensification risks unintended consequences and leakage. LRCFP appears to have successfully increased awareness among FFS master and student farmers of the reduced deforestation objective of LRCFP and this may guide them towards reinvesting rising income into farms in already degraded land. Nevertheless, use of non-demarcated forests may also proportionately increase if a significant proportion of community members successfully takes up new farming methods and expands production.

4) Monitor appropriate indicators for biodiversity. LRCFP took some time to develop indicators and a system of monitoring which could reasonably measure progress towards conservation goals. A monitoring and evaluation assessment completed nine months prior to program closure, revision of indicators and targets in the second-to-last quarter of activity, and a comprehensive collection of baseline data on biological and socioeconomic measures delayed until the last month (and in only one of the two focal areas, Nimba) all reflect the increased yet belated attention on monitoring in the second half of LRCFP, as well as the challenge of retrospectively determining progress towards conservation objectives. The episodic funding of the program accounts in part for this delay. Annex C in quarterly report four, written when the program was limited to two years, reports, “LRCFP does not have the budget or human resources for direct biodiversity monitoring, but expects to show programmatic impacts on biodiversity conservation through activities undertaken.” The program’s decision to link monitoring to forest management planning also helps account for this slow start. Quarterly report seven reports, “With the signing of the CRL, LRCFP will finally be able to begin management planning. The threats analysis training serves as a first step.”

Program staff also appear to have waited for direction from USAID in the form of the MTA, which made two recommendations relevant to monitoring appropriate indicators for biodiversity. First, develop a threat reduction strategy and monitoring protocol. To do this, as mentioned above, the assessment suggested using the Threat Reduction Assessment (TRA) approach to measure process and impact indicators while assisting communities to reflect on what is changing in their local environment. Second, support longer term biodiversity capacity building at the community level, including parataxonomy, biodiversity

inventories, and guide training which could be useful in co-management and research tourism roles.

The October 2009 workplan, first presented in quarterly report seven and developed after the MTA, is the first to include specific activities regarding biodiversity monitoring. Activity 3.1 states “Carry out threats analysis and supporting activities to ensure significant biodiversity objectives are met”. It includes as outputs, “Biodiversity threats assessments for each of the four pilot communities (Q8); and “Monitoring strategy and plan agreed between the FDA and community to inform ongoing response to threats after the project closes (Q9).

Threat Reduction Assessment (TRA) is a simpler and more cost effective alternative to biological indicator approaches to measuring the impact of conservation programs. TRA monitors threats to the resource rather than changes to biological parameters themselves. It measures changes in human activities that threaten the integrity of the resource and, implemented in a participatory manner, can raise community biodiversity awareness while collecting information to draw inferences on the state of the resource itself. LRCFP applied TRA in Sinoe. The report of this activity shows the potential of the process to educate both the project and community members on the threats to biodiversity. Unfortunately, LRCFP did not follow through to make sure people did more than “plan to meet and discuss solutions” to these threats. Nor does it appear that meaningful and measurable indicators of conservation target or threat reduction were discussed as part of the TRA. In Nimba County, according to staff, LRCFP did not conduct a full TRA in the pilot communities, although the program did conduct workshops to define biodiversity with community members. No write-up on that activity was produced. Despite these limitations, LRCFP improved local understanding of key threats and applied a Threat Reduction Assessment which helped communities realize for themselves the problems which certain livelihoods activities cause.

In Quarter 15, LRCFP trained and paid community members to conduct biomonitoring activities based on a methodology developed by the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation in which data is collected on large mammals and their signs along transects of one kilometer. This and other biomonitoring activities helped target the location of key threats in specific areas. In Nimba County this activity should provide a good baseline for later comparison, and prove useful in conjunction with satellite imagery collected from the beginning and end of the program, and during earlier periods, to determine forest cover change and differences in rate of change. In Nimba County, LRCFP also benefited through collaboration with AML, conducting cycles of monitoring every 6 months. The AML partnership has resulted in consistent monitoring in Nimba and some cost savings --LRCFP used the approach CI developed with AML funding.

The short-term nature of project, initial ambiguity in the objectives, limited support from management, and the limited engagement of Conservation International all resulted in delays which postponed rigorous monitoring until the final quarters of the program, at which point it could not be used for adaptive management and assessing conservation impact. Nevertheless, while there is room for improvement, the inventories and monitoring plan developed and tested in the LRCFP community forests met requirements and form a basis for further work.

Results

LRCFP achieved many important conservation objectives, from demarcating and supporting co-management of the ENNR by communities and the FDA, to more broadly demonstrating how capacity building and realigned incentives can transform the role of Liberian communities in natural resources management. Land-use mapping has helped plan, communicate, and measure conservation actions. Although they were not utilized or underutilized by the program, several valuable biodiversity-related assessments were produced. Examples of these studies include: the Protein Alternative Assessment Study (ACDI/VOCA: 2009), and the CI studies on ecosystem services, ecotourism viability, and carbon potential.

Determining the program's conservation impact is less straightforward. LRCFP did not measure improvements in biophysical conditions (such as reduced rates of deforestation, or stable/increasing populations of wildlife species threatened by hunting or habitat loss) or reductions in threats. Therefore, any conservation impact projections must be based on progress addressing key threats identified in the course of the program. Were LRCFP to assess progress, it would be based on project reports and analyses, and the changes in awareness and behavior reported by the clearly biased community members involved in project activities.

Reduced threat of commercial concessions. Commercial concessions are a biodiversity threat on two broad counts: (1) most communities live and/or farm on state-owned land, and the risk that GOL can lease forested concessions to commercial entities is a major disincentive for investing in forest management and intensive agriculture; and (2) the mining, timber and plantation agriculture concessions themselves destroy, degrade or otherwise transform forest habitat. Community forests will help address both threats, and LRCFP deserves credit for piloting community forestry and informing the content of relevant regulations. Risks for abuse and loopholes remain, however. Section V of this evaluation on LTPR and Section IV on CF describe a variety of ways communities may lose rights in authorized community forests, including alienation by the state or mineral interests, such as AML in Nimba County.

Logging or agricultural concessions adjacent to communities will certainly put secondary pressure on the forests they use, whether approved community forests or not, as in Guinea where plantations displaced the farmers now threatening Liberian forests (according to John Howell, AML). In Sinoe, the Golden Viroleum oil palm plantation is on degraded land almost certainly used for agriculture. With 220,000 hectares to start and an option for over 500,000 hectares in all, the pressure to use community and other forests in Sinoe County for farming is likely to be intense, and the potential for restoring forests and connectivity diminished.

Although it would be logical to assume that creating community forests alone will avert the impacts associated with concessions, that is not necessarily the case. First, as described in the LTPR and CF Sections, the FDA reserves the right to cancel a community forest contract and take control of the forest if a community violates terms of the management plan, creating the unlikely but possible situation that by engaging in community forest management, a community may securely *lose* formal rights to land over which they once maintained insecure but traditional rights. Second, and more likely, the CRL and the associated regulations allow a community to commercially log forest lands, with certain constraints. According to Dr. Nouhou Ndam of FFI "some communities see community

forests as a route to timber development. In Sinoe, people are trading timber plots for commercial roads.”

Reduced conversion of forest to farms: the leakage question. FFS participants quickly appreciate that new techniques can increase productivity. They also recognize that the goal of the training is to reduce the clearing of new land. CFMB members report that communities respect the demarcation line and no longer farm in community forests. The big question is whether demarcation and management of one area merely shifts pressure to other areas.

A resource based approach such as the one followed by LRCFP focuses on a portion of the total set of community resources, such as a specific forest, or portion of a forest. Strategies that rural people use to gain their livelihoods from these resources may well displace the negative activities to an adjacent area, such as other forested areas falling under the same community jurisdiction not targeted by the project. The Numopoh community includes nine forests of which one has become the pilot community forest. Nitrian community manages six reserved forests, four others were excluded from authorized community management, and earmarked for different uses such as agriculture and pitsawing. As a result, the overall conservation gain at the community level may be limited or even negative. All four LRCFP pilot communities may be subject to this; conservation gains in several targeted forests may be compensated by losses in others.

LRCFP began tentatively to address conservation issues in Nimba using a landscape approach, but this effort came late, in Quarter 12, and had little impact on program implementation.

Addressing unsustainable hunting and the bushmeat trade. Addressing the threat of bushmeat trade poses a number of serious challenges in Liberia, which LRCFP was not designed to take on directly. USAID/Liberia made the decision to limit involvement in the bushmeat trade, feeling that the national opinions and conditions had not yet coalesced to create an enabling context.

Significant progress on this threat will require regulation and law enforcement by communities and the FDA, public awareness, and identification and promotion of acceptable protein alternatives. It will also necessitate the promotion of livelihood alternatives for commercial hunters, possibly as rangers and guides in areas where ecotourism is possible. Demand for wild meat remains high and law enforcement remains low, therefore being a hunter or seller of bushmeat continues to be an attractive occupation. The challenges identified in the MTA with regard to engaging youth apply to most hunters and sellers too: *What activities can realistically substitute for hunting, pit-sawing and mining? How can young people get cash to marry and build their lives? How can they use skills they may have obtained in these “illegal” activities to improve the community?* The soon-to-be passed wildlife law may provide a foundation for work in this area.

LRCFP took tentative steps to explore the topic with the Protein Alternative Assessment Study (August 2009) and surveys of hunters, markets and wildlife in Nimba county in the program’s final months. Further, the draft management plans of the pilot LRCFP communities include restrictions on hunting, including permits for guns. However, this is just small start. Hunting regulations will be inherently more difficult to monitor and enforce than land use regulations, as hunting is less visible, less traceable, and requires lower

investment. With little tourism or other incentives for protecting wildlife, and a comprehensive wildlife law still awaiting passage, hunting infractions are not likely to be taken seriously by communities or courts in the near future. Even where hunters respect newly demarcated community forests and protected areas, they would be expected to shift effort to less-managed areas rather than hunt less, as long as easily-transported bushmeat stays relatively high-value and low-risk.

The livelihoods development components of LRCFP designed with the intention to complement management plans have helped farmers and NTFP collectors increase incomes while decreasing environmental impact, although the program did not actively recruit hunters or bushmeat sellers. The transformation of subsistence farmers into agricultural entrepreneurs may in time reduce the number of people attracted to informal or illegal activities, but does little in the near-term to reduce the supply of bushmeat.

LRCFP has provided baseline information and foundation for work on wildlife monitoring. In conjunction with the wildlife law about to be passed, the option of developing viable alternatives to meat and hunting now exists for future USAID investment in Nimba County.

Raising public awareness and conservation engagement. LRCFP public awareness activities and targeted training have raised the level of awareness of the members of pilot communities of several particular kinds of unsustainable practices which threaten biodiversity. A notable example involves the sustainability and human health problems associated with freshwater fishing using plant-based poisons and/or fine mesh nets to harvest freshwater fish. A variant of this story was repeated to multiple interviewers, from at least a dozen Sinoe and Nimba interviewees, with or without an invitation to describe biodiversity threats. Community Association and CFMB members interviewed also made sincere broad generalizations about the value of forests, such as, “The forest is our mother!”

Whether or not a late-stage communications campaign led to behavior change is unknown due to limited monitoring. Certainly the weekly radio program and community theater performances reached a wide audience, but did messages about unsustainable practices and natural resource conflicts actually change behaviors, or improve participation in or support for community forest management?

It is apparent that LRCFP helped catalyze a small but growing group of advocates for conservation and sustainable forest management. This conservation constituency is critical to maintaining and building on the results achieved so far.

Challenges and adaptive management strategies

Impact of episodic funding on biodiversity. The focus on biodiversity results wavered due to initial short term project design and the progression of extensions. Changes in COP also broke the continuity of effort. These factors also diminished project utilization of the primary source of conservation expertise, Conservation International.

Limited incentives for participating in the ENNR Co-Management Committee. The members of the ENNR Co-Management Committee understand that the main intended use of the reserve is conservation, and recognize that it will provide value for their children. But thus far neither they nor the members of their communities receive direct benefits from their

participation in the CMC and the shared management of the reserve with the FDA. For its part, the official policy of the FDA continues to be not to allow community members to harvest NTFPs from ENNR.

Tension over use of ENNR. Despite LRCFP’s work on building trust, and identifying concrete benefits for both sides, it is clear that while both communities and the FDA talk the talk of co-management, they are walking different walks. In Nimba County some community members continue to feel that they own the land of the ENNR but are willing to accept “co-management” as a way to retain a measure of control. Many in the FDA, while nominally in favor of co-management, see it as opening the door for communities to expand their farms into the protected area.

Conservation in WNNR. The Gba pilot community site in Nimba County overlaps with both a planned West Nimba Nature Reserve, and the ArcelorMittal Liberia (AML) concession, which extends to and includes ENNR. These prior claims have impeded the establishment of a community forest in this area.

AML has a corporate social and environmental responsibility program that supports environmental studies and a large conservation and livelihoods program (US\$20 million over 20 years). It is the biggest investor in Liberia, and their Mineral Development Agreement has the force of law, so collaboration with this company is required for both nature reserves and community forests in this area. Fortunately the “exclusion zones” where mining is underway or planned are outside of the ENNR, and most of the Gba forest is likely to not include mine sites. As of the evaluation, the company was working with partners, including LRCFP subcontractor CI, to develop an integrated landscape management program for northern Nimba County, which would likely include some form of collaboration with community members, perhaps through conservation agreements.

Sustainability

Communities will need expert guidance integrating biodiversity planning into community forest management planning, which itself is still at an initial stage. Implementation by the FDA and communities in community forests and the reserve will need technical assistance and adaptive management. Many questions remain to be decided. Will FDA take over the management of organizing annual biomonitoring, or will the communities? If FDA starts, at what point will the plan be turned over to communities? Will CI be able to provide support in the meantime?

Implications for future programs

Use livelihoods activities strategically in community forestry programs. The livelihoods component of LRCFP make sustainable economic and agricultural alternatives available to people in the targeted communities, but does not target specific individuals whose activities directly threaten biodiversity (pitsawyers and commercial hunters). Strategies for relating these two types of activities, other than mere juxtaposition, need to be incorporated in future CF programs.

Institutionalize community biodiversity monitoring. Follow-on investment in CF in Liberia should include community monitoring of biodiversity and an approach to adapt community

forest plans to the results of this monitoring. It would take an estimated four or five years to institutionalize monitoring and develop approaches that could be scaled out for use in other community forests in Liberia.

Prevent leakage through landscape planning and conservation agreements. Rather than the “resources based strategy” followed by LRCFP, investments in the future should include the entire jurisdictions of forest users. Connectivity between forests, both community and conservation forests, should be a priority. Forest cover change monitoring (satellite) would be a useful complement to understand if forest conversion is reduced in the landscape or if pressure is merely shifting to still-unmanaged forest.

Work with conservation NGOs. Progress in CF requires coordination with Liberia’s strong conservation community. Harmonious collaboration will depend on a common definition of CF and the landscape approach used, as well as methods for demarcation and mapping, and criteria for the selection of trainees.

Explore tree crops as an alternative to field crops. Strong potential exists for cocoa and rubber crops in Liberia, especially if the produce is certified. International demand exists. Working in this area would also open the possibility of integrating work in the pilot communities with other ongoing ACIDI activities in the country. ACIDI’s approach does not involve clearing the forest.

Section VIII Communications and Awareness

Background

Communications have been a critical part of LRCFP since its inception. As CF was new to Liberia, there was a huge need to first define the concept for different audiences, refine the definition in the Liberian context and begin to fill in the details of how CF could work. New messages had to be devised during and after the roll out of the CRL.

At the site level, in the process of developing awareness activities, LRCFP staff first learned about effective and appropriate local approaches and times to communicate; they focused on adapting their approach to local communication channels. The use of town criers is an example of this attention to local communication networks.

Components of the communications and awareness strategy that the evaluation team directly experienced included:

- Pamphlets and brochures (for example a brochure on the CRL in Liberian English)
- Radio spots including a quiz show
- Theater troupes that use cultural narratives and role plays to deliver key messages about forest conservation, CF, the CRL and other topics
- Dance troupe that brings excitement and sense of pride in cultural tradition
- Town crier messages in the communities

The MTA recommended that LRCFP promote the project name rather than “TT/ARD” to assure integrated messaging. That recommendation was taken up; communities and other partners recognize and use the name. People also continue to call the project “ARD”, even in the Nimba office. This is likely in part a result of the fact that LRCFP is more difficult to say and remember.

Results

Program level results

Although LRCFP did not systematically track the impact of communication activities, the following conclusions may be drawn with reasonable certainty:

- Communications and awareness are seen to be inexpensive and have potential to broaden impact and scale
- Approaches have wide appeal in rural areas due to cultural references and narratives
- Community skill building adds value to communications
- Cross-site visits add value at site and policy levels (but all FDA should be considered not just CF)
- Community facilitators have been trained and mentored (but \$20/month project stipend is not sustainable)
- The theater group communicates effectively to non-literates about forest management and benefit sharing (CPOP and CFMB)

At the national level, LRCFP supported considerable dialogue among national level actors through workshops, reports, and working groups. Topics ranged from CF itself to the CRL,

regulations, Social Agreements and the National Benefit Sharing Trust. LRCFP also conducted a number of activities to gain input on and publicize national policy issues and legislation, including the NTFP regulations, the CRL, the regulations to the CRL, and the workings of the National Benefit Sharing Trust Board. LRCFP has worked with the Department of Community Forestry and the Public Relations Department of the FDA on radio programming as a platform for the dissemination of CRL. LRCFP and the FDA also identified resource persons selected from a broad spectrum of community forestry stakeholder organizations, such as FDA, FFI, SDI, SADS, IUCN, as well as private individuals with interest in community forestry. Pre-recorded copies of the radio programs were circulated to community radio stations throughout Liberia as well as national radio stations in Monrovia. LRCFP also produced and disseminated a simplified version of the CRL in Liberian English.

Other CF themes were clarified through four policy briefs by the senior land tenure specialist.

Site level results

Communication in rule development. LRCFP staff has used a number of communication techniques to open dialogue about forest management rules and negotiate common understandings related to the application of these rules. The program makes the connection between taboos and the new rules. They are also relying on hunters to broaden community understanding of their practices now incorporated into CF rules, such as restrictions on hunting pregnant animals. Immigrants unaware of these rules are an important audience. The program builds on these traditions in skits that role play conflicts related to rules and regulations. Theater troupes play an important role in the pilot communities. Through skits the program could ask men and women of communities how they manage resources and identify key messages. For example, killing fish in the river with poison was identified by communities as a behavior they wanted to change. They use skits and role-play to work through ways to change the behavior.

Staff also conducts workshops focusing on differences of opinion concerning rules and addressing bylaws and the constitution of bylaws. These efforts have helped CFMBs develop bylaws and consider the impacts of restrictions on animals in the community forests and the ENNR.

Other results of LRCFP communication activities at the site level include:

- Community members met with lawmakers at local and national level and were able to successfully articulate their positions
- AGRHA notes that communities now make presentations and develop their own proposals
- Communication approaches help the FFSs discuss technologies and methodologies and helps the CPOPs and CPGs to measure labor time in processing

Challenges and adaptive management strategies

Absence of M&E. LRCFP has not systematically measured the impact of these communications activities. The PMP tracked the number of messages but not the

effectiveness of messages. This is not to say that staff has blindly pushed communication efforts out into audiences; they have used observation and less structured methods to assess impact, talking with audience members and trainees, for example.

Limited set of approaches. Staff did not employ targeted behavior change and social marketing approaches. One indication of this lack of an intention to market the approach is that the CRL brochure, radio spots and awareness activities highlight LRCFP rather than creating a local brand or identity for community forestry.

Annexes

Annex 1 LRCFP Workplan from Quarter 14

2.1 Component/Program Objective 1: Legal and policy framework developed and strengthened to support community management, sustainable use of natural resources, and biodiversity conservation in forests

Activity 1.1: Support implementation of the CRL

Expected Outcome: Implementing regulations developed that clarify ambiguities, mitigate risks of abuse, and fully support the requirements of a Community Forest Management Plan under the CRL

Activity 1.2: Strengthen understanding through public outreach on LRCFP and the community forestry framework

Expected Outcome: Increased public understanding, oversight, and support for an enabling community forestry and forest resource rights framework and for its implementation at four pilot sites

Activity 1.3: Build capacity in community forestry at the national level under the enabling framework

Expected Outcome: Increased institutional capacity, commitment, and leadership for effective, equitable, and inclusive community stewardship under an enabling framework

Activity 1.4: Support “alternative” approaches to forest conservation through community forestry

Expected Outcome: Co-management between FDA and communities underway for the ENNR; co-management in other areas under discussion

Activity 1.5: Advise implementation of “social agreements” between concessionaires and communities

Expected Outcome: A benefit-sharing trust established for communities affected by logging concessions and, if opportunity arises, improved “social agreements” between timber concessionaires and communities

Activity 1.6: Participate in forestry sector coordination

Expected Outcome: Experience shared and lessons learned through participation in forestry sector coordination

2.2 Component/Program Objective 2: land tenure and property rights systems for forest lands developed and strengthened to secure rights for natural resource users/owners

Activity 2.1: Develop working relationships with the Land Commission, relevant national-level agencies, and other donor efforts

Expected Outcome: Improved balance in the priority the LC gives to developing policy responses to rural land issues, with LTPR issues in community forest lands forming a significant part of the LC's ongoing agenda

Activity 2.2: Strengthen working relationship with local governments

Expected Outcome: Traditional and local leadership structures and customary land management contributing to more sustainable forest and land management through engagement with county and national level decision-makers

Activity 2.3: Build capacity in LTPR

Expected Outcome: A cadre of trained individuals that can begin to address LTPR issues in forest lands

Activity 2.4: Provide demand-driven STTA to support the Land Commission

Expected Outcome: Improved understanding by the Land Commissioners and LC staff of rural land tenure and ownership issues, helping them make connections between land, gender, and rural poverty.

2.3 Component/Program Objective 3: management of community forests and conservation of their biodiversity improved, and economic opportunities increased for communities and other user groups

Activity 3.1: Carry out threats analysis and supporting activities to ensure significant biodiversity objectives are met

Expected Outcome: Community- and forest user-defined, research-supported mechanism(s) to monitor threats to biodiversity and natural resources

Activity 3.2: Establish and strengthen management institutions

Expected Outcome: Forest management bodies and community assemblies have developed core competencies that include legitimacy, participatory processes, regulatory authority, and conflict resolution (as described in the LRCP PMP)

Activity 3.3: Build the capacities of community organizations

Expected Outcome: Community-level capacities consolidated to implement community-based NRM and biodiversity conservation

Activity 3.4: Prepare community forest management plans

Expected Outcome: Communities enabled to manage and use their forests and forest resources efficiently and sustainably (see also Activity 1.4, regarding co-management of the ENNR). Specifically, four communities have delineated forest management landscapes from farm lands to secure their old growth forests (and degraded portions thereof) totaling about 100,000 hectares (of which at least 25,000 hectares are biologically significant) under a community-based forest management system (rather than the current situation of open access).

Activity 3.5: Develop livelihood improvement opportunities

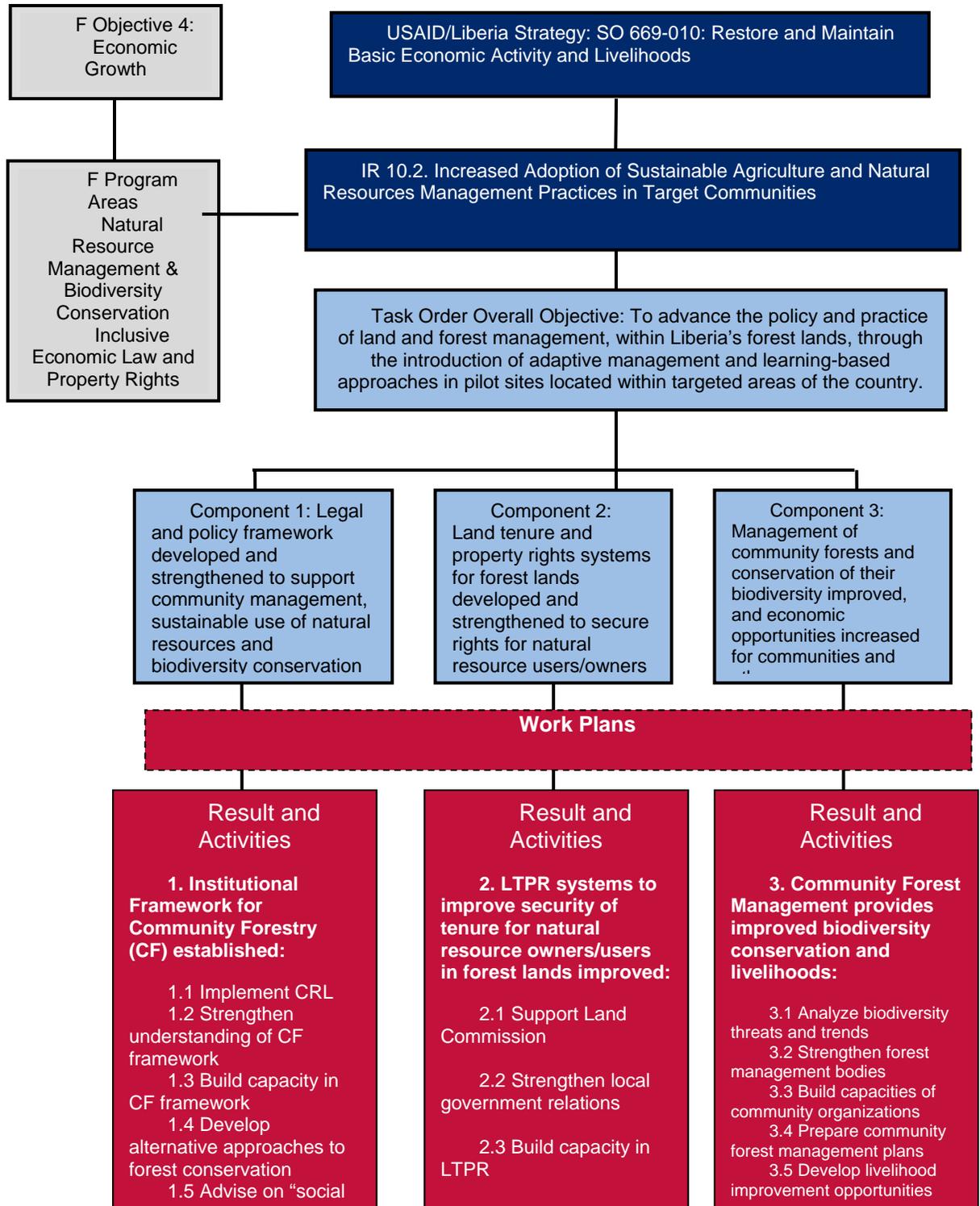
Expected Outcomes: Community groups are producing, processing, and marketing more consistently, competitively, and sustainably. Farmers and resource users are developing relationships with traders; farmers and resource users are testing and adapting improved technology and exploring livelihood options “entrepreneurially”, and; Master farmers are teaching other farmers within the communities improved technologies.

Activity 3.6: Strengthen community-level understanding of land rights and community forestry

Expected Outcome: Communities empowered and community forestry bodies legitimized to take up stronger roles and assume the larger responsibilities offered them under the CRL and other legislation, through practical understanding of and skill in applying forest governance, land rights, conflict management, and co-management principles

Annex 2 Results Framework and LRCFP Workplan Activities, Quarter 10

("F" Objective and Program Areas refers to USAID's worldwide Foreign Assistance Framework)



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- Zor – Draft CF Management Agreement
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- Appendix 3 -- Zor – Officials in CFM Institutions
- Appendix 4 – Zor CFMB Revised Constitution

- Appendix 5 – Tree Species

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**STATEMENT OF WORK
FINAL EVALUATION OF THE USAID/LIBERIA
LAND RIGHTS AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM**

Background

A central dilemma throughout Liberia's history has been that the country's rich natural resources have only benefited a small number of Liberians. USAID is supporting community forestry and property rights in Liberia because they provide an entry point to address these fundamental inequities and help foster better governance. Historically Liberia had a stronger emphasis on larger scale commercial exploitation in the forestry and agriculture sectors, with relatively little attention paid to substantive engagement with local communities that should ultimately benefit from economic development. Rights-based approaches to land and forest management complement and enhance development programs, particularly those focused on improving natural resource management and developing marketable products based on sustainable natural resource use.

USAID Liberia initiated the Land Rights and Community Forestry Program (LRCFP) in December 2007 to help the Government of Liberia craft new policies and institutions and build capacity at national and local levels in order to implement new governance systems for transparent and equitable management of land and forest resources. The LRCFP is focused primarily on community forestry, but also addresses commercial forestry and conservation activities as these intersect with the rights and responsibilities of rural landholders. The LRCFP's primary focus has been on pilot sites in Nimba and Sinoe counties where customary and mixed tenure systems prevail and where community forestry pilot activities are being undertaken. The program works closely with forestry and agricultural institutions to craft solutions that promote economic growth while assuring the rights of the poor, including potentially disenfranchised groups such as women. It also collaborates with conservation organizations to create and adapt land and forest use rules and regulations to sustain biodiversity.

The overall goal of the LRCFP program is to advance the policy and practice of land and forest management in Liberia through adaptive management and learning-based approaches. This is being accomplished through a variety of means including:

1. Improve legal and policy environment for land tenure, property rights and natural resource management
2. Build the capacity of communities and their governmental and non-governmental partners to develop and sustain community forestry programs
3. Generate environmentally-sustainable and equitable economic benefits for rural residents. Underlying these actions is the need to develop, strengthen and foster the enabling environment and to complement and support efforts by other actors in this sector.

A midterm assessment completed in July 2009 documented significant achievements of LRCFP such as an inclusive, measured approach that reached out to all stakeholders from national to local level, and successful launching of field offices in two areas good for pilot community forestry activities. LRCFP also was seen to have significantly improved relations with FDA in the community (notably around East Nimba Nature Reserve) that mitigated conflict and opened avenues for collaboration and co-management.

The assessment made numerous recommendations including:

- Strengthen government relations through a more structured and holistic relationship with FDA.
- Do not engage in major scaling up/out of LRCFP: work within existing large communities and scale out from them as makes programmatic sense (e.g., adding additional, contiguous forests and forest user communities).
- As possible, complement LRCFP with other USAID investments in agriculture and economic growth, health, education and democracy and governance programs in the pilot areas.
- Develop a robust livelihood strategy for LRCFP that moves beyond producer groups and small grants. Revise the small grant process as it is cumbersome and not appropriate for local groups. Move toward targeted support to forest-based value chains and assure that benefits from these value chains are directly linked to better forest management.
- For biodiversity targeting, carry out site-specific threats analysis, align activities to address threats and design monitoring protocols to measure threat reduction. Consider that “open access” situations are likely to be the root cause threats to Liberia’s forest biodiversity.
- Harmonize communications messages, approaches and “behavior change” strategies. While a lot has been done to promote policy awareness a more structured approach to helping communities link to local government and to policy advocacy opportunities is needed; this will help with the longer term goal of building grassroots civil society.
- Develop a clear gender strategy especially with respect to how women access, use and benefit from forestry. Recruit and retain women into the LRCFP team through outreach and mentoring. Familiarize the team with best practices in gender programming for forestry programs.

Among other tasks, the evaluation will examine if and how assessment recommendations were implemented and what barriers emerged to changing course.

Objectives

- 1) *Document results, accomplishments, challenges and problems*
 - a. Measure (qualitatively and quantitatively as possible) actual results against expected results in each component
 - b. Document perceptions of LRCFP approach and accomplishments by different stakeholders, especially direct beneficiaries
 - c. Determine effectiveness of integration of different components in terms of integrated results (e.g., synergies between different component, efficiencies in delivery)
 - d. Determine robustness of the project design, initial development hypothesis, and adaptive management strategies used to deal with changing scenarios, recommendations from the midterm assessment, and other unanticipated shifts
 - e. Analyze policy impacts at national and site levels

- f. Analyze gender impacts
 - g. Assess impact of LRCFP on USAID/Liberia program and within USAID
- 2) *Evaluate efficiency and effectiveness of project management*
- a. Carry out budget analysis to show areas of major investment, and shifts in budget, in relation to impacts/results
 - b. Describe strengths and weaknesses in staffing
 - c. Document USAID concerns and kudos concerning management
 - d. Document management of subcontracts and grants
 - e. Document synergies with any other USAID programs

Tasks

- Review existing LRCFP documentation
- Review key USAID/Liberia program documents
- Review and analyze pertinent reports, assessments, policies, and other recent key documentation on land rights and community forestry in Liberia. The evaluation will look at LRCFP in light of the “enabling policy” environment in Liberia: as a factor in shaping design, implementation and adaptive management.
- Conduct interviews with relevant stakeholders and program staff
- Visit field offices and pilot communities and conduct group and key informant interviews
- Photograph key biophysical conditions and impacts at sites attributed to LRCFP

Team

Diane Russell, EGAT/NRM/B, team leader, overall program and policy analysis, USAID views, gender

Andy Tobiason, EGAT/NRM/B, biodiversity and M&E, site level Land Tenure and Property Rights (LTPR), photographer

David Miller, consultant (30 days), community forestry, stakeholder analysis, integration of program components and results, coordination of report

Ken Hasson, agriculture/food security officer, analysis of livelihoods and agriculture interventions

LTPR consultant (5 days), analysis of LRCFP land tenure and property rights results (policy level)

Timing and Duration of Assignment: Diane Russell and Andy Tobiason arrive in-country on August 14 and depart on August 25 or 26, 2011. The Mission will be debriefed before departure of Russell and Tobiason, and receive a draft evaluation report by September 15. A final report for Mission approval will be provided no later than October 7, 2011.

Reporting: The team will report to Daniel Whyner of USAID/Liberia for planning and implementation of this Terms of Reference.

Annex 5 Partial List of People Interviewed

Wednesday 16th

Saye Thompson Chair CMC, Chair CFMB
Earnest Value Member of CMC and CJFMB
Doris Payne CFMB member Gba
Secretary for CJFMC and CMC
Jeanette Carter Technical Support Land Commission

Thursday 17th

Peter Zurweh Chief elder of Zorgowee. CA from Gba community
Mary Duo Chairperson of Zor CA. Trad Council Chair
Rebecca Yeanay Cassava Processing Group, Zolowee
Yoih Brown Cassava Processing Group, Zolowee
Steven Flomo Commercial Palm Oil Processing Group Zolowee
Richard Pey Commercial Palm Oil Processing Group Zolowee
Stanley Toe Program Officer Land Commission
Suzanne G. Vaye Commissioner Education & Outreach, Land Commission

Friday 18th

Emilia Mantor FFS participant
Linda Garkbah NRFP Financial Secretary
Wilfred T. Gayeeleh NTFP Chairperson
Jerry S. Gono Master Farmer
Theresa Delee NTFP Secretary
Johnson Lugon FFS student Zor community
Helen Weanquoi JFMB
Jacob Darlington CFMB Gba
Joseph Yormie Paramount Chief, Nimba

Saturday 19th

Andrew F. Johnjoe AGRHA
Josephus Nyepan AGRHA
Patrick Voneh Nimba County Land Commissioner

Monday 21st

Bill Woods Director of FTI
Othello Brandy Land Commission Chair
FDA staff, including
Moses Wogbeh Managing Director
Lawrence Greene Manager, Community Forestry, FDA
John Kantor Manager, Research and Development Department, FDA

Thursday 24th

Sinoe Community Members, including
Alex Wloh CFMB
James Kelgha CFMB Chair
Jackie Nipan FFS student
Othello Snoh General Secretary CFMB

Alfred Snoh	Cassava Producer Group chair
Seyh Dia	NTFP participant
Tomas	NTFP participant
Rolan	NTFP participant

John Howell Environmental Advisor, ArcelorMittal Liberia

Multiple interviews with TT/ARD and ACDI/VOCA staff across the two weeks.

Paul De Wit. Paul De Wit is an independent consultant with 30 years of experience, mainly on the African continent, on post conflict land tenure reform, land policy development, participatory land use management and territorial development strategies. He is a reference consultant on land issues for a number of international organizations and institutions, including FAO and UN-Habitat.

Dr. Ken Hasson. An Agriculture Development Officer with USAID in Liberia and has been with the Agency for 1.5 years. A former Peace Corps fisheries volunteer, Ken's expertise is in aquatic diseases of farmed fish and shrimp and, to a lesser degree, in extensive and semi-intensive aquaculture systems. During his 30 year career in this field, Ken has given numerous aquatic disease presentations, authored 20 peer reviewed papers describing novel bacterial and viral diseases and worked with numerous fish and shrimp farmers throughout Latin America and the U.S. to resolve production problems resulting from infectious and non-infectious diseases. Review of the LRCFP livelihood component represents the first formal evaluation process Ken has undertaken since joining USAID.

David M. Miller. An international program design consultant, Dr. Miller has provided technical assistance to natural resources management and agriculture projects in Africa for over 18 years. A program and training specialist for the US Peace Corps for six years, David also supervised Peace Corps' technical team supporting their programs across the world. His specialties include training design, and land tenure. Dr. Miller holds a PhD in development anthropology from Boston University.

Diane Russell. A USAID Social Science and Biodiversity Advisor, Diane joined the EGAT/NRM biodiversity-forestry team in August 2005. Her academic credentials include a BA (Barnard College/Columbia University), MA and PhD (Boston University) in Anthropology and Masters in Environmental Management (Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies). She worked for six years as a scientist within the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR): two years as post-doc at the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA)'s Humid Forest Station in Cameroon and four years as a program leader for markets and conservation-development linkages at the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) based in Nairobi, Kenya. In the 1990s she spent almost four years with the USAID-funded Biodiversity Conservation Network/Biodiversity Support Program (BCN/BSP) based in the Philippines and Fiji as a Senior Program Officer and social scientist. Her USAID experience includes being a "local-hire" social scientist for USAID/Kinshasa in the 1980s, a stint as Research Manager within the Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE/RRS contract), a member of the Strategic Objective Team of the Central African Regional Program on the Environment (CARPE) as well as being Environment Advisor to USAID/Kinshasa during the reestablishment of that Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In her current position, Diane has been AOTR for the Global Conservation Program (GCP), including managing the final evaluation of GCP and the Business and Biodiversity Offsets Program (BBOP) and is currently an AOTR for the SCAPES LWA with PACT and partners, as well as alternate AOTR for the TransLinks LWA. She assists Missions and USAID/W with design, evaluation, assessment and communications relating to biodiversity with an emphasis on economic, social and cultural dimensions. Diane has visited numerous field sites, lectures and supervises students as an adjunct faculty member in the anthropology department at University of Maryland, and

published a book in 2004 with Camilla Harshbarger: *Groundwork for community-based conservation: Strategies for social research* (Altamira Press). Forthcoming is a chapter on anthropology and conservation for an interdisciplinary textbook.

Annex 7 Evaluation Itinerary

August 2011

				12 Fri	13 Sat	14 Su
				Russell arrives in Monrovia	Miller and Tobiason arrive	Plan with Whyner and Hasson
15 Mon	16 Tues	17 Wed	18 Thu	19 Fri	20 Sat	21 Su
Logistics and introduction with COP	Travel to Sanniquellie Meet LRCFP team. Dinner with county and city officials	Interviews with Gba community members. De Wit arrives in Monrovia	Interviews with a limited number of representatives from the Zor community.	Interviews in Gba. Visits to FFS fields and oil press. De Wit arrives Sanniquellie	Interviews with LRCFP staff. AGRHA, NAEAL,	Returned to Monrovia
22 Mon	23 Tues	24 Wed	24 Thu	26 Fri	27 Sat	
Interviews at FDA, FTI, Land Commission	National holiday Further interviews with COTR. Reading and writing	National holiday. The team assembled notes, and researched Interview with CI representative.	Interviews with representatives from Sinoe community. Interviews with LRCFP staff. Interview with ArcelorMittal Environment Adviser.	Mission debrief and depart	De Wit departs	