



USAID | LIBERIA

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Economic Growth: Forestry & Land Tenure

The US Mission in Liberia's support to the forestry sector in Liberia started in 2004 with the creation of the Liberia Forest Initiative (LFI). This initiative was launched by USAID and the U.S. State Department with the goal of coordinating assistance to initiate needed reforms in Liberia's forestry sector. Importantly, The LFI has been working to address the recommendations for forest sector reform issued by the United Nations Security Council, reestablish and improve the government's stewardship of the country's forests and ensure that forest sector resources are effectively managed for the benefit of the Liberian people. With leadership from provided by the USDA Forest Service, the LFI engaged a number of international non-governmental organizations such as Conservation International, Fauna and Flora International and the Environmental Law Institute. Later in 2004 and 2005, several multilateral organizations, including the World Bank, the European Commission, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) joined the initiative, giving the LFI partnership a strong multilateral and multinational character. LFI support to forestry sector reform is targeted on strengthening the three main pillars of commercial forestry, community forestry and conservation (also known as the three "C"s).

The LFI has succeeded in restoring confidence in the future management of Liberia's forests. With support from the LFI the Government of Liberia successfully completed a review of all forest concessions and declared them null and void based on non-compliance with the rule of law. LFI members then worked with colleagues in the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) and in civil society organizations over the course of 2006 to draft a new forestry law for the nation that was enacted last October and mandated key reforms. The USAID/USDA Forest Service partnership also funded improvements and provided technical support to enhance the capacity of the FDA to manage Liberia's forests and has boosted support to the country's civil society organizations to more effectively hold the government accountable for better forest management.

LFI activities have generated important synergies with other US government assistance programs in Liberia. LFI-driven institutional reform of the FDA is being complemented with the support of the GEMAP program. The work of the Liberia Community Infrastructure Project is improving the road infrastructure needed to make commercial and community forestry activities more economically viable. Improvements in the agricultural sector through the Sustainable Tree Crops Program also will be used to support activities in areas where community forestry activities will be implemented. In addition, LFI's support for forest sector reform underpins US government assistance to fulfilling the role of civil society organizations and the media as the public's watchdogs for better governance in post-conflict Liberia.

Some of the main activities in the forestry sector that have been supported by USAID include the following:

- **Commercial Forestry** - USAID has provided a projected \$4.4 million since 2004 in support through the LFI to institute good governance in the commercial forestry sector as well as supporting institutional reforms at the FDA. In terms of good governance, USAID support to the LFI has led to the forest concession review process; the drafting of the Forestry Reform Law of 2006; the development of regulations, policies and procedures needed to make the law operational; the establishment of transparent competitive bidding procedures for logging contracts; and the institution of a chain of custody program to track all timber logged in the country. Specific USAID support for FDA has been targeted on implementing a right-sizing exercise to reorient the FDA to meet its new mission; improvements to the accounting systems of the agency; the development of a strategic planning unit; and enhancements to timber contract administration. These efforts have been coordinated for the past three years by a Forestry Technical Advisor provided through an inter-agency agreement with the USDA Forest Service and USAID.
- **Conservation** - USAID has provided \$1.4 million in funding to Conservation International and its development partner, Action Aid Liberia to implement the new Civilian Conservation Corps activity with communities located around Sapo National Park. This program will seek to develop viable alternatives to unsustainable natural resource use practices that can be replicated in and around other potential protected areas in the country and that will build on previous investments by conservation NGOs in the country. USAID is a key participant in discussions between the FDA and donors on the development of a protected area system for Liberia.
- **Community Forestry and Land Tenure** - Support for community forestry and land tenure activities has benefited from USAID-funded analytical work and a new \$5.5 million land rights and community forestry program is currently being designed by the Mission. The development of community forestry programs will focus on increasing economic benefits to the citizens of the country while also introducing sustainable practices in an effort to protect the country's extensive forest resources. USAID is an active member and will be providing support to the newly-formed Community Forestry Working Group, a group comprised of representatives from donor institutions, the FDA, conservation organizations and civil society who are interested in collaborating in the promotion of community forestry programs in the country. USAID/Liberia also recognizes that a major concern facing transparency and good governance in the forestry sector is the current confusion over land and property rights in Liberia. Both statutory (based on deeds) and customary (based on traditional ownership) systems of land ownership are recognized in Liberia. Even within those two categories there are conflicts related to duplicative and overlapping land claims that will require adjudication to resolve. For this reason, the Mission is investing in innovative

ways to address land and property rights issues through the new land rights and community forestry program. USAID/Liberia already participates in on-going national-level land and property rights discussions and will support needed reforms under this new activity. The mission recently hired a land and community forestry advisor through the USDA Forest Service who will manage the land rights and community forestry program.

Plans/Current Priorities:

- A new land rights and community forestry activity will be designed and competed in FY07;
- Coordination will continue with Sustainable Tree Crops Program (IITA/IEHA) on tree crops/agroforestry systems for smallholders and exploring ways to link this program to other forestry programs;
- Attention to commercial forestry issues through LFI is ongoing and will require continued investment; and
- The Conservation International activity will scale up by late 2007 to other biologically significant areas of Liberia.

Partners:

- *Commercial:* the LFI is by its very nature a partnership between many donor and technical institutions (as discussed above) to support the FDA and other local organizations concerned with good governance in the forestry sector.
- *Community Forestry:* Research on how to design and introduce effective community forestry programs have benefited from collaboration with international partners from the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), namely the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), and World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), as well as other international partners such as Fauna and Flora International, Conservation International and the World Bank. The Community-Based Forest Resources Management Department at the FDA as well as the local civil society institutions Green Advocates and the Sustainable Development Institute are also key local partners.
- *Conservation:* USAID has partnered with Conservation International through its grant for rehabilitation and community development around Sapo National Park and also with the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility in support to the FDA conservation Department in the development of the country's protected area system.