



USAID | **LIBERIA**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**MID TERM
ASSESSMENT
OF LAND
RIGHTS AND
COMMUNITY
FORESTRY
PROGRAM
(LRCFP)**



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGRHA	Action for Greater Harvest
ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
BCN	Biodiversity Conservation Network
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
CA	Cooperative Agreement
CI	Conservation International
CF	Community Forestry
CFWG	Community Forestry Working Group
CJPS	Center for Justice and Peace Studies
COP	Chief of Party
COPAN	Consolidation of Protected Areas Network Programme – World Bank
COTR	Contracting Officer’s Technical Representative
CRL	Community Rights Law
CY	Calendar Year
DG	Democracy and Governance
DNH	Do No Harm
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessments
ENNR	East Nimba Nature Reserve
ETOA	Environmental Threats and Opportunities Assessment
FDA	Forestry Development Authority
FFI	Fauna and Flora International
FMC	Forest Management Committee
FLMC	Forest and Land Management Committee
FOS	Foundations of Success
FY	Fiscal Year
GA	General Assembly
GC	Governance Commission
GIS	Geographic Information System
GoL	Government of the Republic of Liberia
ICAA	Initiative for Conservation in the Andean Amazon
IEE	Initial Environmental Examination
IPR	Individual Property Rights
LC	Land Commission
LCIP	Liberia Community Infrastructure Program
LTPR	Land Tenure and Property Rights
LRCFP	Land Rights and Community Forestry Program
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAEAL	National Adult Education Association of Liberia
NCRC	Nature Conservation Research Center
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product(s)

NWP	Nature, Wealth and Power
PA	Protected Area
PLACE	Prosperity, Livelihoods and Conserving Ecosystems
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
SGS	Société Générale de Surveillance
SoW	Statement of Work
SNP	Sapo National Park
STCP	Sustainable Tree Crops Program
STEWARD	Sustainable and Thriving Environments for West African Regional Development
STTA	Short-Term Technical Assistance
TBD	To Be Determined
TO	Task Order
TRA	Threat Reduction Assessment
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VT	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
WCF	Wild Chimpanzee Foundation
WRI	World Resources Institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

The Land Rights and Community Forestry Program (LRCFP) takes an inclusive, measured approach that reaches out to all stakeholders from national to local level. This approach is appropriate given the newness of these concepts in Liberia, the lack of an experienced cadre of professionals to administer such activities and the need to mitigate potential conflicts and communication gaps.

The LRCFP design and concept have held up despite serious policy hurdles such as the lack of a Community Rights Law (CRL) and Land Commission (LC). Staff and partners feel strongly that it is important to link land tenure/property rights (LTPR) with community forestry (CF) as LTPR is the basis for rights of communities to forest resources.

The project has recruited and trained an excellent staff and set of partners with high skill levels and commitment. Government (Forest Development Authority-FDA, Governance Commission-GC) and communities alike praised both the technical skills and dedication of James Murombedzi and Sam Koffa. Subcontractors appreciated the inclusive and approachable management style of LRCFP Chief of Party (COP) Ian Deshmukh.

LRCFP has not experienced any significant administrative issues. Delays in getting subcontractors on board were difficult but understandable. Subcontractors have been involved in program development from the outset despite lack of formal contracts. LRCFP in turn praised USAID Contract Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) Dan Whyner as providing excellent guidance and support.

LRCFP has successfully launched field offices in two areas. Field officers have spent a great deal of time in the communities, which has led to the successful creation of Forest (and Land) Management Committees (FMCs/FLMCs). Local leadership is engaged and supportive of LRCFP and communication and outreach channels are open to the whole community through General Assemblies (GAs).

The sites chosen are good for pilot community forestry activities: communities have potential to manage large forest areas, provide interesting contrasts and are in appropriate locations in terms of use of biodiversity earmarked funds (harbor significant biodiversity and, in the case of Nimba, are contiguous with a protected area). The considerable size of these communities provides an opportunity to make larger scale impacts.

LRCFP has significantly improved relations with FDA in the community (notably around East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR) in Nimba) that has mitigated conflict and opened avenues for collaboration and co-management. Moses Wogbeh (FDA community forestry division chief) recounted that when he was recently at ENNR he saw youth within the FDA compound preparing a communication for FDA, something that would never be seen in the past. This rapprochement has been attributed in part to LRCFP. Intra-community conflict related to control and ownership of forests in Nimba has also been mitigated and joint forest management committee formed between the Zor and Gba communities.

Technical training opportunities and short term technical assistance (STTA) are highly appreciated by subcontracts and other partners, notably training on Geographic Positioning Systems(GPS) and conflict mitigation, report on best practices in community forestry and assessment of social agreements for commercial forestry contracts. One impact is that the assessment of social agreements is leading to a rethinking by FDA and partners of how to distribute benefits and how social agreements fit with other kinds of rights and responsibilities.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Start planning for the sustainability of community forestry investments by assessing capacity, resources of all potential investors and timeframes needed to achieve objectives.

Continue funding LRCFP for at least two years to assure impact—however even this timeframe is surely not going to be adequate to build the needed capacity for CF and reform of LTPR within customary forest areas.

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.

Lack of framing policies such as the CRL should not significantly inhibit LRCFP action. LRCFP and FDA should assess the potential to move ahead with CF under Chapter 10 of the National Forestry Reform Law of 2006. FMCs require sustained support to develop their internal management capacity and to interface with FDA, the private sector and within their own communities.

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. It will not be possible to adequately scale this approach up to reach enough people at the site. As well, it encourages people to move from handouts to proposal writing rather than from handouts to farm- and forest-based businesses. There is urgent need for a strategy to provide some benefits to those who cannot and will not qualify for small grants.

- Move toward targeted support to forest-based value chains and assure that benefits from these value chains are directly linked to better forest management.
- Harmonize approaches within LRCFP (partners ACIDI/VOCA, Action for Greater Harvest-AGRHA, Conservation International-CI) and share experiences with other USAID enterprise projects.
- Map out key market systems (key actors, financials, locations and other variables that will provide data on potential entry points) and engage a range of market actors.
- Promote entrepreneurship through business training, entrepreneur “incubators,” support to small-scale traders and other market actors with realistic understanding of barriers to entrepreneurship (e.g., ethnic tensions between producers/traders, jealousy related to success)

- Analyze and pilot ways that communities can get more value out of “illegal” and high value enterprises such as bushmeat hunting and pit-sawing.

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. An appreciative inquiry approach will build local ownership.

Develop a clear gender strategy especially with respect to how women access, use and benefit from forestry. Find ways to recruit and retain women on to the LRCFP team through outreach and mentoring. Familiarize the team with best practices in gender programming for forestry programs.

OVERVIEW

LRCFP

ARD, Inc. signed a Task Order (TO) with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in December 2007 to implement LRCFP in Liberia. Implementation of the two-year program in-country began in January 2008. The program’s overall goal is to advance the policy and practice of community-based land and forest management in Liberia through adaptive management and learning-based approaches.

The TO Statement of Work (SoW) identifies three major LRCFP components as follows.

Component 1: Legal and policy framework developed and strengthened to support community management and sustainable use of natural resources, and biodiversity in forestlands. Emphasis is on specific steps necessary to support the development, strengthening, and harmonization of a legislative framework that supports community management and maximizes investment and economic growth options from the sustainable exploitation of natural resources.

Component 2: Land tenure and property rights (LTPR) systems developed and strengthened to secure rights for natural resource users/owners. To support the sustainable and equitable management of land, forests and other natural resources, individuals and communities require clearer access, use and ownership rights.

Component 3: Management of community forests and conservation of their biodiversity improved and economic opportunities increased for communities and other user groups. Activities promote a multifaceted approach to community forestry including developing capacity to implement forest management practices, improving opportunities for livelihoods through sustainable management of natural resources and fostering economic linkages between smallholders (and communities) and market opportunities.

To achieve these objectives LRCFP was designed to:

- Improve legal and policy environment for community tenure rights within forest lands
- Improve community-based natural resource management and biodiversity conservation

- Build the capacity of communities and their governmental and non-governmental partners to develop and sustain community forestry programs
- Provide environmentally-sustainable and equitable economic benefits for rural residents

Underlying these actions is the need to develop, strengthen and foster the enabling environment through participatory implementation of pilot activities, in Nimba and Sinoe counties, that could be replicable in other areas of the country.

During 2008 LRCFP identified and worked with four pilot communities; two in Nimba (Gba and Zor) and two in Sinoe (Nitrian and Nimopoh) and these remain the focus of activities during the first part of 2009. To date LRCFP has developed community profiles for all four communities and identified producer groups as potential grantees in Gba and Zor. Each of these communities has begun establishment of a community forest management body that will seek to develop and implement a forest land management plan as well as provide a participatory interface with FDA. Community groups in Nimba are currently developing their ideas prior to preparing formal grant proposals. Policy level activities have been largely held up by failure to pass the CRL and lack of an established LC.

KEY ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

- Do the initial design, and the assumptions within it, particularly combining CF and LTPR, hold up?
- What is the appropriate time frame for LRCFP and how has the initial short time frame (two years) affected implementation?
- How have recent policy bottlenecks—lack of LC, failure to pass the CRL—affected LRCFP? Does this lack of enabling legislation seriously compromise LRCFP’s mission?
- Scale and project impact. Are the pilot sites too big or too small and is the project sufficiently focused to have measurable impacts on Liberia’s rural poor?
- Use of biodiversity funds. LRCFP will start using mainly biodiversity funds by 2010. Is the project appropriately aligned to use biodiversity funds according to USAID’s Biodiversity Code?
- Team integration. The project has four international subcontractors, including two with offices in-country, and three national subcontractors. How will this team diversity be managed and are there any significant overlaps or confusion about roles and responsibilities? This question is particularly relevant as the three national subcontractors move out into the sites.
- Potential platform for other USAID investments? Could the LRCFP sites be focal areas for USAID to concentrate actions in other sectors such as education, democracy and governance (DG) health and economic growth? Can the groups formed with the project such as the Forest Management Committees (FMCs) and producer groups also work in other sectors, particularly with agriculture?

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

The LRCFP design and concept have held up despite serious policy hurdles such as the lack of a CRL and the passage of an act to establish a national LC, which just occurred at the end of June. Staff and partners feel strongly that it is important to link LTPR with CF as LTPR is the basis for rights of communities to forest resources. Staff continues to feel that the idea of merging CF and LTPR was inspired because you can't tackle CF without LTPR. Nevertheless, even as these two areas are conceptually united they must often be functionally separated. The LC has been a long time in coming and CRL is highly politicized thus hampering key links between work at the sites and policy development.

LRCFP is taking an inclusive, participatory and measured approach that reaches out to all stakeholders from national to local level. This approach is appropriate given the newness of the concepts in Liberia, the lack of an experienced cadre of professionals to administer such activities and the need to mitigate potential conflicts and communication gaps.

The project has recruited and trained an excellent staff and set of partners with high skill levels and commitment. Government (FDA and GC) and communities alike praised the technical expertise and commitment (especially to community level efforts) of James Murombedzi and Sam Koffa. "ARD has been a real help to us. James is excellent," remarked Othello Brandy of the Government Reform Commission (GRC) in reference to James' assistance with getting the LC set up and advising on potential reforms to customary tenure.



James Murombedzi with Chief in Gba

Subcontractors appreciated the management approach of LRCFP Chief of Party (COP) Ian Deshmukh because he took care to include them in the project from the outset, even when the subcontracts were not finalized; overall he is seen as consultative and helpful. The subcontractors without local offices (World Resources Institute-WRI, Virginia Tech-VT) felt that in-country support to their teams was excellent. These partners reported that they consistently received all the logistical and technical help that they needed to complete their assignments.

The partnership brings together an impressive array of technical expertise and experience across the sectors. It is not without some disagreement on technical issues but overall communication is excellent and there is progress in harmonizing the approach and technical assistance provided to government and communities.

LRCFP has not experienced any significant administrative issues; delays in getting subcontractors on board were difficult but understandable. Subcontractors were involved in program development from the outset. Despite delays in getting contracts finalized with local partners, they understand the delays and feel that the time was well spent in training to understand the concepts of LRCFP. They have positive things to say about interactions with ARD and Ian specifically. Pierre Méthot of WRI remarked for example that "ARD is one of the finest consulting firms around. They do real quality work."

LRCFP in turn praised USAID COTR Dan Whyner as providing excellent guidance and support.

LRCFP has successfully launched field offices in two areas. Field officers have spent a great deal of time in the communities, which has led to the successful creation of FMCs/FLMCs. Local leadership is engaged and supportive of LRCFP and communication channels are open to the whole community through GAs.

The sites chosen are good for pilot community forestry activities: communities have potential to manage large forest areas, provide interesting contrasts and are appropriate locations in terms of the biodiversity earmark (significant biodiversity; in the case of Nimba, contiguous with a protected area). There is high potential for Bleh forest, identified with communities through LRCFP in the Nimba area, as an important community forest area.

LRCFP has significantly improved relations with FDA in the community (notably around ENNR in Nimba) that has mitigated conflict and opened avenues for collaboration and co-management. Moses Wogbeh (FDA community forestry division chief) recounted that when he was up at ENNR recently he saw youth using the palava hut within the FDA compound to prepare a communications for FDA, something that would never be seen in the past. This rapprochement is needed to move forward on a conservation strategy for ENNR and surrounding landscapes in Nimba and has been attributed to LRCFP.

The team has been active in government fora such as the Community Forestry Working Group (CFWG) led by FDA, although this group has been moribund lately due to the CRL impasse. James is also working closely with government (especially the GC/LC). A challenge, discussed below, is to balance LRCFP staff involvement at the national level on policy issues with much needed support to communities.

Other specific achievements include:

- Intra-community conflict related to control and ownership of forests in Nimba has been mitigated and joint forest management committee formed between the Zor and Gba communities.
- Communities demonstrate increased awareness of policy developments in community forestry and land tenure as well as technical dimensions of community forestry including experience in other countries. Their desire to contribute to and have a say in policy formulation is extremely encouraging.
- LRCFP has created a number of analytic products that are useful to the Government of Liberia (GoL), USAID and other actors. Training also much appreciated by local partners notably training on Global Positioning Systems (GPS), non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and conflict mitigation. Short term technical assistance (STTA) and workshops were organized that a number of stakeholders were able to participate in (training needs assessment, WRI-best practices in community forestry and assessment of social agreements).
- Quality of STTA has been high. For instance, Peter Veit and Pierre Méthot are global experts on tenure and technical



LRCFP Nimba coordinator Amigos Saah addressing Zor producer group

dimensions of forestry and natural resources in Africa. Pierre has been working for five years in Liberia and has deep understanding of the actors and systems.

- LRCFP has built trust between different parties. As an example, the CRL process was becoming highly polarized and it could have been derailed. LRCFP played a beneficial role in proposing workable approaches that all parties could embrace. That is not to say that everyone agrees—even within LRCFP—on the way forward for the CRL, but the dialogue remains cordial and different viewpoints represent viable concerns about capacity and rights.
- In Sinoe, LRCFP has built up the confidence of communities. Communities are becoming more aware of how to collaborate with each other and trust levels are increasing within and among these communities and with LRCFP.
- The concrete impact of this trust is the formation of forest management committees that have already acted to improve forest management and communicate back to their communities. The community leaders from Nimopoh we met with in Monrovia have thought deeply about benefit sharing and communications within their communities. They have drafted bylaws for forest management. LRCFP is an important link for them to the rest of the world. They also benefited from the profiling exercise by learning more about their own history as a community. Research into community based conservation shows that pride in one's territory and history are as much if not more of a motivator to conserve than economic motivations (Biodiversity Conservation Network findings 1995-1999).

CONCERNS

IMMEDIATE

Sustainability. USAID should evaluate how long it will take to assure sustainability of its investment in community forestry and improved land and biodiversity management. This does not mean USAID has to go it alone or forever as responsibility can be shared with other donors and investors, including the private sector. A sustainability plan would assess the contributions of other stakeholders and investors over the long term and potentially reach out to new investors, particularly in the private sector (e.g., mining companies, forestry companies, agricultural marketing intermediaries).

It is critical to develop ownership of the LRCFP approach and processes within FDA, local government and community institutions. There is need to plan now for how FDA, local LRCFP partners and other NGOs can provide this assistance when the project ends: what resources will they need and how can they tap into technical assistances when LRCFP ends? On the land side, consider how pilot information and models for common property/customary tenure developed under LRCFP will be integrated into any emerging policies and processes developed within the LC and other institutions.

Government role and relations. Overall relations with government are positive, but the role of FDA in LRCFP needs to be better defined according to Moses Wogbeh, Roger Luke and John Woods. They feel that the FDA role is minimal and FDA doesn't get credit for CF advances. Coordination within FDA seems

to be somewhat problematic in that FDA seconded staff's reports do not seem to be widely circulated within FDA. As ENNR Warden Roger Luke pointed out, promises made by LRCFP will rebound on FDA when the project is gone so it is very important that FDA be part of the process. New consultations should now be initiated with FDA on how they will provide technical assistance on community forestry over the long term. 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. At root, getting a clear common definition of community forestry is essential. For instance, it is important to clarify with FDA that LRCFP is NOT a buffer zone project because that term has certain connotations for community forestry and for activities allowable to communities in zones near protected areas.

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—their voices are still not being heard. This helps the longer term goal of building grassroots civil society.

Scale. The sites are already large and it will be a challenge just to assure good communications and outreach within them. The larger community scale here is a lesson learned from Sapo where work with only some communities created tension. LRCFP is trying to bring in most concerned communities in a given area. While it will be tempting to reach out to new areas of the country, the focus should remain on existing communities. Any scaling out from there should be in the context of management of contiguous forests and lands.

Integration. Some work needs to be done to integrate the team at the site levels such as rebranding the staff from “ARD” to “LRCFP” as the subcontractors are mobilized in the field. LRCFP will need to consider risks and benefits related to communications, logistics and equity of putting subcontractors together in one village or in separate villages at the sites. At the Monrovia level there is good communication overall but there have been some lost opportunities. Within reason all partners should review documents and meet and benefit from any STTA passing through.

To fully integrate subcontractors into the project, LRCFP will need to harmonize their different approaches, styles, areas of expertise and resources. For instance, different organizations use different terms for similar concepts such as concession, conservancy, and community forest. Harmonization does not mean that all subcontractors have to parrot an LRCFP party line but there should not be mixed messages when communicating with communities, government or other key stakeholders.

There is especially a need for harmonized communications on a “behavior change” strategy. Different partners have different interpretations and approaches as well as different avenues for communication. What do they mean by behavior change? There should not be a barrage of “sensitization” messages to communities by all the different subcontractors. Listening and working through appreciative approaches is critical. This means grounding all activities and models in local assets, institutions and knowledge—above all listening a lot and limiting or eliminating preaching.

Policies. Lack of framing policies has inhibited action, especially on land tenure but also CF. There has been trepidation to move ahead without clear policy guidance. The confusion over the CRL has also led to suspension of CFWG. All actors agree that this group must start up again especially as new actors

such as the Ghana-based Nature Conservation Research Center (NCRC) enter the scene. There is the potential for existing policy to cover community forestry actions under Chapter 10 of the National Forestry Reform Law of 2006. Consultations with FDA and other government entities could help clarify this option. Peter Veit of WRI noted that ARD must take a cautious approach to policy issues as a USAID contractor and USAID might consider splitting some of the policy work off to a Cooperative Agreement (CA) to a non-governmental organization (NGO) that would give them more flexibility and independence in tackling policy issues when and where they need to be tackled. (This type of arrangement is possible within USAID but might lead to lack of coherence. In some cases USAID has contracted central program functions like communications and knowledge management while using CAs for site-based conservation work (case of the Initiative for Conservation in the Andean Amazon/ICAA). Policy work, analysis or research could also be funded as a grant under a contract.)

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. In other countries, as local government is empowered it adds another layer on to management that can be confusing. At the same time there is potential through local government to get quicker actions on policy and regulatory issues.

Livelihoods. The approach of “alternative livelihoods” has not alone been successful in drawing people out of illegal or destructive activities and it typically creates unsustainable and not particularly profitable enterprises. Thus LRCFP is taking the right direction in assessing enterprise options that have clear market demand and linking livelihoods to better management and control/ownership of resources. But these links could be even tighter and more explicit.

Right now the livelihood approach is not closely linked to forest management. This does not necessarily mean that all enterprises or even most enterprises promoted have to be forest based enterprises but there needs to be a clear link between threats to forest and benefits to those who both protect and heavily exploit the forest. It is unclear if the producer groups set up at the sites are or will be involved in forest management. They must be involved. As such the team suggested (in our strategy session) a reorientation of grants and other support to forest value chains, recognizing that the agriculture based support will have to continue at some level and that forest product value chains are often more difficult to develop.



At the project level, developing a robust livelihood strategy for LRCFP has been held up by the emphasis on producer groups and small grants. Livelihood support is not seen as underpinning the project. While LRCFP can't be all things to all people nor can it be an integrated rural development project it has to deliver on some measure of support for enhanced livelihoods of the target populations.

The small grant process is cumbersome and not appropriate for local level actors. It will not be possible to adequately scale this up to reach enough people at the site. As well, it encourages people to move from handouts to proposal writing rather than from handouts to farm and forest based businesses that

are internally sustainable and build economic capital. LRCFP needs a strategy to provide some benefits to those who cannot and will not qualify for small grants.

Biodiversity. A comprehensive threats analysis is needed (and in process according to recent discussion with Dan Whyner). Flowing from that analysis is an assessment of how activities will mitigate threats and how threat reduction can be monitored. It is not sufficient to assume that x activity will mitigate a given threat (e.g., swamp rice production will mitigate clearing for upland rice). LRCFP may need to add STTA to assist with biodiversity earmark requirements. There is need for example to develop a custom threat reduction data protocol for biodiversity monitoring to track certain threats and provide qualitative or where possible quantitative measures of change in the level of threat (see below in recommendations for more guidance).

A question was raised about long term investments in biodiversity given the short term of the project. Should LRCFP work on the bushmeat market and also build longer term capacity of FDA and communities on biodiversity monitoring and parataxonomy (to build local expertise for research and research tourism)? Additional technical biodiversity investments could include investigating ways to improve connectivity between CF areas and PAs and approaches to wildlife management that build on both science and customary systems. This could entail for example conceiving of a new model of PA as refugia for bushmeat (wildlife that can appropriately hunted) species and the CFs as the management zone for bush meat extraction and management. USAID should consider these investments in light of future programming in biodiversity. With Guinea and Madagascar off-line, Liberia may be getting (or programming) more in biodiversity.

USAID should push back against any strategy for “alternative protein sources” for bushmeat such as cane rat production. These strategies do not get at the core issue, which is that hunting is a business. As well, cane rat raising is way too expensive for rural Liberians.

LRCFP should help partners, especially, FDA, develop a clear understanding of what demarcation, of both PAs and CFs, entails—the risks and benefits of moving quickly to obtain a “result” of a marked territory versus proceeding more carefully and methodically to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in the process and that their concerns are addressed. At the least, LRCFP could propose appropriate solutions based on a synthesis of different approaches and avenues to demarcation and boundary definition as was done for the best practices in community forestry report.

A clear **gender strategy** needs to be articulated especially with respect to how women access, use and benefit from forestry. There is also need to attract and retain women on the LRCFP team. This should be done through targeted outreach, mentoring and building local capacity. Women



in Greenville and Saniquellie could be identified to work with the local teams. They could be students or teachers or possibly women who have worked with other NGOs or UNMIL. The first step in working with women at the local level is to identify any organized women’s groups and work through these groups.

They may be neighborhood self-help groups or affiliated with a church or mosque. A specific group for women forest users could be organized to advise the FMCs on women's access to and use of forest resources.

LTPR strategy and ramp up. LRCFP now needs to develop a comprehensive strategy for linking lessons and data collected at the sites to national efforts and efforts of other actors such as the World Bank and Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). The land issues are, if anything, even more fraught than community forestry given the proliferation of deeds and the perturbation of customary systems in many parts of the country. Devising common property LTPR models is critical for CF and potentially for other land and resource uses, such as management of rivers, lakes and seacoasts, fishing grounds and mangrove areas.

As the Land Commission (LC) gets in gear, it was felt that LRCFP should not pull James from major focus at the community level but give him some space to advise the LC and MCC if and when it moves into land issues. Peter Veit of WRI has a bit of contrary view on this point, feeling that James is a world expert on community based natural resource management (CBNRM) and as such really needs to dive into policy development and assuring that Liberia builds on global best practices.

An issue discussed with the team and FDA is how common property resources may eventually be sub-allocated to individuals and households to assure clearer benefit. In many CF systems, there is a move toward individual property rights (IPR) and territories within the forest, especially where there are valuable resources such as rattan, resins, barks or timber species. LRCFP needs to think ahead that "communities" will not want to or be able to manage large forests as a block and so thought needs to go into how individual territory for management and benefit can be defined within the common area.

It is very unclear how Liberia will build expertise on the LTPR side especially expertise that is not strictly legal but addresses the multiple dimensions of customary tenure including approaches to demarcation, land history, genealogy, dispute resolution, authority and management systems for lands and resources that will not be deeded to individuals. The universities may be developing some expertise but major efforts are required if reform of this sector has any chance. MCC may have a role in helping but will need to be closely guided by LRCFP and USAID.

Capacity. Weak capacity and handout mentality are common complaints by staff and other actors. It is important to distinguish what is unique about the Liberian situation—e.g., proliferation of humanitarian agencies, ongoing support of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)—versus common constraints experienced by African rural dwellers: lack of infrastructure, outmigration, insecure tenure, elite capture, jealousy/sorcery, changing and confusing leadership.

There is a perception by some that Liberia cannot learn from other countries due to the weakness or even absence of local (rural) institutions. LRCFP should respond to this perception and show how local institutions can be the nucleus of sustainable forest management. This is truly a critical question. At the community level it seems that in some areas there are not even rotating credit associations or *susus*. This is the very first rung of self-development and LRCFP, particularly ACDI/VOCA and AGHRA, should explore why there are no functioning groups at present and what can be done to build women's savings

capacity. This step could lead to micro-credit programs in the future. Often women's groups incorporate men as they mature and spread into new enterprises. However lessons from other USAID programs using microcredit need to be integrated before moving ahead.

A comprehensive strategy is needed to build human capacity in forestry at all levels from FDA to communities. The FDA cadre is too few, especially in community forestry, and many seasoned staff will retire soon. The University of Liberia's program is not seen to be dynamic. If community forestry is to work with any kind of appropriate management, extensionists at county and para-extensionists at the community level are needed. In discussions with ENNR chief warden Roger Luke, it was recalled that one purpose of LRCFP was to create conditions whereby communities would seek out FDA for this technical assistance. This strategy relates to the sustainability plan for the program discussed above, as community forestry will eventually have to stand on its own. There are several elements to building this capacity, both within FDA and within other NGOs and community groups. FDA could rethink the perception that it must control all aspects of forestry in the country and instead become a convening authority that sets standards and builds best practices in the country.

Be realistic about community management. FDA Managing Director John Woods believes that in Liberia community level management structures are weak and fragile compared to other African countries so that models imported into Liberia may have limited applicability. Individual benefit must be a factor in community forestry even as bylaws and overall management structures are put into place. Discussing scenarios with leaders and the wider community will prepare them for internal conflict. CJPS is well placed to take the lead in this endeavor.

In addition, an explicit strategy to prevent large-scale elite capture of valuable forest resources is needed, as mentioned above. The first step is to describe to community leaders how this has occurred in other countries and the impacts it has had on forests, local control and benefit. Through extended socioeconomic profiling, LRCFP could map out lines 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. The communities need to be prepared with alternative scenarios that show benefits that can be derived from slower but steadier returns from forest use.

LONGER TERM



Keep the focus on **root causes** of poverty, conflict and poor management, especially the dynamic of few opportunities for youth in rural society. It is critical to productively involve youth while maintaining respect for the role of elders and customary leadership.

Outreach. Within the CFWG, discuss how to develop outreach and exchange programs with other areas in Liberia where USAID or other organizations are working (Lofa? River Cess?).

Biodiversity planning. Review perspectives on and roles and responsibilities in co-management of protected areas (PAs) considering the new PAs being set up and evolving situations at ENNR and Sapo National Park (SNP). What models work best in situations where PAs will not be generating significant benefits from tourism or other revenues? What input can LRCFP provide to Consolidation of Protected Areas (COPAN) strategy? Can CI's concept of "growth poles" be deployed in a scaling up strategy so that it centers on rural towns, such as Saniquellie and Greenville, that have growth potential and which builds opportunities for the communities and markets served by those towns?

Develop a realistic ecotourism strategy and joint cultural/ecotourism approach. Consider building on the Zor people's relationships with chimpanzees and the fact that they call themselves the "bee people." Do they have art and ceremony that reflects these relationships with nature? Nimba is a beautiful area that could at least attract internal tourism within Liberia and/or research tourism.

Commercial forestry. Explore how to foster the integration of all "Cs" in the forestry sector. Government, private sector and communities will need to be involved in *all* types of forestry. John Woods and Pierre Méthot believe that more could be done on the commercial forestry side and that this side has much to teach CF. Seek to help the GoL and local communities to find pathways to regularize/legitimize at least some pit sawing in some parts of the country. There is potential to work with SGS/Helveta to bring in technologies for community asset mapping and monitoring.

Environmental impact. As part of ongoing environmental monitoring efforts, work with the appropriate units in the GoL to analyze impacts of planned/proposed infrastructure development including planned and unplanned logging on forest conservation, especially those that impact on project sites. Assure that initial environmental examinations (IEEs) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) are up to date with respect to any infrastructure and agricultural activities.

Policies. Develop a considered response to new wildlife and conservation laws and regulations (e.g., inclusion of property rights perspectives) based on LRCFP experiences and international best practices.

Consider engaging with other practitioners working on community bylaws for sustainable forest management. Help FDA and communities develop a policy index that can trace the steps toward development, enactment, testing and adaptation of bylaws to become institutionalized and effective. There are several resources for this such as CIFOR's criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management: <http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/acm/methods/candi.html> and the databases within the International Forest Resources and Institutions program: <http://www.sitemaker.umich.edu/ifri/home>. The World Agroforestry Centre also recently held an international conference on bylaws: http://www.capri.cgiar.org/wks_1106.asp

Livelihoods. With other actors in rural development, help think through a comprehensive swamp rice strategy (also including upland rice) that incorporates technological, economic, ecological and social (labor, equity, gender) dimensions. Factor in the politicization of rice, both local and imported.

LTPR. Work on greater understanding of land history and genealogies at sites as well as models for how to obtain and sensitively use this information. Possibly develop a program that trains and deploys

students/interns; for instance Cuttington University has an *Africana* program and an anthropology department. What are the data needs around the country to prepare for new LTPR systems that take into account customary and mixed tenure systems? How can LRCFP make a contribution to that?

Social analysis. As mentioned above, consider developing an explicit plan for understanding and mitigating elite capture. This analysis could be part of overall institutional analysis that looks at Diaspora/sons of the soil, women's groups, cultural/secret societies, work exchange groups, rotating credit groups, religious groups, education/youth groups, etc. Clearly define community and understand community dynamics especially with respect to central versus satellite villages. Check in on how benefits are perceived and allocated as well as communications from FMCs with their GAs.

WAY FORWARD

- Presented findings to whole LRCFP team, USAID and FDA/GoL
- Suggested the creation of integrated task forces within LRCFP to address the major themes
- Carried out phone interviews with WRI (Pierre Méthot, Peter Veit), VT (Keith Moore) and FDA (John Woods, Roger Luke, Silas Siakor) in DC
- Produced final draft by July 13
- ARD and partners put together new workplan by August/September
- USAID/Liberia to consider complementary investments at sites
- USAID/Liberia to consider ways to link USAID livelihood and enterprise programs to share experiences and approaches

OUTPUTS OF STRATEGY SESSION

Grants need to be targeted to achieve specific outcomes otherwise groups will only propose what they know. Forest value chains take longer to develop.

Consider ways to support other actors in value chain such as petty traders and merchants servicing areas. Support overall market development (market spaces, increased competition, transportation).

Consider approaches to “illegal” forest value chains. How can communities get more value from pit-sawing and hunting while at the same time developing management regimes. One important step is to limit cross-border flows (choke points) from other countries (Guinea and Ivory Coast) and even within Liberia (Nimba to Sinoe).

To encourage stewardship of wildlife, consider bushmeat as wealth (like domestic animals and children). Revive earlier forms of management such as seasonal hunting seasons, closing off areas for animal reproduction, initiation of hunters. Carry out simple catch-per-unit-effort studies to demonstrate decline in resources to hunters and other forest users.

Better understand the historical basis for why people are using forests more extensively (war pushed people out of agriculture, increased guns and young people entering hunting).

Analyze the CRL vis-à-vis wildlife. Also the constitution denotes all above-ground resources as the property of the state but this does not harmonize with CRL. The Wildlife bill is confusing with respect to community rights and responsibilities. There is a need to push FDA and GoL to realize that State cannot claim ownership of these resources as there is no possibility that they could actually manage them. Confusion over ownership and management will create *de facto* open access situation, which is the biggest threat to biodiversity.

The profiling exercise revealed very complex management systems. For example in Sinoe, there are four categories of forest and two of swamp. Cassava farm is not considered a farm but a garden.

There was a lot of discussion about the assumption that swamp rice farming will mitigate threats to biodiversity from upland farming. First there is the issue of if and how upland farming is a/the major threat to biodiversity. Second there are questions about whether or not people will adopt swamp rice farming at scale. Third it is unclear if the same people who do upland farming will switch to swamp farming as swamps are not found everywhere and not owned by many families. Also new groups/people could move into uplands if swamps are developed. However some people (Abu of LRCFP for instance) are convinced that swamp farming can make a difference in limiting deforestation.

This discussion raises the whole question of “sustainable intensification.” Under what conditions will producers increase labor and other inputs to agriculture? Clearly there needs to be a price signal but even with higher prices there may be labor and technical constraints.

RECOMMENDATIONS

MAJOR PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop sustainability plan within USAID/Liberia for its investments in community forestry, biodiversity and land management as these are long term processes and capacity is very low.
- Continue funding LRCFP for at least two years to assure impact—however even this timeframe is surely not going to be adequate to build the needed capacity for CF and reform of LTPR within customary forest areas.
- LRCFP can and should move ahead despite policy bottlenecks but needs to continue to work closely with GoL counterparts to be part of the policy process.
- There should be no gap in funding/contracts for subcontractors.
- Do not significantly scale up LRCFP but consider complementary USAID investments. 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 in the pilot areas.
- Significantly revise small grants process and overall livelihood approach. The small grant process is cumbersome and not appropriate for local groups. It will not be possible to adequately scale this approach up to reach enough people at the site. As well, it encourages people to move from

handouts to proposal writing rather than from handouts to farm- and forest-based businesses. There is urgent need for a strategy to provide some benefits to those who cannot and will not qualify for small grants.

- 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. An appreciative inquiry approach will build local ownership.
- Develop a clear gender strategy especially with respect to how women access, use and benefit from forestry. Find ways to recruit and retain women on to the LRCFP team through outreach and mentoring. Familiarize the team with best practices in gender programming for forestry programs.

DETAILED TECHNICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

LIVELIHOODS REORIENTATION

- **Reorient livelihoods actions to encourage forest based livelihoods but not abruptly transitioning from agriculture-based livelihoods.** During the course of the assessment, from initial discussions through the field site visit to the mini-workshop on Friday June 26, concern was expressed by the project teams that there was a disconnect between the livelihoods and small grants focus on the agricultural sector and the major focus of the project, which is on community forestry. That said, everyone recognizes that agriculture is the mainstay of the rural populations in Liberia. It is also recognized that 1) there is no easy path to improving forest value chains due to the nature of forest products; 2) the most valuable products, bushmeat and timber from pit-sawing are illegal or “semi-legal.” The team agreed that the livelihood component should be increasingly targeted on forest based livelihoods while not jettisoning support to agriculture, as this is how current producer groups are largely organized. This emphasis means that additional means have to be taken to identify new stakeholders at the local levels and throughout the value chain, engage them and find ways to BOTH improve revenue streams and manage the resource.
- Some **promising value chains** discussed include rattan, possibly bamboo (although use and knowledge of this resource is very scanty) and various NTFPs identified in recent LRCFP and NCRC assessments. LRCFP can also work on how communities can get more value from bushmeat and pit-sawing through legalization, creation of rules and regulations within the sectors and enforcement.
- Because **cross-border flows** are very important in these sectors, USAID/West Africa’s Sustainable and Thriving Environments for West African Regional Development (STEWARD) program could play a role in understanding and intervening in these markets. LRCFP can follow up on recommendations from the recent regional bushmeat workshop of the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF).

- **Develop a range of livelihood support mechanisms and approaches.** At best, the small grants will not be sufficient to produce livelihood benefits at scale within the target communities. Thus LRCFP should consider developing and rolling out a range of support mechanisms for livelihoods, including:
 - Target training to community members not receiving small grants; helping them to consider different enterprise options and outlets for their products
 - Improve general market conditions at the sites (improved infrastructure, increased competition, market information through cell phones, etc.).
 - Bring in other USAID resources in the agriculture sector to work at the sites. If this is not possible, reach out to other donors and investors.
- **Encourage market and entrepreneur based approaches while also building social capital.** Promote entrepreneurs in a variety of ways through “incubators” to support to small-scale traders and other market actors. **“Entrepreneur incubators”** focus on building entrepreneurship more generally and not on specific enterprises or value chains. Activities would include facilitated meetings among market actors in a value chain, teaching producers and small-scale traders how to get market information, ways to diversify their product lines, and training in bargaining and negotiation. As part of a larger communications strategy, LRCFP should incorporate discussion and information on market and enterprise principles and provide support to budding entrepreneurs who are facing barriers such as lack of capital and credit and cultural issues such as jealousy and “leveling mechanisms” (ways that family and community members insist on getting a piece of the pie from any economic endeavor thus making it very difficult to accumulate and build capital and assets especially in rural areas).
 - **Identify and engage range of market actors.** LRCFP should identify all the actors of the market chains that LRCFP is working with: traders, merchants, middlemen, investors and laborers and carry out a value chain analysis to show the gaps and weaknesses in the chain. This may be at the level of producers often it is at the intermediary level. This value chain analysis will lead to targeted actions such as efforts to increase competition or to enable producers to do more off-season production.
 - Harmonize the approaches within LRCFP (ACDI/VOCA, AGHRA, CI) and assure that each subcontractor has realistic and technically grounded plans for how to move ahead with specific value chains. CI could take the ecotourism niche with the clear understanding that ecotourism will be a long time coming in Liberia.
 - Organize a one day workshop to share ideas with other groups such as Liberia Community Infrastructure Project (LCIP) and other NGOs, such as NCRC, which are working on NTFP value chains. For instance, LCIP is trying to promote sustainability in its market approaches by assisting some local partners create private sector arms of their NGOs.

- Apply incentives at input end; give grants or other support to petty traders to develop new markets.
- Carefully assess the pros and cons of different producer group models (cooperatives, associations, bulking and quality control groups).
- Carry out a robust market system analysis, beyond specific value chains to structural constraints in markets such as lack of competition, poor market infrastructure, insecurity of travel, land issues, labor constraints, lack of savings/credit institutions.
- Craft a **realistic value addition** and appropriate technology strategy; i.e., don't introduce cane rat raising, improved stoves and village processing equipment at the community without seriously analyzing costs and benefits.
- Determine what needs to be done to scale up and sustain livelihood activities as well as integrate with other USAID agriculture and market activities as these scale up and are extended geographically.
- Analyze and pilot ways that communities can get more value out of "illegal" and high value enterprises such as bushmeat hunting and pit-sawing.

BIODIVERSITY FOCUS AND ACTIONS

- **Carry out threats analysis → both immediate and root cause threats (open access).** This is a site based threats analysis, not the more general, national level kind that took place within the recent Environmental Threats and Opportunities Assessment (ETOA). The team wishes for this analysis to be done with the communities to tap into their knowledge, build their skills and get them involved in monitoring.
- **Assess program actions in light of threats.** LRCFP has to take a very objective look at threats and not just go with what people are saying. This doesn't mean that lots of hard data have to be collected but there needs to be triangulation of views and data on threats. Some data would not be tremendously difficult to collect: market data on traded items such as timber and bushmeat (the recent report on pit-sawing will be very helpful on this); 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 the size of these farms.
- **Develop threat reduction strategy and monitoring protocol.** The LRCFP team expressed a keen interest in crafting participatory threat reduction and monitoring system that will build local capacity for data collection and management. The team can make use of tools such as Threat Reduction Assessment (TRA) produced for the Biodiversity Conservation Network (BCN), available at Foundations of Success (FOS): <http://www.fosonline.org/images/Documents/tra.pdf>. Such a protocol should not be overly complicated and should assist communities to reflect on what is changing in their local environment. It can include a mix of process indicators (e.g., number of people trained in sustainable natural resource management) and impact indicators that will show longer term trends (e.g., catch-per-unit effort for bushmeat; number of farms cleared in forest areas; length of time it takes to gather a given unit of rattan).

- **Support longer term biodiversity capacity building at community level.** LRCFP should discuss with USAID options for building longer term capacity in biodiversity monitoring, which could be useful in co-management and research tourism roles. This kind of expertise includes training in para-taxonomy (learning to identify species and translate local into scientific terminology), biodiversity inventories and guide training.
- **Take measured approach to demarcation (and zoning).** There is a reason why boundaries in African societies tend to be fluid. First, there are often multiple users and rights holders of a given territory and resource. One family may have historically farmed an area while another group of people gathered NTFPs or hunted in the area. Second, boundaries depend on historical claims and remembrance, which while often very accurate, can be subject to intense debate. Finally, boundary clarification or zoning can be a cause for conflicts that simmer under the surface to emerge into the light. It can also be an occasion for land-grabbing, where the more powerful find a way to take the land of absentee owners, female-headed households or other disadvantaged groups. Hence great care needs to be taken that all stakeholders be involved in any demarcation or zoning process. The process has to reach out to marginalized groups, groups living on boundaries of administrative or ethnically determined areas, recent migrants, and secondary rights holders, including people who may have long-term leases to an area.
- **Clarify roles/responsibilities within co-management.** It's clear that while both communities and FDA talk the talk of co-management, they are walking different walks. In Nimba, some communities feel that they own the land of the ENNR but are willing to accept "co-management" as they see it as a way to retain a measure of control. Many in FDA, while nominally in favor of co-management, see it as opening the door for communities to expand their farms into the PA. The process has to be results-driven so that both sides can see concrete advantages. Hence the actual benefits of co-management have to be determined at the outset based on realistic premises and options, not promises (eco-tourists will come in large numbers!). What is inside the PA that is of value to surrounding communities that could be used sustainably (NTFPs, fisheries, wildlings for nurseries)? What employment opportunities might realistically be available to local people: as local rangers, research assistants, para-technicians? Can the ecosystem benefits such as carbon sequestration or watershed value of the PA be quantified and "sold" and benefits be distributed equitably (a big question worldwide). (One successful co-management activity involved the management of a PA around Mt. Kitanglad in the Philippines. Their management was linked to successful Landcare/agroforestry groups, which then collaborated with park management: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol6/iss1/art12/>.)

COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH STRATEGY

- **Devise clear and consistent message within project...everyone on same page/team.** The first task is to assure that everyone in the field identifies as LRCFP and not ARD or ACDI or one of the other contractors. This will take a bit of time as many people already identify the project with ARD. There needs to be a consistent message about the purpose of the project. Even FDA is confused about its role vis-à-vis livelihoods and how much it should delve into policy.

- **Use appreciative approach adaptively; emphasize listening and empowerment.** Along with a clear message, there must be a consistent approach to mutual learning. One danger of having lots of agents in the field is that they become the local experts who everyone turns to for problem solving, rather than facilitators who can bring people together to solve their own problems. Local agents must take a great deal of care to listen, observe and reflect with people rather than provide ready-made solutions, new technologies and other advice. People will eagerly grab on to new technologies and “expert” advice but this type of assistance is typically not sustainable. That is not to say that agents can’t come up with solutions to problems but ready-made technical solutions (e.g., provide processing equipment, do cane rat farming, install solar panels) should be considered very carefully with an eye to ALL the costs, to management arrangements and overall sustainability.
- **Harmonize communications approaches among partners.** Each of the subcontractors brings different strengths to the project. This is great. The team should spend time together learning about their experiences and skills and be able to communicate these skills as a team. So if one person is working in a village, he or she can be thinking about what the whole team has to offer. The approach should use appreciative and reflective best practices so that everyone takes the time to build on local assets and abilities. There should never be an onslaught of “sensitization” and “awareness raising” in the community such that people learn a lot of jargon and the lingo of the project. Every member of the team has to treat local people as the experts in their domains. They are the ones who know the forest, know the farming systems and know the history, traditions and social structures that make society work. They are the ones who will come up with solutions. The core ARD team is attuned to this approach and just needs to train the others in the field.
- **Put behavior change efforts in context of structural constraints and cultural realities.** During interviews, we heard a lot of discussion about the need for behavior change of local communities to enable sustainable forest management. In reality there are good reasons for “unsustainable” behavior when the rules of given society reward quick exploitation and militate against long-term productive investment. Crisis in Liberia produced a need for very quick returns, even more so than in many African rural societies. And on top of that are the structural constraints such as insecure LTPR, youth disempowerment, outmigration of able-bodied people, uncertainty in regulations and power structures (lack of policy, unclear policy and inability of the state to enforce). So it is not clear that “behavior change” strategies will work unless attention is paid to these underlying factors. However, these factors won’t change unless people do feel empowered to change them.

Some behaviors reflect long-standing state-society struggles. Historically forest dwellers have fought with the state over things like pit sawing, bushmeat hunting, artisanal mining and charcoal making since at least Roman times (see Harrison’s great book: *Forests: the Shadow of Civilization*). Yale Agrarian Studies professor James Scott writes about “weapons of the weak” that rural dwellers use to gain some measure of control over their lives. These measures include evading, circumventing, disabling and otherwise overcoming state controls over their lives and assets which for the most part have not been beneficial or have been outright destructive, while also individually forging patron-client links that are needed for survival and upward mobility. It is this kind of

attention to the realities of rural African life that will help LRCFP to move into transformational development and set a standard for other projects to follow.

The major aim of “behavior change” should thus be to **empower people to attack structural constraints to productive investment** rather than to change particular destructive behaviors absent the context of why people do what they do.

- **Revive Community Forestry Working Group.** Having a forum to discuss the experience of LRCFP and other groups working in CF and related enterprises is essential. Eventually all must be at the table, even as they disagree on approach and outcome. LRCFP has played a positive role in this group and needs to keep up the pressure on FDA to restart the CFWG as well as other informal and formal fora for information sharing. One way to get the ball rolling could be a speakers’ series that would invite individuals working on specific topics related to CF to present their work and then open up for wider discussion. This forum could make use of visitors coming into Monrovia including all the STTA.
- **Ramp up forestry sector capacity building.** Engage with forestry curriculum, universities and students. VT needs to take the lead on this but they have been discouraged by lackluster response of University of Liberia. Develop strategy for outreach to higher education. LRCFP could employ its technical forest management competency to help curriculum development (silviculture, rattan management, plantation diversification, tree domestication). For instance, Sam Koffa could develop a lecture series on community forestry. John Woods just informed that Yale will help with 10 scholarships for FDA. VT should work closely with Yale and other investors to develop a comprehensive capacity and curriculum strategy.

GENDER (AND YOUTH) STRATEGY

- **Design outreach and mentoring strategy for women to become project staff, interns, etc.** Integrating women into a project at staff and community level is not something that will happen just if we wish it to happen and use traditional methods of outreach and recruitment. It takes specific outreach and communications strategies tailored to the realities of families and communities. The team has to explore innovative solutions such as hiring young married couples to do work, working with women’s groups on a variety of projects and reaching out to teachers and other local professionals. Identifying promising women at all levels, mentoring them and assuring gender sensitive training are critical. Finding roles for female staff of FDA is a promising option as long as there is appropriate mentorship and they are doing real work.
- **Develop clear guidance for extension agents about how to work with and engage women.** It must be said that, if not developed already, LRCFP needs to develop and enforce very strict policies on conduct related to women: there should be no scandals associated with LRCFP staff. Extension agents should work with women in groups and always keep husbands and other men apprised of work they are doing with women. Where possible, women should be interviewed separately by female staff members.

- **Work with men on engaging women.** A gender strategy can only be successful with the support of men. Leaders and husbands must take the lead in encouraging women to participate and even take leadership roles. They have to feel confident that women’s participation will benefit everyone. However that does not mean that they should hijack activities that are specifically designed to benefit women, such as marketing of products that women typically control.
- **Develop clear role for women in community forestry (and sustainable agriculture).** Women are heavy users of the forest but have little role in forest management as typically they do not allocate land for farming, do not grow tree crops (although some female headed households certainly will do so), and do not own trees or forests. In other parts of the world, women have come together in groups for better forest management, but have not had a seat at the table when decisions are made about use and benefit. LRCFP has to make sure that women’s uses and benefits are not being compromised in any forest management plan. This idea can be tricky as in many cases what women control is farm and short fallow land and in forest management what is often valued is more trees, longer fallows and less deforestation. If we cover up all the fallow lands in West Africa with trees to capture carbon where will women farm? It is going to be very hard for them to clear swamp areas or to farm more intensively in short-fallow lands without access to labor and other inputs. One of the most promising areas of investment for women is thus the home garden for vegetables and spices.
- **Engage youth through associations (CJPS).** This recommendation gets back to the issue of root causes of conflict in the region. Traditionally African societies are structured around age grades and as people move up the grade they get associated rights and responsibilities. This system worked effectively in many ways but has significantly broken down with universal education, outmigration, weakening of authority systems and inability of elders to provide benefits to young people. In many cases the struggle of young people to get rights and a voice in society has lead to both low-key conflict (sorcery accusations against both children and old people) and also outright violence. CJPS works with youth as a group so that they can be represented in social and decision-making fora. I have seen other cases where individuals or groups in society take on mediator roles to forge better relations between the generations and get men to play a more expansive enlightened role in parenting. This is a huge generational shift but it is happening. LRCFP needs to have a flexible and realistic strategy toward youth that reflect these societal tensions and shifts as well as factors in the attraction for youth to dangerous but potentially lucrative pursuits. 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?

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

- **Strengthen government relations** through a more structured and holistic relationship with FDA. One possible avenue is a formal **MOU between LRCFP and FDA**. It may help to carve out a more formal role and place for FDA within LRCFP. LRCFP can support FDA to convene the CFWG and help bring civil society back into the fold, acknowledging that all viewpoints are of value and that disagreement is part of the democratic process. LRCFP can help FDA to think about itself as the lead

technical agency and not the sole manager of all Liberia’s forests. They are the agency that Liberians will turn to for technical guidance as they show themselves to have the technical capacity and be honest brokers between communities and private sector operators. There is good movement in this direction but it has to be consolidated and mandated at all levels. FDA will never have enough personnel to control the forests of Liberia so it must see itself as a key resource rather than regulator. Enforcement duties will have to be shared, as FDA cannot do it alone. LRCFP can help FDA forge alliances with communities and NGOs to manage forests. It can help FDA to devise appropriate roles for private sector investors in community forestry.

- **Reach out to other government agencies.** LRCFP could do more with Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy as well as Ministries of Agriculture and Planning. All have a role in land management. There may be opportunities to mentor some staff of these Ministries and involve them in field visits and training. Sponsoring inter-government fora is another option to assure communication flows about policies and processes.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICIES

- Assess potential to move ahead with CF under Chapter 10 of the National Forestry Reform Law of 2006.
- James should not be pulled in to MCC and LC work at the national level but should remain focused at the community level. However what is learned at the sites should be fed back into policy development and adaptation.
- Carry out a review of wildlife policy as it pertains to community management; as well there is potential conflict with the Constitution that allocates all above-ground resources to the State.
- Help FDA to articulate to other parts of the GoL the lessons about decentralization of natural resource management so that they realize that confusion and uncertainty will lead to open access situations. FDA seems quite aware of this problem but other parts of the government are not likely to be aware or even to be concerned.
- Work with FDA to move forward in defining roles and responsibilities in co-management.

PROGRAM AND PROCESS

Embrace USAID’s Nature, Wealth and Power (NWP) framework so that each component of the program includes NWP—it should not be compartmentalized. To access the framework go to:
http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/agriculture/landmanagement/pubs/nature_wealth_power_fy2004.pdf

For instance, any enterprise activity has a significant governance component while forest management committees should be focused as much on “wealth” for the entire community from forestry as well as power (vis-à-vis the government). Biodiversity and ecosystem conservation should be a thread moving

through each activity so that every activity should at a bare minimum do no harm to forests and biodiversity and strive to improve them.

Carefully plan **learning field trips** to include different stakeholders and different levels (FDA and other national, local government, community members). Individuals who have the best communication skills should be selected. Include other government actors aside from FDA, including local government.

Find out what happened to Citizen Committee in Nimba and see if it can be revitalized and replicated at other PA sites, including new PAs to be set up in Lake Piso and Wonegezi (FDA should take the lead).

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON SMALL GRANTS MANUAL

Some of the questions in the grants manual seem highly inappropriate for village level institutions in Liberia. ARD should query their contract specialists to see if USAID's grants-under-contract provisions are flexible enough to allow for needed changes in the approach. These are geared to NGOs that have worked with external funding in the past. Some of the questions could be reworded to be more appropriate while others would have to be eliminated. Some examples include (my comments in bold):

1. Has this approach been taken in the past? What were the results? Problems encountered? Lessons learned? How will your approach be different? **Reword this question to have the group reflect on what activities they have done together or in other groups in their area in the past and what problems they encountered.**

Provide a matrix of objective indicators to be used to project monitoring and evaluation: (provide as attachment). **This seems inappropriate for community level groups. Instead of indicators, ask the group about results they expect to achieve and how they will know that the results have been achieved. Again, this should emerge from group reflection and the monitoring set up should be driven by what is appropriate to the group's abilities and NOT driven by LRCFP and USAID needs. LRCFP can do the work of providing any appropriate indicator data to USAID.**

2. Describe your experience with similar projects: **most have no experience**
3. Staff skills relevant to the proposed project:
There is no "staff" per se so this question doesn't make much sense. It makes sense to ask group members to reflect on their individual and collective skills and experiences and how they bring these to the implementation of this particular activity. What skills do they need to attain to implement and while implementing?
4. Experience in geographic region:
This doesn't make any sense.
5. Does the organization have written accounting and procurement procedures:
Are they really going to have procurement procedures?
6. Describe the organization's capacity to adhere to LRCFP financial guidelines:
Here LRCFP should discuss how they will support financial management of any grantees. Is there even any possibility to put grant money in a bank? Doesn't this process mean all but the most elite community members will be excluded from forming groups?

Gender Considerations

7. Describe the focus on women's issues:
8. Describe the impact on women's issues:

This is not a gender question. Gender is about social roles of both men and women. Also in the case of these pilot areas and groups, it may be education and class that are more important equity considerations than gender. A better question would be: does this activity have potential to help poorer, more disadvantaged members of the community? (That would include some women, some youth, women-headed households, people in small hamlets that are hard to reach, etc.). Have the group reflect on how they can reach out to these disadvantaged people even if the activity is not targeted to them (through mentoring, training, contracting out labor and other tasks).

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON LOCAL PARTNER SOWS

AGRHA

Add a section on how AGRHA can support the private sector into below and emphasize hands-on technical assistance rather than lots of training: In conjunction with LRCFP staff, AGRHA will build capacity of community producer groups through training and technical assistance and subsequently evaluate the impacts of that capacity building in terms of livelihood enhancement. Relevant local government officials may also be recipients of this capacity-building effort, through participating in training and technical inputs. ARD will retain responsibility for community groups' activities in implementing livelihood grants which apply the support provided and calling for specific follow-up inputs from AGRHA if required. However, AGRHA will remain engaged through monitoring activities and providing advice on improving impact.

NAEAL

The following deliverables should be adjusted and also not sure that NAEAL should be held responsible for the first one in any case: Deliverable 3: At least 50 acceptable grant proposals submitted by producer groups from four pilot sites to LRCFP for relevant livelihood activities. Deliverable 5: Follow-up meetings with at least 50 individual grantee community organizations 1 month and 3months after initial training to provide technical assistance in grant implementation and organizational development.

CJPS

CJPS can help set the tone for LRCFP interventions at the site level. Above all, it should adopt a Do No Harm (DNH) approach that improves the ability of stakeholders to manage conflicts. CJPS should also help LRCFP and FDA to take a rights-based approach in all its activities so that technical recommendations are considered with respect to how they may strengthen or weaken local (including intra-community) rights. This approach is particularly critical for activities such as land use planning, zoning, allocation of benefits within a community or group, or in negotiations among communities and between communities and government agencies.

Conservation International

CI should concentrate on helping FDA and other stakeholders develop and roll out the concept of co-management of PAs based on best practices and the evolving process at Lake Piso and other new PAs. It should help develop a realistic but innovative strategy for domestic ecotourism and research tourism in Nimba (and possibly Sinoe but this seems much more long-term). It can help identify potential researchers and other actors (mining companies?) that want to collect data and possibly mitigate damage from their extractive activities. It should assist in building local capacity for biodiversity research and monitoring and help LRCFP set up its protocols to meet the biodiversity earmark. It should carry out some baseline research with communities at the sites to determine state of the ecosystem and keystone species.

For any other work on community-based livelihoods, CI should coordinate closely with ACDI/VOCA to assure a common approach. It could share work done with the Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP) and in Ghana on cocoa agroforestry systems and biodiversity.

As CI continues to work on a “growth pole” strategy and a regional strategy, it should be sharing its ideas and lessons with LRCFP. CI has a particular interest in carbon and the potential for carbon funds to be used for conservation and community benefit. The experience of the FMCs within LRCFP will be extremely important to CI as it develops these strategies and in turn to all of Liberia and West Africa as they attempt to capture carbon benefits. LRCFP should work with CI to capture these lessons and share them, perhaps as part of STEWARD or in other regional fora.

VT

VT should facilitate the development of a comprehensive strategy for support to the forest sector through curriculum development, capacity building of FDA and other groups that work in the sector and mobilization of donor and private sector resources.

WRI

Pierre Méthot and Peter Veit are great assets to LRCFP. Pierre should be tasked to look at ways that lessons and approaches to commercial forestry can be integrated into CF. Peter should work closely with James as the LC rolls out its work. Both should be involved in a rapprochement between FDA and civil society over the CRL, helping all the stakeholders to see the risks and benefits of different approaches, despite what legislation actually passes. Both should be aware that Liberia IS different than other countries due to its social history, the recent conflicts and lack of social cohesion in many areas.

STATEMENT OF WORK

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM DIANE RUSSELL OF USAID WASHINGTON'S ECONOMIC GROWTH AGRICULTURE AND TRADE BUREAU TO CONDUCT A MID-TERM ASSESSMENT OF THE USAID LIBERIA LAND RIGHTS AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM

Summary: USAID Liberia is requesting the services of Diane Russell, a technical specialist in the EGAT Bureau to assist the Mission with a mid-term assessment of its Land Rights and Community Forestry Program. Dr. Russell will come to Liberia in the second half of June to do this assessment and would be managed by Dan Whyner, the COTR for the program. This Mission will use Dr. Russell's assessment report to improve program performance and determine how to go about acting on no-cost and cost extension options for this 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 has 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 began 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. improving the legal and policy environment for land tenure, property rights and natural resource management;
2. building the capacity of communities and their governmental and non-governmental partners to develop and sustain community forestry programs; and
3. generating 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.

Duties: The purpose of Diane Russell's TDY will be to assist the USAID Mission and its implementing partner ARD Inc as well as concerned stakeholders and beneficiaries of the Land Rights and Community Forestry Program (LRCFP) in a mid-term assessment of this two-year program, which will include an assessment of its performance to date in meeting the objectives outlined above and a presentation of substantive recommendations on how the program can improve performance and adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities as the Mission considers a no-cost extension for the program and determines whether it would like to act on an option to continue the program beyond the current two year funding.

The USAID Mission and its implementing partner ARD, Inc will facilitate Dr. Russell's implementation of this assessment, including providing her with program documentation and arranging for meetings and interviews with program partners and beneficiaries in Monrovia and in the pilot sites in Nimba and Sinoe counties. In preparing this assessment, Dr. Russell will ensure that her research includes the following activities:

- 1) review of existing LRCFP documentation;
- 2) analysis of pertinent reports, assessments, laws, bills, regulations associated with land rights and community forestry in Liberia;
- 3) conduct of interviews with relevant stakeholders and program staff to learn more about the program's implementation; and
- 4) visits to field offices and pilot communities to learn firsthand how the program is progressing.

Timing and Duration of Assignment: Dr. Russell will arrive in-country on June 14, 2009 and depart on June 28, 2009. She will provide the Mission with a draft assessment report and will provide a final report for Mission approval by no later than July 10, 2009.

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

ANNEX 2: ITINERARY AND CONTACTS

NAME	ORGANIZATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
<i>Monrovia (6/16-6/17)</i>		
Dan Whyner	USAID	dwhyner@usaid.gov
Rick Scott	USAID	rscott@usaid.gov
Mac Homer	USAID	mhomer@usaid.gov
Sam Koffa	LRCFP	snkoffa@yahoo.com
James Murombedzi	LRCFP	jcmurombedzi@gmail.com
Ian Deshmukh	LRCFP	ideshmukh@ardinc.com
Noorie Dudley	ACDI/VOCA seconded to LRCFP	ndudley@ardliberia.com
Nobeh Jackson	LRCFP	njackson@ardliberia.com
Jessica Donovan	Conservation International	jdonovan@conservation.org
Othello Brandy	Consultant, Governance Commission	ctob51@yahoo.com
<i>Saniquellie (6/18-6/19)</i>		
Amigos More Saah	LRCFP-ARD County Team Leader	Contact LRCFP Monrovia for information
Martin A, Veselee	LRCFP-ACDI/VOCA Livelihoods Specialist	Contact LRCFP Monrovia for information
Nuah Biya	Seconded FDA staff	Contact LRCFP Monrovia for information
Edward	Finance and Admin	
<i>Gba</i>		
Forest Management Committee Members	Gba Community Nelson Topa, Chair of FMC	Contact LRCFP Monrovia for information
<i>Zor</i>		
Forest Management Committee Members	Zor Community	Contact LRCFP Monrovia for information
Joint Forest Management Committee Members	Gba/Zor Communities	Contact LRCFP Monrovia for information
FDA Field Staff at East Nimba Nature Reserve	FDA	Contact LRCFP Monrovia for information
Ben Group	Farmers Producer Group, Zor	Contact LRCFP Monrovia for information
<i>Monrovia (6/22-6/29)</i>		
Forest and Land Management Committee Members	Nimopoh Community Mark Quiah, Mular Karmo	Contact LRCFP Monrovia for information
Forest and Land Management Committee Members	Nitrian Community Milton Chea, Azaiah Beah	Contact LRCFP Monrovia for information
Robin Wheeler	ACDI/VOCA	rwheeler@acdivoca.org
Mike Field	ACDI/VOCA	mfield@acdivoca.org
Roy Bloh, Director	NAEAL	Contact LRCFP Monrovia for information

Stanley Bedel, Project Officer		
Joseph Howard Avenso Mulbah	CJPS	cjpsstudies@yahoo.com
Dee-Maxwell Kemayah	AGHRA, Executive Director	deemaxkemayah@yahoo.com
Francis Kulee	Green Advocates	
<i>Telephone interviews from DC</i>		
John Woods	FDA Managing Director	jtwoods38@yahoo.com
Peter Veit	World Resources Institute	pveit@wri.org
Keith Moore (Bob Smith and Robert Kenney)	Virginia Tech	keithm@vt.edu
Pierre Méthot	WRI	pmethot@wri.org
Roger Luke	FDA, Chief Warden, East Nimba Nature Reserve	rogerluke742003@yahoo.com
Silas Siakor	SDI, Executive Director	ssiakor@sdiliberia.org

ANNEX 3: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Land Rights and Community Forestry Program (LRCFP) Task Order Statement of Work

LRCFP Quarterly Reports and Workplans

Statements of Work for NAEAL, CJPS, AGHRA and Conservation International within LRCFP

Pierre Méthot, WRI: Assessment of Social Agreements

Nick Thomas report on GIS

Profile of Nimopoh, Nitrian

Capacity Needs Assessment

Small Grants Manual

Best Practices in Community Forestry

Community Forestry as a Business Training Manual

LRCFP Conflict Management Training Manual

Stakeholders Landscape

Liberia and the search for alternative protein sources