



Draft Manual prepared by

The Liberia Forest Re-assessment Project

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A Manual for Establishing Communal Forests in Liberia

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Preface

This draft document, *A Manual for Establishing Communal Forests in Liberia*, is the first step towards implementing the communal forest legal mechanism as an integral part of the forest management systems of Liberia. Communal forests (CFs) not only secure forest resources for the communities that traditionally use them, they are an important part of initiating and promoting the process of balancing commercial, conservation and communal uses of Liberia's forests. The steps set forth are a product of participatory workshops with relevant stakeholders that include Government agencies, NGOs, donors and, most importantly in the case of piloting CFs around Sapo National Park, traditional leaders/chiefs and communities who live around the Park. It is intended that the Park's buffer zone is to be legally established through creating communal forests around the Park.

It is hoped that this pioneering effort and the series of changes it is expected to undergo will catalyse informed discussions which would help all concerned stakeholders to 'adapt and learn' with time. Some of the issues to be confronted in this process include:

- clarification of the definition of communal forests to consider whether the management of such forests should be limited to "non-commercial" use, as prescribed in the *Act for the Establishment of a Protected Forest Area Network*, or whether the legal definition must be amended or flexibly interpreted to address the livelihood enhancement component of this endeavour;
- the socio-economic impact of community-based forest management—is the government adequately committed to taking forests out of commercial use for communal use?
- the challenge of defining "the community" in an area composed of different cultural groups who may have varying interests in the utilization of the forest resources coming under the management of the community.

These are just few of the complicated issues that cannot be resolved at the beginning of this new chapter in the management of Liberian forests and related resources, but which the processes outlined here are intended to address.

This manual, however, is a work in progress and represents the first concerted effort and a detailed attempt to support decentralized management schemes and practices for Liberian forests and those who directly depend on them. It is intended as well, in part, to assist conservation practitioners and policy makers alike in learning lessons so as to actively encourage sound and sustainable local forest management initiatives as a tool for meeting livelihoods and biodiversity conservation needs simultaneously.

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Acronyms

CBO	Community-based organizations
CDC	Community Development Committee
CF(s)	Communal forest(s)
CFC	Communal Forest Council
CFEC	Communal Forest Establishment Committee
CFMC	Communal Forest Management Committee
DEO	District Environment Officer
EPA	Environment Protection Agency of Liberia
FDA	Forestry Development Authority of Liberia
FFI	Fauna & Flora International
LFR	Liberia Forest Re-assessment Project
MIA	Liberian Ministry of Internal Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NTFP	Non-timber forest products
PFA	Protected Forest Area
SNP	Sapo National Park
TLC	Tribal Land Certificate

Acknowledgements

This draft document is a product of the Liberia Reassessment Project (LFR), which ended on September 30 2004, and the project for Establishing Community-Based Forest Biodiversity Management around Sapo National Park which began in mid-2004. The LFR was funded primarily by the European Commission's Tropical Forest Budget Line and implemented as a partnership between the Government of Liberia, Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and Conservation International. Testing and implementing the steps outlined in this manual are continuing under the second project mentioned above, funded by the Darwin Initiative of the United Kingdom's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

At this juncture, the authors thank Mr. James Murray, former LFR project manager, for the initial research for this manual and for sharing his experience from his involvement in an earlier attempt to establish a communal forest in Liberia. Mr. Massayan Jorbor of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) aided us in understanding local administration and traditional land-use practices. His advice on integrating traditional perspectives into the process of establishing CFs was invaluable. A focus group consisting of representatives from the Forest Development Authority (FDA), MIA, the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), and international and Liberian NGOs provided thoughtful suggestions that were included in this manual. Special thanks are due to Silas Siakor of the Sustainable Development Institute for pointing out some possible landmines regarding "Traditional Authorities" and suggesting alternatives. Our gratitude is extended also to Mercy Corps who hosted and facilitated the working group sessions. We hope Mercy Corps will continue to collaborate with FFI on the community level.

Dr. Samuel Koffa, FFI-Liberia's Senior Specialist on Communities' Forest Resource Management, brings 21 years experience in community-based forest management to this CF pilot project. His input has added much to this draft of the manual and has provided a preview of his practical approach to implementing communal forests.

We acknowledge the work of the Catholic Relief Services and the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia for their pioneering efforts to establish a communal forest in Liberia. We have furthermore considered lessons learned from communal forest experiences elsewhere in Africa and in Asia.

The process of establishing communal forests in Liberia will continue to be informed by practical experience as they are piloted around Sapo Park, especially from feedback from beneficiary communities, as well as by lessons from the international community. Thus while this draft of the manual is explicitly focused on the current pilot initiative around Sapo Park, as experience is gained the focus of the manual will be revised to apply to establishing and managing communal forests across the myriad different contexts of Liberia's forests.

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1. Overall Objective of this Manual

To provide a framework for establishing sustainable communal forests (CFs) in rural Liberia.

CFs are the primary legal mechanism for devolution of forest management authority to rural community-based entities so these have control over choices that protect and/or enhance their livelihood. In addition to the primary purpose of CFs, communal forests are important tools for conserving biological diversity and maintaining ecosystem goods and services, the benefits of which accrue to Liberian society at the national level, and the international community.

Because this manual is intended to guide a pilot effort to establish CFs around Sapo National Park (Sinoe and River Gee Counties), its specific objectives include:

- a. to propose strategies, guidelines and steps for piloting communal forests to serve as a tool for consolidating rural Liberians' rights and for enhancing livelihoods in the proposed buffer zone around Sapo National Park (SNP – see Appendix A);
- b. to support the biodiversity conservation objective of Sapo National Park by giving formal legal protected status to the Park buffer zone, thereby establishing a model for integration into the national forest management system;
- c. to outline an approach where each proposed step is tested, and lessons are learned and incorporated along the way to ensure that the intended outcomes are sustainable, feasible, legal and derived with full participation of the relevant stakeholders; and
- d. to pursue the above objectives in a manner that stakeholders take ownership of the process so that by gaining deeded ownership or otherwise official exclusive use rights to communal forests, pilot 'communities' find their access to and control over forest resources protected, and their livelihood security is improved.

2. Background

Liberia harbours the most important remaining rainforest blocks and wildlife of humid West Africa, including numerous endemics and species whose survival is seriously threatened outside of Liberia such as the pygmy hippopotamus and the Liberian mongoose. Liberia is recognized internationally as a biodiversity "hotspot" because of its threatened biodiversity.

Forests are fundamental to the Liberian people. Forestry became the country's most important commercial activity by 2000. Forests are a source of subsistence, economic activity and cultural identity for rural Liberians who represent a large section of Liberia society. However, the legal rights and responsibilities of these rural communities to the forests and forest resources they traditionally depend upon are unclear, and have never been legally established or defended.

Communities have historically managed forests in Liberia, but for decades rural Liberians have been excluded from decision-making; the policies, laws and regulations regarding community control of rural resources have not been implemented. Because rural Liberians lack legal or practical control over the natural resources they depend on for survival, they have benefited little from forest management decisions taken by Government.

Piloting a communal forests around Sapo Park is an endeavor to integrate conservation and community needs for economic development and protection of their rights to forest resources. In November 2002, 110 chiefs and representatives of women's, youth and other local groups from around the Park, attending an SNP management workshop, unanimously endorsed the idea of piloting CFs around the Park as a means to secure their access to forest resources and diversify local production systems and incomes.

The Challenges.

Using communal forests to pursue conservation objectives – in this case to serve as the Sapo Park buffer zone – highlights the multiple benefits that can be derived from CFs. It also raises serious challenges: how can both objectives – community and conservation – be pursued without one compromising the other? In cases when compromises must be made, how will these be negotiated? Whether or not a conservation area is nearby, how can local economic activities be structured so that the beneficiary community prefers to keep the area under permanent forest cover, assuming that the novelty of formal deeding of an area to the community, or granting of exclusive use rights, will wear off and communities will take exclusive rights to the forest in question for granted? In this situation, communities may prefer after a time to convert the communal forest to non-forest uses like agriculture, mining or palm/rubber plantations. This could bring the community into conflict with the FDA. Another significant challenge is how to structure CFs so that over the long-term, sustainable community-based forest management is possible with minimum outside intervention?

Environmental policies/laws in place to address the challenges.

According to the Constitution of Liberia, all forests not owned by private individuals are managed by the State and may be deeded to private individuals or awarded to private operators in logging, mining, agricultural or other concessions (see Appendix B). The Constitution mandates citizens' participation in natural resource management. The environmental policies and enacted laws of Liberia support community utilization and, to a certain extent, co-management of forest resources. However a legal regime for communal use of the forest to ensure community peoples' rights has not yet been enacted in fact.

Communal forests, community forests, tribal reserves, native reserves are classifications provided for in Liberian forest related laws over the years. Definitions have varied accordingly and the method for devolving control over these forests were not clear. In October 2003 an *Act for the Creation of a Protected Forest Area Network* was enacted identifying “communal forests” as one protected forest type among eight that constitute the building blocks of an integrated national protected forest system (see Appendix C). Thus the current legal basis for communal forests in Liberia was established.

As defined in the Act, CFs are “areas set aside legally or temporarily by regulation for sustainable use of forest products by local communities on a non-commercial basis.” The aim of this manual is to provide an flexible approach to operationalizing CFs, as defined by the law, initially around Sapo Park but with the long-term aim of them being replicated nationally. The manual is to be tested, adapted and revised as needed, without clinging to its strict wording.

3. Communal Forest Creation

3.1 Who should be involved?

To promote inclusiveness within a clear structure, stakeholders must be identified and their roles and responsibilities clearly defined. Within this structure, stakeholders can and must contribute their resources and perspectives. Main stakeholders should include:

1. FDA (responsible for forest sector management)
2. Ministry of Internal Affairs (responsible for local/tribal rights and administration)
3. beneficiary communities, in the present care those surrounding Sapo National Park, and any other community/person likely to be affected
4. traditional authorities
5. logging (or other) concessionaires
6. conservation and community development NGOs/CBOs

3.1.1 Forestry Development Authority/State authority-- roles/responsibilities

The Communal Forest Unit is under Community Forest Services, which in turn is under the Division of Conservation. The Division of Conservation is headed by the Deputy Managing Director for Conservation Forestry. The CF Unit's roles and responsibilities in CF establishment and management, in particular during the pilot initiative, should be to:

- a. prepare rules, regulations and basic resource-use criteria to be used by a community deciding to establish a CF. These would explain, for example, where CFs generally may and may not be established and what can and cannot be done in them;
- b. define different categories of CF based on different possible CF objectives (i.e. strict rural development/livelihood enhancement areas, protection of sites of cultural significance, conservation buffer zones or a combination of these or other objectives) and prepare appropriate rules and regulations;
- c. facilitate dialogue between all stakeholders, hosting workshops and consultations and facilitating conflict resolution forums during and after CF establishment; send legal notices to relevant stakeholders;
- d. negotiate, if appropriate, with concessionaires to relinquish/swap/decommission land or include lands in their holding in the CF;
- e. assist beneficiary communities to prepare simple, locally feasible CF management plans;
- f. provide technical (research, silvicultural & wildlife management advice, other) assistance, as well as financial support, law enforcement and capacity-building to ensure sound implementation of management plans;
- g. facilitate training of relevant FDA staff and beneficiary communities in community-based resource management;
- h. monitor and evaluate implementation of management plans, and take corrective action if the plans or general CF rules and regulations are not followed, including revoking the CF status of the area as a last resort;
- i. ensure that the Environment Protection Agency's EIA requirements are satisfied;
- j. evaluate funding needs and ensure that CFs benefit from fees levied on tree-cutting (like conservation or severance fees);
- k. support the development of sustainable non-timber forest products (NTFP) industries that take biodiversity conservation into consideration and will benefit communities with CFs;
- l. explore with MIA the appropriate tenure mechanism/arrangement to ensure tenure security as well as the permanent maintenance of forest cover; and
- m. demarcate/survey CF boundaries.

3.1.2 Ministry of Internal Affairs-- roles/responsibilities

All county and local government activities, including the offices of the County Superintendent and traditional chiefs, are under the MIA. Their roles and responsibilities are to:

- a. educate and sensitize tribal authorities of their rights to use the forest land (sustainably);
- b. facilitate the establishment of the CF committees;
- c. prepare and issue a *Tribal Land Certificate* for the selected area for the CF;
- d. monitor the piloting process to make sure the wishes and needs of the community are taken into consideration; and
- e. facilitate conflict prevention and resolution.

3.1.3 Communities surrounding Sapo National Park and those likely to be affected-- roles/responsibilities

The beneficiary communities will define and communicate their needs, and explore with appropriate stakeholders alternatives, structures and rules for meeting those needs. This consists of:

- a. organizing themselves into functional committees, possibly with external facilitation and/or assistance, to define their forest-related needs and the geographic limits of local forests meeting those needs;
- b. working with the FDA, MIA and other partners to prepare a request for the establishment of a CF, according to the procedures laid out in this manual;
- c. drafting and implementing simple but effective management plans (with technical assistance from FDA and possibly NGOs or others) containing, *inter alia*, rules and quotas for use of forest resources and the modalities of sanctioning offenders;
- d. selecting and supporting communal forest guards to police boundaries so as to detect infractions of CF rules, regulations and quotas (as per the management plan and general CF restrictions), to prevent immigration of individuals from other communal forest communities, and to deter encroachment of loggers, miners and other intruders;
- e. participating in locating and demarcating CF boundaries;
- f. organizing village-based forest (sub-)committees within standard CF structures as parallel decision-making bodies to the official village councils or traditional authorities. These will resolve boundary and related disputes of inter-communal forests and communities; and
- g. reporting to FDA/MIA through standard CF structures all problems which local organizations cannot solve.

3.1.4 Traditional Authorities—Roles/Responsibilities

Traditional authorities give legitimacy to the process of CF establishment and help mobilize beneficiary communities, especially by:

- a. mobilizing the community to form the necessary committees to establish and manage a CF;
- b. identifying and helping codify traditional forest management/conservation practices which may be beneficial to CF management;
- c. ensuring the quality of input of traditional perspectives;
- d. assisting with implementing management plans and enforcement of various by-laws, respecting communal boundaries, conservation practices, the control of abuses in the use of forest resources (timber, non-timber), etc.;
- e. providing leadership in conflict resolution among tribal groups; and
- f. playing a central role in the location and demarcation of CF boundaries.

3.1.5 Logging (or other) concessionaires — roles and responsibilities

It is in the interest of concessionaires to be a part of the process of selecting areas for establishing CFs, especially because they may have to give up some of their rights in the interest of balancing commercial, conservation and community uses of the forest, and they may have a legitimate claim to compensation. Therefore they should participate by:

- a. presenting their interests in and legal claims to an area proposed for CF status to the appropriate bodies (FDA, MIA, EPA, CF committees), as well as their past investments in the area that could constitute the grounds for compensation in cases where concessions exist prior to the creation of a CF;

- b. consulting with and including representatives of communal forests in demarcating new concession areas near proposed CFs, and preparing user-friendly maps of concession areas to be established near the CFs; and
- c. sharing operational plans with communal forest communities that could affect the CF, and giving preference for training and recruitment to CF community members near concession areas, possibly including individuals from other communal forests.

3.1.6 Conservation and development NGOs/CBOs, international agencies/donors

In addition to Liberian and private sector entities, not-for-profit and international agents can support the critical conditions for sustainability and success of CFs. Some of their roles are to:

- a. raise public awareness about the possibility of establishing communal forests;
- b. assess in a neutral, objective manner specific communities' interest in establishing CFs, assess the strategic context for CFs in given locations, support the process of creating CF establishment committees and other initial steps in collaboration with relevant State authorities (see section 4);
- c. design and lead workshops, conferences and training courses for CF communities and representatives of other concerned groups;
- d. define and execute research in assessing community needs for livelihoods, income generation and training needs, as well as in efficient harvesting, processing and marketing of non-timber and timber forest resources;
- e. assist/facilitate CF communities in developing and implementing appropriate CF management plans, mindful of the central role of gender issues and analysis in them; and
- f. develop and market quality grant proposals to support all these activities.

3.2 How should a communal forest “community” be defined?

For a communal forest to be established in a lasting manner, the beneficiary community must consist of people whose lives are linked spatially or culturally, and who share common interests with respect to the forest in question. This is not to say that conflicts will not exist within “communities”; rather it is to say that the community consists of a people who in ways defined by geography and/or forest use are all concerned by the same area of forest. It must be possible to manage, negotiate and enforce rules regarding the forest area in question, effectively and legitimately, by a committee composed of members of the community. Community/CF institutional arrangements must take into account social differences so that the CF management structures recognize the cultural, social and economic values of the traditional users of the forests, ensuring connection between the people and the resource they depend on.

Options for defining CF ‘communities’ include individual villages or village clusters, ethnic groups with a shared culture living in a defined area, people of different backgrounds who share similar access to the forest resources in question, political divisions/groups, or sub-groups of a community with similar needs of forest resources. A communal forest could be defined by what constitutes a feasibly managed area of forest (defined perhaps by natural features) and the CF ‘community’ would be defined in relation to that. If a CF is used as a tool to support conservation as well as community rights and welfare, i.e. if it is a buffer zone such as is proposed around Sapo Park, the ecological landscape will be an important criterion.

Whatever its defining features, the ‘community’ must be *tested*, meaning the FDA and MIA, supported by partners, must assess the social feasibility and practical ability of the proposed ‘community’ to receive title to the forest area in question. A probationary period should be considered for the ‘community’ to establish functional committees as outlined in this manual.

3.3 Criteria for selecting precise areas for communal forests.

Specific practical criteria for defining the exact area for a CF area include, but not limited to:

- a. the proposed area should represent the will of critical resources users within the applicant community;
- b. the area should not lie within other incompatible protected areas;
- c. areas that are likely to advance rural livelihoods, rural development, cultural values and/or nature conservation should receive favourable consideration;
- d. if the proposal is likely to affect commercial concessions then there must be a potential solution to resolve this conflict. It is important to note here however, that a major purpose of establishing CFs is to restore balance between commercial, conservation and communal uses of the forest. Because forest sector reform demands equitable sharing of forest resources, restrictions on the rights of commercial users may need to be negotiated;
- e. the area should not conflict with national-level forest strategy and national land-use planning strategies;
- f. the area should not present immediate conflicts with other tribal groups or 'communities', unless there is an immediate potential solution to this problem and the communal forest designation of the area offers the most effective means of management of the area (instead of another protected forest designation set out in the *Act for the Creation of a Protected Forest Area Network*); and
- g. the area should be of sufficient size so that it constitutes a sustainable source of priority forest products and services for all or a well-defined part of the community.

To illustrate sections 3.2 and 3.3, the following eight design principles were found in long-lasting common-pool resource management institutions and resource areas, from Ostrom (1999):

Principle	Explanation
1. Clearly defined boundaries	Individual or households with rights to withdraw resource units from the common resource-pool, with boundaries of the resource-pool clearly defined
2. Congruence	a. The distribution of benefits from appropriation rules is roughly proportionate to the costs imposed by provision rules b. Appropriation rules restricting time, place, technology and/or quantity of the resource units are related to local conditions
3. Collective-choice arrangements	Most individuals affected by operational rules can participate in modifying such rules
4. Monitoring	Monitors, who actively audit common-pool resource conditions uses and/or are the users themselves
5. Graduated sanctions	Users who violate operational rules are likely to receive graduated sanctions (depending on the seriousness and context of the offence) from other users, from officials accountable to these users, or from both
6. Conflict resolution mechanisms	Users and their officials have rapid access to low-cost, local arenas to resolve conflicts among users or between users and officials
7. Minimal recognition of rights to organize	The rights of users to devise their own institutions are not challenged by external governmental authorities
8. For common-pool resources that are part of a larger system (nested enterprises)	Appropriation, provision, monitoring, enforcement, conflict resolution and governance activities are organized in multiple layers of nested enterprises

See Appendix F for additional observations on critical conditions for successful community-based common-pool natural resources management.

3.4 Piloting Communal Forest Creation: the Process—the Steps¹

3.4.1 Step 1: Clarification of legal and regulatory issues related to CFs

Devolution of forest management responsibilities to rural peoples must be done in a clear legal framework. Prior to enacting the *Act for the Creation of a Protected Forest Area Network*, local/traditional peoples' rights in relation to the forests in the Liberia were confused from a legislative point of view. This changed with this Act, although further clarifications of the relationship between 'Communal Forest' and 'Tribal Reserves' as defined in Article 66 of the Revised Rules and Regulations Hinterland of Liberia (see Appendix C) appear necessary and may require proposing new or amending existing laws and regulations. The pilot initiative at Sapu Park will need to test the coherency of Liberia's Hinterland Laws with its Forest laws, and propose needed revisions. One critical issue to resolve, which could hinge on whether a Communal Forest should be considered a sub-set of Tribal Reserve, is whether CF land is to be deeded or granted under a long-term lease arrangement to the beneficiary community. (The same choice would apply to whether exclusive use rights are granted in perpetuity or for a specified period, if this is the approach adopted.)

The *Act creating a Protected Forest Area System in Liberia* defines communal forests as “areas set aside legally or temporarily by regulation for sustainable use of forest products by local communities on a non-commercial basis” (see Appendix C). Creating CFs with the objective of rural communities' livelihood security must allow some revenue-generating activities. Thus the definition of “commercial” requires interpretation, and the word may have to be amended to provide flexibility reflecting the objective of a given CF. Furthermore because this category of protected forest area does not have a history in Liberia, the FDA does not currently have specific rules and regulations pertaining to uses of CFs. These will need to be developed in the course of the pilot initiative.

3.4.2 Step 2: Preliminary Assessment of the Targeted Areas

An assessment must initially be conducted by the FDA and supporting partners to determine:

- cultural and ethnic identities of the area(s);
- the existence of important site selection criteria such as the availability, approximate quantity and location of forest products on which a CF will depend, as well as notable biodiversity and proximity to other protected forest areas;
- environmental impact issues which may require attention during the establishment process;
- potential land-use conflicts;
- forested areas used by neighbouring communities that could be grouped into one CF; and
- areas to eliminate from consideration at the very beginning of the CF establishment process.

3.4.3 Step 3: Identification of a beneficiary “Community”

A “community” must decide of its own accord, through acquired awareness or encouragement by FDA (as a forest management strategy) and/or by the MIA (for cultural reasons), to establish a CF. The process may be initiated by an NGO/CBO in collaboration with the community, too.

A community can be defined as a village, town or groups of villages and/or towns adjacent to a forest area that is of social and/or economic value to them. It should abide by the principles in sections 3.2 and 3.3 above, namely that the members of the community have shared and not

¹ These are suggested steps, the sequence of which may be altered according to the reality on the ground and what is logical remembering that at Sapu Park, this is a pilot process to test and learn.

conflicting interests in the targeted forest area, and they must be able to effectively negotiate and conduct the management of the forest area through the committees established to that end.

3.4.4 Step 4: Sensitization of the greater Community

The relevant national, country and local authorities, and or other entities like NGOs/CBOs assisting the identified “community”, must communicate to all communities and other stakeholders in the proximity of the area targeted for CF establishment:

- the objectives of CFs,
- what is entailed in creating one, and
- the benefits, responsibilities, challenges and constraints involved in a communal forest.

This is the occasion for discussing the laws, rules and regulations, and for identifying conflicts that the preliminary assessment may not have uncovered and that the FDA, MIA, EPA or other governmental structure would need to address, for example conflicts with commercial operators or sectoral plans for the area (like road-building).

3.4.5 Step 5: Endorsement by Traditional Authorities

The Tribal Authorities and “community” representatives must meet to approve moving forward with establishing a CF and to discuss their roles. This is a time to tease out proactively any immediate likely problems at the local level. This step may require participatory facilitation to deal with power imbalances and issues arising from the heterogeneity of the group.

3.4.6 Step 6: Spread Information, Raise Awareness

At a well-publicised, facilitated meeting or series of meetings, the *Manual for Establishing Communal Forests in Liberia* is distributed and its content discussed, emphasizing the steps. This is the chance for the “community” and relevant stakeholders (see section 3.1) to share information, discuss concerns, responsibilities, duties and thoroughly debate issues to build consensus on the specific objectives and boundaries (geographic as well as in terms of uses) of the CF. The “community” and relevant stakeholders then affirm their commitment to establish a CF. Since the piloting of CFs around Sapu Park is an adaptive process, changes to the content of the Manual are likely.

3.4.7 Step 7: The Institution to Guide Establishing a Communal Forest

If the “community’s” consensus at the end of Steps 4-6 is to establish a CF, a Communal Forest Establishment Committee (CFEC) is created from the “community” to be responsible for leading the CF establishment process.

The size and membership of the CFEC:

These depend on the composition of the “community” and should reflect the various interests, including gender differences, of local communities/stakeholders. Each village, town or settlement making up the “community” must be represented, i.e. it cannot be too exclusive. At the same time the size must be workable, i.e. it cannot be too large or it becomes unmanageable. Suggested members include but are not limited to the highest ranking traditional authority/-ies in the “community”, representatives of local, key forest-resource user groups and the County Development Superintendent. The FDA Regional Manager and/or the manager of an adjacent protected forest area (like a chief Park Warden) should be included to help the CFEC ensure the proposed area is appropriate for CF status and conforms to FDA regulations. (S)He also ensures technical input from the appropriate FDA Divisions and assists in presenting the request to the

FDA management. Inclusion of the County Environmental Officer ensures the EPA's environmental impact and natural resource management issues are addressed.

The roles of the Committee:

- to assure “community” input through public consultation meetings on inter-tribal/clan issues that may need to be addressed;
- to ensure that the “community” has all relevant information as the CF creation request is presented to the appropriate authorities so the “community is making fully informed choices;
- to facilitate gathering of all necessary documents and other information from each stakeholder, that is from elements of the “community” initiating CF creation as well as holders of legal rights to and in the vicinity of the forest area being targeted for CF;
- to ensure that the proposed CF meets the community's agreed criteria and to ensure adequate consensus within the “community” to make the CF viable; and
- to draft a preliminary report on the rationale and criteria for CF boundary selection based on the needs and desires expressed by the various elements of the “community”; the report must also specify the benefits intended to accrue to the community as well as to forest conservation.

3.4.8 Step 8: Area Selection

Based on information gathered from the CFEC's work, any other public consultations and from the assessment in Step 2, the CFEC in collaboration with the Tribal Authorities define the CF area and applies to MIA for a *Tribal Land Certificate*². MIA reviews the proposed area by conducting an on-the-spot investigation of the targeted forest area to ensure it is free of conflicting claims, not only by other local groups or individuals but also by other sectoral State agencies like, for example, the Ministry of Transportation or Lands, Mines & Energy. MIA assesses if the purpose of the CF is justified and if satisfied, issues the *Tribal Land Certificate* to the “community” which gives it the right to apply for a deed to the land within a limited period.³

3.4.9 Step 9: Submitting the Formal Request for establishing a CF

Content of the request:

- Main contact person for the request,
- Names of co-operating towns/villages/settlements,
- Names of community representatives or contact persons in each town/village/settlement,
- Minutes of community meeting(s) approving this request and attendance list(s),
- Description or sketch map of potential forest areas for inclusion. This should show the location of people around the area, the extent of the forest and other prominent features such as roads, rivers and key resources,
- List of the key resources and/or features of importance to the community, and
- Tribal Land Certificate (assures acquisition of land title by deed, unless communal forests are established through granting exclusive land-use rights rather than a title deed).

² They apply for a *Tribal Land Certificate* assuming that a communal forest is deemed to be legally compatible with and thus a sub-set of a tribal reserve under the Hinterland Laws. Otherwise this part of the process will need revision. If exclusive use rights are granted rather than a title deed, the process will need revision, too.

³ If the timeframe for acquiring a deed after receiving the Tribal Land Certificate (TLC) is not realistic, the application for the Certificate must be made at the appropriate time in the process. Instead of a TLC, stakeholders may agree on a temporary land tenure mechanism such as a lease agreement that can be extended as the viability of the CF is established.

Routing of request

The official routing of such application is CFEC → Commissioner → County Superintendent Office → MIA → FDA.

Process of Approval

The request is reviewed at the County level by representatives of the Superintendent's Office and the Regional FDA Manager, with representatives of the CFEC present, to confirm that the area is clear of conflicting claims and to establish that the proposed area is justified and "community" needs have been considered. Once the application has been cleared and co-signed by the three parties, the County Superintendent ceremoniously approves the request and without delay forwards it to the MIA for approval in a timely manner.

Once approved by MIA, the request is transmitted to the FDA to determine:

- ✓ how the CF fits into the protected forest area system, that is whether it appreciably benefits to the system;
- ✓ whether it serves as a buffer zone for another protected forest area (PFA), or it promotes socio-economic empowerment or both (conservation services would dictate FDA funding);
- ✓ initial funding options;
- ✓ whether ownership of the particular CF can be by deed, or other means such as a long-term lease that will provide adequate tenure security⁴;
- ✓ activities that are prohibited or permitted based on PFA classifications as well as attributes of the site selected and objective of the CF. This may involve, if not already proposed, zoning of the CF into different areas with different resource uses permitted in each;
- ✓ boundary mapping to ensure the boundaries are appropriate and realistic;
- ✓ formal registration of the CF, whatever the mechanism for ownership; and
- ✓ appropriate forest regulations to facilitate creation and management, including clear definition of roles and responsibilities of the "community" the FDA in its management.

Once approved by the FDA, copies of the application and all supporting documents are sent back to the "community", represented by the CFEC, via MIA.

3.5 Public Awareness Regarding Application Approval and Way Forward

Upon approval of the application to establish a CF by the FDA, public consultations are held to acquaint all members of the identified "community" and other relevant stakeholders, including representatives of neighboring towns and villages who may be affected in some way, the media and other, with the progress up to this point and to preview the rest of the process. Depending on the makeup of the "community", several meetings may be needed in different areas of the "community" facilitated by published notice as defined by the EPA Act (newspapers, radio-vernacular, public places, etc).

3.6 Institutional Arrangements for Management of Communal Forests

From this point, the roles of the stakeholders should be directed at supporting the CF "community's" institutional, technical and financial capacity to manage the CF sustainably to pursue its stated objectives, such as securing local rights to the forest, livelihood enhancement and possibly biodiversity conservation. Without this capacity, communal forests are unlikely to fulfill expectations.

⁴ As previously stated, if exclusive land-use rights rather than a title deed is granted, the same choice of rights-in-perpetuity versus rights-for-a-specified-period must be made.

3.6.1 Establishment of the Communal Forest Council

A “community” meeting is held to dissolve the CFEC and elect members of a Communal Forest Council (CFC)—the CF’s prime decision-making body. It should be facilitated jointly by a respected traditional authority figure and a locally respected representative of the Government. If several villages and/or towns make up the “community”, each may elect a local Communal Forest Management Committee (CFMC) to look out for the needs of that local village/town and to ensure the effective use and management of the CF resources in their area(s). One or two elected representatives from each CFMC will then form the CFC. The FDA Regional Manager (and the FDA manager of an adjacent protected forest area, if relevant), the MIA Regional Coordinator and the District Environment Officer (DEO – see Appendix E) should be non-voting members. The DEO (mandated by the Act establishing the EPA) is to liaise with the “community” on environmental protection matters and access support from the EPA especially in the area of capacity-building for sustainable environmental management.

3.6.2 Structure and functions of the CFC

At the community meeting mentioned above, stakeholders will determine the structure of the Council. It can be made up of sub-committees to implement the different activities planned for the CF (agro-forestry, education, business, hunting, conservation, etc.), and include different positions like president or treasurer. However it must not be too complex or else it will become unworkable.

The functions of the CFC are to:

- ensure that all activities undertaken in the CF conform to FDA and EPA requirements and MIA policy guidelines;
- formulate a **management plan** for the CF with the support of FDA, MIA and NGO partners and input from public consultations attended by all relevant community members. The management plan will meet the objectives articulated in the request to establish a CF, and include:
 - objectives of the CF being created;
 - a participatory resource assessment/mapping;
 - a zoning of the CF including special sites to be protected such as water sources and cultural sites, development use and conservation use zones—in case there are conflicting demands;
 - technical activities such as baseline data collection and inventories;
 - a plan for CF land utilisation such as agro-forestry, NTFP collection, hunting, and wood collection (poles, firewood, other);
 - other short- and long-term income generating activities, as well as structures for marketing products like co-ops — an important element of sustainability is how the management plan incorporates a market mechanism for generating income;
 - quotas and regulations like seasonal restrictions or bans for harvesting in the CF;
 - conditions for harvesting in the CF, i.e. whether resource harvest would be for subsistence uses or for sale, and if for sale whether benefits can accrue to individuals, groups and/or to the entire community⁵;

⁵ The issue of interpreting “on a non-commercial basis” from the legal definition of communal forest is critical here. If “commercial” means that nothing harvested from a CF can be sold for profit, this severely restricts what can be done in a CF, and thus the likely interest rural communities will have in establishing them. If ‘commercial’ is interpreted as ‘not by external commercial operators’, then many more activities could be permitted but the risk of unsustainable resource harvest increases dramatically. Another question to resolve is whether profits generated by the CF can accrue to individuals of the community, or whether they must accrue all or in part to the community.

- activities that are forbidden – activities like farming, livestock grazing and timber harvesting are not generally permitted because they degrade or remove forest cover, although activities that do not destroy the forest canopy may need to be reconsidered⁶. Activities permitted in a CF may depend on the objectives and location of the CF, and should be negotiated with the FDA;
- a simple monitoring plan to assess whether forest resources are being harvested sustainably;
- forest management activities such as rehabilitation of degraded areas;
- the particular CF’s management structure which could include different committees (for community development, law enforcement, conservation activities, women’s activities, for example);
- mechanisms for enforcing rules, controlling access and punishing infractions, including the division of roles between the FDA and the “community”;
- social controls that will reinforce compliance;
- conflict resolution mechanism(s);
- rules about non-“community” members entering CF, which might be on the basis of reciprocity with other “communities” or may fall under the responsibility of local government/Traditional Authorities to monitor; and
- the resources required for implementing the management plan (financial, technical, human, other) as well as possible income streams;
- mobilize, manage and monitor resources to implement the management plan, including human, financial, technical and other resources;
- draw up the CFC’s bylaws which outline the roles and responsibilities for each member—how positions are to be passed on, meeting frequency and procedures, decision-making policy and procedure, etc, and how the CFC’s operation will be funded;
- manage funds – CFs could generate money for the community, especially if use-rights are leased to outsiders (see footnote 4);
- disseminate simple, easy-to-follow rules for the community based on the management plan and promote the CF through local awareness campaigns; and
- serve as the CF’s point of contact for external bodies and individuals.

Appendix G contains a summary of the Community Development Committee model followed by Mercy Corps to pursue community mobilisation, empowerment and upliftment. Because this model is well tested and to avoid creating parallel, duplicative structures as Mercy Corps initiates work with communities around Sapo Park, the CF establishment pilot should consider working with the structures to be catalysed by Mercy Corps.

3.7 Implementing the Communal Forest

Once the draft Management Plan has been agreed by the CFC, it is taken to the full “community” for formal adoption. The community as a whole has to take ownership of the Management Plan and accept shared responsibility for its priorities and implementation.

Those facilitating the CF process should agree with the “community” and test appropriate tools for monitoring, adapting and learning so that the communal forest is made operational and sustainable. Indicators and a timeframe should be agreed for evaluating the successes and shortcomings of the CF.

⁶ Timber harvesting is not currently permitted although it might be considered if communities were beneficiaries of revenues in a non-commercial fashion and timber sales/hunting permits for outsiders were permitted once every, say, 10 years and not for the first 10 years of existence of a CF. See previous footnote.

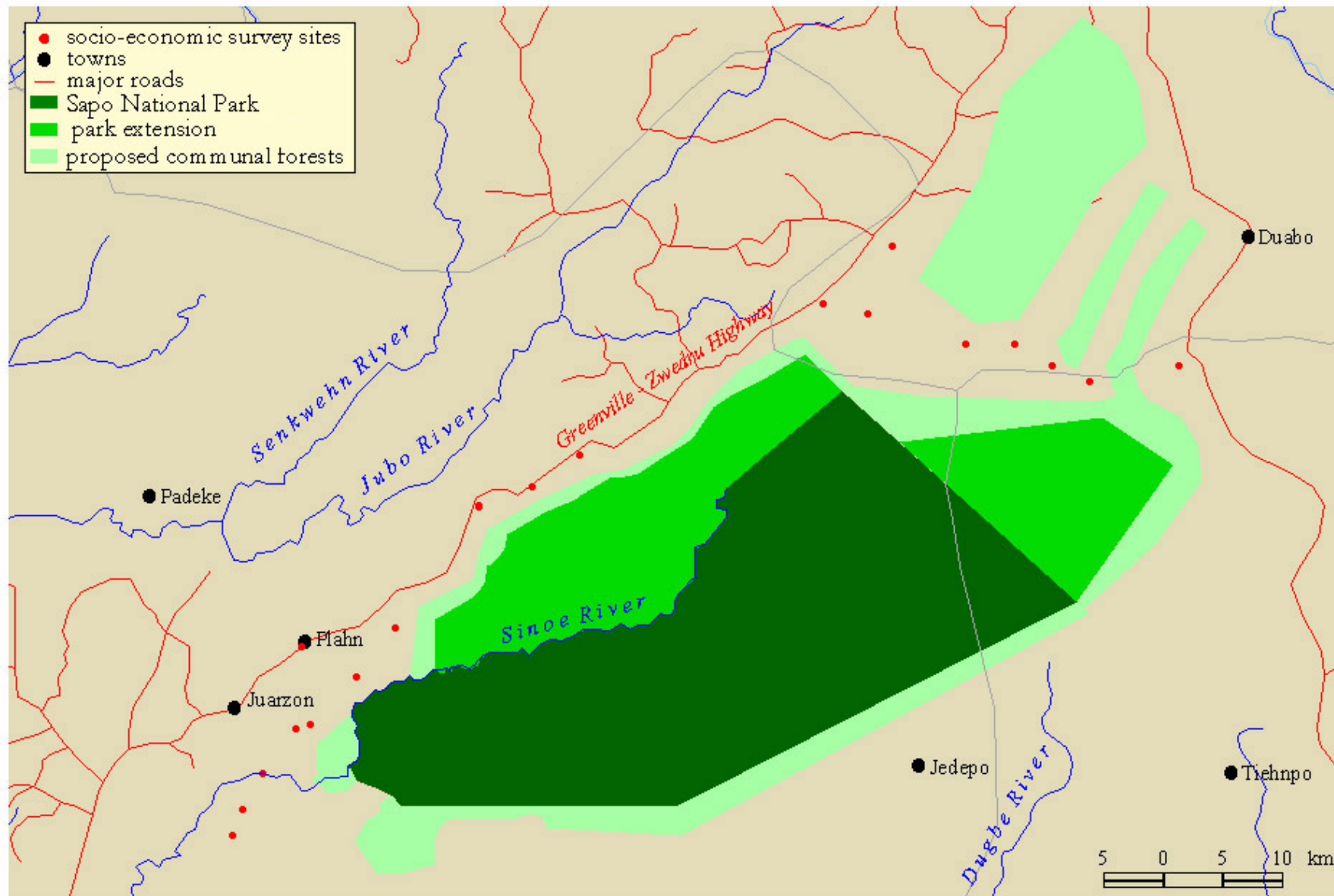
Conclusion

The success of a communal forest should be measured ultimately by whether it can survive socially, institutionally and biologically long after the initial external support has ended. This will depend on myriad factors, some of which are highlighted in this draft manual and will be tested in a pilot initiative around Sapo Park. The most important factor is likely to be how well the processes outlined here empower and motivate a community-based, -owned and -managed institution to conserve the productive capacity and integrity (including biodiversity) of the forests on which the “community” depends for its social, economic and cultural needs.

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Appendix A: Map of Sapo Park showing original area, 2003 extensions and proposed CF buffer zone, plus surrounding towns & villages



Sapo National Park

Appendix B: Articles 66, 67 and 71 of the Revised Rules and Regulations Governing the Hinterland of Liberia (1949)

Article 66 Lands:

- a. Title to the territory of the Republic of Liberia vests in the sovereign state. The right and title of the respective tribes to lands of an adequate area for farming and other enterprises essential to the necessities of the tribe's main interest [may be vested?] in the tribe to be utilized by them for these purposes; and whether or not they have procured deeds from the government, delimiting by notes [metes?] and bounds such reserves, their rights and interest in and to such areas, are a perfect reserve and give them title to the land against any person or persons whenever.
- b. This land interest may be transmitted into communal m holdings upon application of a tribe made to the Government for that purpose, and such communal holding would be surveyed at the expense of the tribe concerned.
- c. The communal holding will be vested in the Paramount Chief and Tribal Authority as trustees for the tribe.
- d. The Trustees, however, cannot pass any fee simple title in these lands to any person whatever.
- e. Should the tribes become sufficiently advanced in the arts of civilization, they may petition the Government for a division of the land into family holdings in which event the Government will grant deeds in fee simple to each family for an area of 25 acres in keeping with provision of Act of 1905.

Article 67: Use of Lands by Strangers:

If any individual enters the territory of a tribe of which he is not a member for the purpose of farming, he shall observe the following:

- a. Obtain permission of the Tribal Authority prior to commencing his activities;
- b. Agrees to pay some token in the nature of rent, such as five or six bunches of rice out of every farm;
- c. Pay taxes to the appropriate tribal chief on all huts on the said lands erected or occupied by him.

The Tribal Authority may cancel the authority granted and confiscate the crops, subject always to appeal to the District Commissioner provided he neglects to comply with all or any of the foregoing provisions.

Article 71: Proceeds of Communal Farms

- a. The proceeds of each communal farm belong to the tribe and shall be used for the general benefit of the tribe as a whole and not for the benefit of any one individual or official.
- b. In order that the government may see the expected benefit to be enjoyed throughout by the different tribes in the Interior from proceeds of the communal Farms, it is hereby ordered that proceeds from all communal farms must be deposited by proper tribal authority into the Tribal Treasury and is as provided in Article 26 hereof. [The duties of the Chief include depositing fees.]

Appendix C: Excerpts from An Act For The Establishment Of A Protected Forest Areas Network (October 2003)

Section 9.9. Game Reserves, Controlled Hunting Areas, Buffer Zones, Conservation Corridors and Other Protected Forest Area Categories. The Authority shall by regulation identify and establish within the Protected Forest Area Network, protected forest area categories, other than National Forests, National Parks, Nature Reserves and Strict Nature Reserve, including, but not limited to, Game Reserves, Controlled Hunting Areas, Communal Forests and other Buffer Zones, as Conservation Corridors to facilitate sustainable protected forest management and biodiversity protection.

Section 3. That from and immediately after the passage of this Act, section 9.2 of Chapter 9 of the New National Forestry Law, Part II Title 23 of the Liberian Code of Law Revised, is amended to read as follows:

Section 9.10. Protected Areas Regulations and Prohibitions. The Authority shall by regulations declare the acts that are prohibited in each protected forest type and category established in the Protected Forest Areas Network except that there shall be included in any legislation establishing a National Park, Nature Reserve or Strict Nature Reserve provision(s) stating the acts specifically to be prohibited; and

- a) Acts permitted in a Strict Nature Reserve shall be limited to management and research purposes only.
- b) Acts prohibited in a **National Park, Nature Reserve** and **Game Reserve** shall include: no prospecting, mining, farming, hunting, fishing, timber or non-timber forest product extraction; Acts permitted shall be limited to access for management, non-consumptive use, including tourism, recreation and research;
- c) Acts prohibited in **Communal Forests** shall include: No prospecting, mining, farming or commercial timber extraction. Other uses are to be regulated by the designated local community with assistance from local authorities and declared by Regulations of the Authority;
- d) Acts prohibited at **Cultural Sites** shall include: No prospecting or mining, farming, hunting, and timber or non-timber forest product extraction. Access to these sites shall be controlled by designated community leaders or local authorities as prescribed by regulation.
- e) Acts prohibited in a **National Forest** shall include: No prospecting, class B or C mining or farming. Permitted acts include: Class A mineral rights in accordance with Section 8.2(c) of the New National Forestry Law; and access for licensed and managed commercial forest product extraction, unless local restrictions imposed by the Authority for sustainable management purposes;
- f) Acts prohibited in Multiple **Sustainable Use Reserves** include: No farming or commercial timber extraction. Other uses are to be regulated by FDA in co-operation with local authorities.

Definitions

“Buffer Zone” in the context of Protected Forest Area, means a transitional zone (such as Communal Forest, Game Reserve, Multiple Sustainable Use Reserve) surrounding a more strictly protected zone, intended for low-impact sustained human use to reduce the impact of outside human disturbance, to protect the boundaries from encroachment, and to preserve the natural state of the more strictly protected zone it surrounds.

“Communal Forest” means an area set aside legally or temporarily by regulation for the sustainable use of non-timber forest products by local communities on a non-commercial basis.

Appendix D: Excerpts from An Act Adopting the New National Forestry Law (April 2000)

Chapter 2: Ownership of Forest Resources

Section 2.1 Ownership of Forest Resources: all forest resources in Liberia are the property of the Republic, except communal and forest resources privately owned which have been developed through artificial regeneration. However, anything pertaining to the prospection, utilization, and export shall be governed by this law.

Section 2.2 Right of Ownership to Forest Resources: The rights of Holders of Forest Resources Utilization Rights, or Hunting Permits shall be governed by the provision of this Law.

Section 2.3 Lease of Forest Land: The Authority [FDA], in collaboration with other relevant agencies of government, shall be the representatives of the government to negotiate or enter into agreements with any applicant or Holder, to lease, utilize or operate public forest or public forest land for the harvesting of Forest Products or agricultural purposes.

Section 2.4 Application and Enforcement: This law shall herein after apply to all agreements relating to forest land, forest management, conservation, utilization and protection of the environment.

Section 2.3 Non-Interference: It is illegal for any official of Government, Tribal Authority or any group of citizens to interfere with any rights granted under this Law to Holders of Forests Resources Utilization Agreements. A violation of this section shall be punishable under the Economic Sabotage provision of the Penal Law.

Definitions:

This Law defines ‘communal forest’ as “A small described forest area immediately adjacent to one or more villages to be used exclusively by the local inhabitants and shall not be used for any commercial purposes.”

Appendix E: Excerpt of Section 27 of An Act Creating the Environment Protection Agency of the Republic of Liberia (2002)

Section 27

District Environment Officer

- 1) The Agency shall appoint a District Environment Officer for each District;
- 2) The functions of the District Environment Officer shall include the following:
 - a) To advise the district Environment Committee on all matters relating to the management of the environment and natural resources;
 - b) To function as the Secretary to the District Environment Committee;
 - c) To liaise with the County Environment Officer and agency on all matters relating to the environment;
 - d) To compile such reports to the Agency as may be prescribed;
 - e) To promote environmental awareness through dissemination of information, public education and campaigns;
 - f) To assist the County Environment Officer to conduct public hearings on environmental impact assessment in the County and the district as prescribed in this Act; and
 - g) To ensure that the views and concerns of all groups within the District are represented at public hearings on environment and natural resource management decisions.

Appendix F. Critical Enabling Conditions for Sustainable Common-Property-Based Resource Management

The following critical conditions listed above are adapted from *Common Property Institutions and Sustainable Governance of Resources* (Agrawal 2001). An author of this report synthesized the findings of leading scholars on the variations of common resource use. Comments were added in parentheses when clarification was deemed necessary based on Agrawal (2001).

1. Resource systems characteristics
 - i. Small size (could vary with size of group?)
 - ii. Well-defined boundaries (of resources)
 - iii. Low levels of mobility (if not stationary, boundaries may have to accommodate variations)
 - iv. Possibilities of storage of benefits from the resources
 - v. Predictability (of resource flow)
2. Group characteristics
 - i. Small size (level of collective action may dictate appropriate group size)
 - ii. Clearly defined boundaries
 - iii. Shared norms
 - iv. Appropriate leadership—young, familiar with changing external environments connected to local traditional elite (experienced)
3. Relationship between resource system characteristics (1) and group characteristics (2)
 - i. Overlap between user group residential location and resource location
 - ii. High levels of dependence by group members on resource system
 - iii. Fairness in allocation of benefits from common resources
 - iv. Low levels of user demand
 - v. Gradual change in levels of demand
4. Institutional arrangements
 - i. Rules are simple and easy to understand
 - ii. Locally devised access and management rules
 - iii. Ease in enforcement of rules
 - iv. Graduated sanctions (level of sanction increases with each infraction)
 - v. Availability of low cost adjudication (conflict resolution mechanism)
 - vi. Accountability of monitors and other officials to the users
5. Relationship between resource system (1) and institutional arrangements (4)
 - i. Match restrictions on harvests to regeneration of resources
6. External environment (relationship between group and external forces)
 - i. Technology:
 - a. Low cost exclusion technology (expertise, know-how)
 - b. Time for adaptation to new technologies related to [common-property]
 - ii. Low levels of articulation with external markets (communication, linkage)
 - iii. Gradual change in articulation with external markets
 - iv. State: (handling unspecified rights and disputes)
 - a. Central governments should not undermine local authority (community-based, collective)
 - b. Supportive external sanctioning institutions
 - c. Appropriate levels of external aid to compensate for conservation activities
 - d. Nested levels of appropriation, provision, enforcement governance

Appendix G. Brief Description of Mercy Corps' Community Development Committee

This description is included for the sake of exploring with Mercy Corps, a primary partner for the CF pilot initiative at Sapo Park, alternatives for a CF institutional mechanism. More specifically, the pilot initiative will test if and how Mercy Corps' Community Development Committee (CDC) could serve as either a CF Council or a CF Management Committee.

I. Roles and Responsibilities of the Community Development Committee

“For a program or project to be pro-poor, or to serve the needs of the poorest and most marginalized, careful attention needs to be paid to the complex and multi-layered power relations within a target community or group. To access that community through the most visible, most literate or vocal, is likely to result in strengthening existing power structures that underpin poverty and inequality in a community or group”.

By Hannah Beardon, Reflect ICT's Project Coordinator, India.

The entry point of Mercy Corps' programs in a community for channeling socio-economic development and peace-building support is the Community Development Committee (CDC). The CDC is a community-owned and -managed civic organization that mobilizes and manages resources for the development of the whole community. Membership of the CDC is composed of citizens freely selected or elected by all citizens of the community to serve as volunteers for a specific period of time. These include citizens residing in satellite villages that are directly a part of the main town.

Membership of the CDC should be as follows:

•	Local government representatives (town chief and assistant town chief)	- 2
•	Elders' representatives (1 female and 1 male)	- 2
•	Adults' representatives (1 female and 1 male)	- 2
•	Youth representatives (1 female and 1 male)	- 2
•	REFLECT circle members' representatives (1 female and 1 male)	- 2
•	REFLECT facilitators (1 female and 1 male)	- 2
•	Agro-forestry representatives (1 female and 1 male)	- 2
•	Education sector representatives (1 female and 1 male)	- 2
•	Health sector representatives (1 female and 1 male)	- 2
•	Business sector representatives (1 female and 1 male)	- 2
•	Peace-building sector representatives (1 female and 1 male)	- 2
	Total	22

The socioeconomic development initiatives of the community should be coordinated and managed by the CDC. The CDC should have a corps of officers elected by secret ballot by all citizens from the membership of the CDC. The following positions are recommended for effective administration of the CDC:

1. Chairperson
2. Vice chairperson
3. Secretary
4. Assistant Secretary
5. Treasurer
6. Assistant Treasurer

The CDC with the support of local NGO partners and Mercy Corps staffers should develop:

- a. Meeting procedures of the CDC
- b. Duties of the corps of officers
- c. Policy decision-making procedures

The CDC should set up subcommittees to manage specific socio-economic development and peace building activities in the following areas:

1. Peace-building: palaver management, civic education, etc.
2. Education: educational infrastructure development, sustainability and quality management
3. Health: health and hygiene promotion, water and sanitation infrastructure sustenance and management
4. Agriculture and Forestry: best agricultural practices, money-making crops, asset management, value-adding industries and marketing
5. Business: micro-enterprise development, basic business management training, self-help groups development

Each subcommittee shall have a team leader and a secretary—one female and one male. The members of the subcommittees shall appoint their team leader and secretary. The ‘Scope of Work’ and tenure of the subcommittees shall be determined by the CDC. The scope of work of each subcommittee, based on needs of the community, shall be documented by the CDC with the support of local NGO partners and Mercy Corps staffers.

The roles of the CDC include, but are not limited to the following:

- Leading the community in identifying, analyzing, prioritizing, planning and implementing action points to address community problems
- Identifying and recruiting suitably qualified citizens as volunteered REFLECT facilitators
- Facilitating the ‘self-selection’ of REFLECT circle members
- Setting up and managing the REFLECT circles
- Initiating income generation activities/projects to sustain community-driven development processes
- Providing incentives (cash or in-kind) to REFLECT facilitators
- Mobilizing and managing resources to implement action points evolving from the REFLECT process
- Advocating for change of policies and practices that impede socioeconomic development
- Leading intra- and inter-community networking to gain strategic relationships that lead to development of shared social infrastructures
- Leading the strengthening of traditional and new conflict management mechanisms

The CDC is:

1. A community-owned and managed civic organization
2. Non-profit, non-political, non-religious, and non-governmental
3. Accountable to the community
4. An advocacy and capacity building CBO

To integrate Mercy Corps’ ‘Community Organization Model’ described above, into the Communal Forest Manual, it would be highly desirable to piggy-back CF committees on top of what Mercy Corps is planning to avoid developing parallel structures, confusion and possibly conflicts in the form of power struggles within targeted communities. The pilot initiative around Sapu Park could adopt the CDC model and use the opportunity of CDC subcommittees to lead the CF work. The subcommittee on agriculture and forestry (agro-forestry) could be broadened and its capacity strengthened to handle the various stages of developing the communal forest. This would streamline community structures, ensuring the CF initiative engages with one or more sub-structures within a mechanism co-ordinating all development resources and accountable to the local community and to donors.