

Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

PLEASE NOTE: Due to the increased number of reports expected in 2005, we will not be able to confirm receipt of reports but will contact you individually should any questions arise

Project Ref. No.	13/008
Project Title	Establishing community-based forest biodiversity management around Sapu Park, Liberia
Country(ies)	Liberia
UK Organisation	Fauna & Flora International
Collaborator(s)	The Liberian Forestry Development Authority (FDA), the Liberian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)
Report date	21 October 2005, for the period 1 April – 30 September 2005
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	HYR 2
Project website	None

1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – September) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up).

As discussed in numerous letter and e-mail exchanges with the Darwin Initiative Secretariat, this project's time-table and work plan has had to be revised several times over, and emphasis of the project's objectives has shifted to adapt to changing in-country circumstances. Therefore a summary of achievements over the six months April-September 2005 follows, succeeded by a comparison of achievements with the time-table proposed in my letter to Margaret Okot of 15th July with the latest revised project work-plan.

Since late April, the Darwin project completed the following:

1. a two-person review in April of the livelihood approaches in FFI's Liberia programmes with specific focus on this project, leading to an internal report for FFI with several recommendations for improving FFI's and this project's capacity to adopt effective participatory approaches;
2. a review of past (approximately 1997-2004), present and planned future conservation and development interventions in communities around the Park (conducted April-June) resulting in a report distributed in Liberia in July;
3. a workshop (July) with all interested parties to review the report above (item 2) in order to share available information, develop a coherent approach to co-ordinating interventions around the Park, and identify capacity needs in participatory approaches (i.e. everyone says they do 'PRA' but what's done is generally far from it). The workshop recommended, *inter alia*, establishing a co-ordinating committee for Sapu Park;
4. participation in a joint CIFOR/ICRAF mission in May that did a preliminary reconnaissance of community livelihoods related to forests and land around Sapu Park, local authority structures for decision-making related to natural resources, and needs for improving community forestry and forest-based livelihoods for communities around the Park, esp. the potential for improving farming systems and information needs. CIFOR prepared the final report;
5. proposal preparation for small-scale home gardens in target communities around the Park (April-May);
6. provision of input (April-September) into the restructuring of the Liberian Forestry Development Authority's (FDA's) Conservation and Community Services Department ensuring community services are now on equal hierarchical footing as conservation;

7. a detailed field assessment in July of grassroots, traditional governance and authority structures, and their relations to natural resources and agricultural management amongst communities around the Park. This review looked also at community dependencies on surrounding forests and explored pilot communities for establishing communal forests (several communities welcomed the idea warmly). The results are summarised in a report available from FFI;
8. a follow-on assessment in September with CIFOR of specific community forestry and other development options for villages around the Park that will facilitate forest-friendly livelihoods and communal forest establishment around the Park (to be completed in Q4 2005);
9. participated actively in the planning of and provided significant logistical support to the evacuation of the Park of squatters, a process successfully completed in August; and
10. secured preparatory funding from the *Fonds Français pour l'Environnement Mondial* (FFEM, or French GEF) to finalise the FFEM proposal which cannot be approved now until March 2006.

While security at the Park is now good and FFI feels it has corrected earlier deficiencies in planning and assessment processes, we are also aware of getting caught in a never-ending cycle of assessments. The study underway currently (item 8) is intended to be the final broad-level assessment before activities are negotiated and piloted one-on-one in Park-adjacent villages starting in early 2006.

In comparison with the revised work-plan submitted to Margaret Okot in July, the project is currently:

- **Project Operations:** behind schedule in terms of regularising its staffing (NGO and FDA field staff) and procurement of field equipment because of a lack of a clear plan for field activities until all assessments are completed, and because the FFEM grant will not be available before April 2006. Otherwise TOR are ready.
- **Critical External Factors:** Security has been restored but communities are still not adequately aware of the location of Park boundaries. This needs to occur under the World Bank/GEF-funded project in parallel, which became operational in August. Buffer zone strategy being formulated by FFI in collaboration with FDA, Conservation International, CIFOR and others.
- **Regulatory Framework:** Little attention paid to this over the last 6 months in favour of evacuating the Park of squatters and assessing options for community forestry and community development around the Park. Furthermore the project supported FFI staff to participate in the development of Liberia's (draft) National Forestry Policy which emphasises community forestry, and communal forests as one mechanism to support community forestry and empowerment. Thus attention was paid to the broader policy framework than on the specifics of communal forests.
- **Establish 3-4 Communal Forests:** Through successive assessments, certain communities have already volunteered themselves as candidates for piloting communal forests as well as forest-friendly development initiatives. Activities here are likely to occur earlier than planned in the July work-plan.
- **Models for sustainable natural resources & common property-based livelihoods:** Slightly behind schedule since insufficient information was available on how to interact strategically with grassroots authority structures and what types of livelihood assistance are likely to support CF and Park goals.
- **Capacity of FDA and partners enhanced:** Inadequate formal training of partners in participatory processes, although assessment teams (limited numbers) have received good on-the-job instruction from the team leader.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

The exchanges between FFI and the Darwin Secretariat explain these in some detail, as do the review of the annual report and FFI's responses to the annual review (Attachments 1-2). In summary, security at the Park (it was occupied illegally by several thousand miners, hunters and business people, many of whom were former combatants) was a major problem prior to this semester and until about June 2005, limiting the project's ability for field work. Likewise the aftermath of conflict changed surrounding communities' priorities from securing legal rights to forest areas to meeting basic subsistence needs.

This required FFI to rethink its approach, improve its participatory planning processes and focus more on basic livelihood support, deferring piloting communal forests until appropriate. The timing of many activities, and the emphasis between formal establishment of communal forests versus sustainable forest-friendly livelihoods, have changed (see Attachments 1-2).

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

Yes, this project's challenges have been regularly communicated with the Secretariat, resulting in budgetary changes as well as agreement to alter the work-plan change emphases between components.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: yes (letters and e-mail) in October 2004, February 2005, April 2005, July 2005, September 2005 and October 2005

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: yes, submitted in July 2005 and new adjustments proposed this month with quarterly invoice

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

No.

If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document.

Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk. The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**