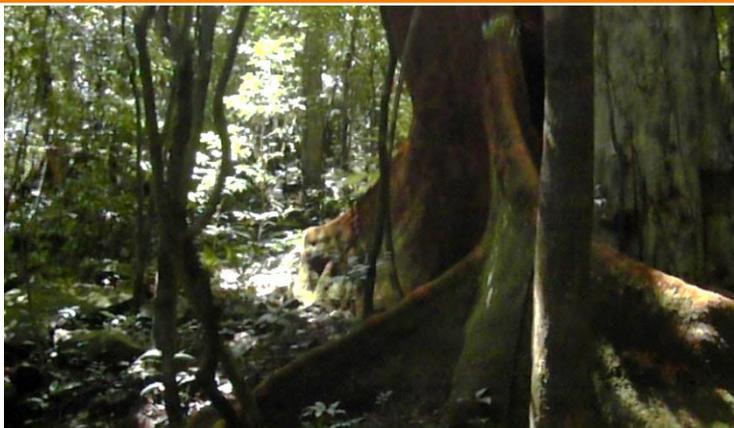




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**FINAL EVALUATION REPORT OF THE
WESTERN AREA PENINSULA FOREST PROTECTION PROJECT
EC: DCI-ENV/2008/153865
WHH: AF / SLE 1008**



**on behalf of Welthungerhilfe
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I Summary

1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AND FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

The Western Area Peninsula Forest Reserve project (WAPFR) in Sierra Leone started in March 2009 and will end in February 2014 after a 5-year implementation period. The overall objective of the project has been to enhance the protection and conservation of the WAPFOR and to decelerate deforestation, as nearly a third of the original forest cover had been destroyed between 1990 and 2008.

The project concept was based on a coherent result model that: (i) (potential) encroachers are supported with alternative livelihood options to stop their unsustainable utilisation of forest resources; (ii) communities are supported with ecosystem services as well as community empowerment, to facilitate their participation in forest protection; (iii) awareness raising and sensitisation at different levels to create environmental consciousness and an understanding of the lifesaving functions of the forest ecosystem and the importance of conservation; and (iv) the relevant government institutions, particularly Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), are strengthened enabling them: to prioritise conservation issues, to advance and implement legislation, and to set up an effective institutional framework.

The Republic of Sierra Leone is bordered by Guinea to the northeast, Liberia to the southeast, and the Atlantic Ocean to the southwest. Between 1991 and 2002, the Sierra Leone Civil War devastated the country, resulting in more than 50,000 deaths, much of the country's infrastructure destroyed, and over two million people displaced as refugees in neighbouring countries. Since 2002, the country has been undergoing peace-building, democracy, reconciliation and development, as well as coming to terms with its recent history.

Sierra Leone is a constitutional republic with a directly elected president and a unicameral

legislature. The country has a tropical climate, with a diverse environment ranging from savannah to rainforests, but it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. It does have strong economic growth, but with very little impact on the living conditions of the poorest. Poverty and food insecurity are the major challenges regarding further development. Land grabbing in combination with unsustainable natural resource exploration constitute the biggest risk for future conflicts, rural exodus, a fast-growing urban population and increasing poverty.

Nowadays WAPFOR is one of eight biodiversity hotspots in the country and is part of the Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem. It is of critical importance for the water supply to the peninsula population, including the capital Freetown (1.5 million people¹ – approximately 20% of the country's total population). The reserve covers 17,000ha of enclosed rainforest declared a reserve in 1916 and gazetted as a non-hunting forest reserve in 1973. It hosts approximately 80–90% of Sierra Leone's terrestrial biodiversity. Its environmental services – protection against floods, erosion and landslides; absorption of water in the rainy season and its release over the course of the dry season; considerable windbreak and micro-climate regulation – as well as its tourism potential are essential for the whole country.

The intervention's direct target group was estimated at 50,000 people living in villages adjacent to the WAPFOR. The communities mainly rely on subsistence farming and fishing for their livelihoods. Households are also carrying out horticulture, charcoal burning and trading, stone and sand quarrying, palm wine and small-scale agricultural production. Women play a vital role, as they take care of the home gardens and small-scale animal husbandry. Timber and non-timber forest products from WAPFOR play a crucial role in the livelihoods of these communities.

¹ CIA World Fact Book demographic statistics (2008 est.)

The project holder is Welthungerhilfe, but it was planned and implemented together with “Environmental Forum for Action” or ENFORAC – a Sierra Leonean network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The project is an integrated part of Welthungerhilfe’s global, regional and national programmatic approach. All relevant stakeholders from government agencies at all levels, district councils, local NGOs and CBOs were involved.

2 RELEVANCE

Project relevance is generally very high. The WAP Forest Reserve is of crucial importance for the water supply of the entire peninsula population, including the inhabitants of the capital Freetown. Furthermore, Sierra Leone has signed several international conventions and protocols regarding environmental and forest protection, and has developed policy, legislative and institutional framework for its environmental management.

The project objectives are well aligned to the general objectives of Welthungerhilfe: i.e. to sustainably improve living and to support people to help themselves. The project’s approach of developing community and institutional capacity for zonal management strengthens self-help efforts.

The project has been financed under the EC programme “Environment and sustainable management of natural resources, including energy” and is aligned to the objective of the European Community’s Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme 2008–2013, which lists environmental governance as one of six priorities under its focal sector “good governance and institutional support”.

A particularly strong aspect of the project design is the articulation between local and national levels, reinforcing each other to encourage law enforcement, communities’ economic development with alternative livelihoods options (ALO), and the use of ecosystem services as an argument for protection and conservation and further community development.

3 OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

Impacts are defined as long-term effects. With the international recognition of the National Park and through Sierra Leonean parliament legislation, the project has certainly achieved an impressive impact that no one had expected during the project planning phase or even at the beginning of its implementation. The WAP Forest is also listed under the UNESCO World Heritage sites, which increased international attention to the forest and therefore its protection.

There is a strong awareness created about the core forest zone, and the need for preservation is generally well accepted among all stakeholders, as well as the peninsula population. Nearly 100% of the target population is aware of the importance of the forest ecosystem and what it provides, especially its watershed. Around 25% of the villages adjacent to the forest have a fully functional water supply, which has contributed to measurable improvements in living conditions in the communities, e.g. the reduction of waterborne diseases and improved health conditions among the dwellers.

The project reached only about 13% of an estimated total of 6,000 potential encroachers, (people who derive their income from the forest in a destructive way) with its livelihood support. Of these, approximately 80% managed to establish reasonable alternative income sources, and use these for further investments. Nevertheless, there is a considerable reduction of anthropogenic activities and human stressors in the forest.

Some small-scale community-based tourism destinations were promoted. Their income is reasonable, but their design is at an early stage and the major touristic infrastructure is still rudimentary. However, the water supply systems and piloted hydro-power supply systems will increase the potential for community-based development of future tourist projects. Awareness regarding preconditions for a successful tourism business is established.

The government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) is aware of the need to establish an independent and sustainable National Park administration structure and that the forest law and its penalties must urgently be revised, although to date there is no indication that the government is taking any action. But district councillors and community headmen have become active and have promoted by-laws. Ministry employees have learnt and greatly benefited from project support, by compiling quality data and arguments for ministerial internal debates and advocacy work in parliament. The project could gain important supporters such as the EPA² and SPU³ to push the legalisation of the National Park and its conservation and protection.

The communities' and councils' education contributed to their empowerment and enabled them on the one hand to grasp the serious risk coming from further deforestation, degradation and unsustainable natural resource exploitation; and on the other hand they understand the benefits that can be derived from protected ecosystem services. Although a preliminary zonal management plan was jointly developed, so far it has neither been accepted nor legalised. This will have negative effects on further economic, regional and community development.

The outcome for ENFORAC as a project partner is considerable. Having to cope with many early difficulties led to their poor initial involvement in the project management. Nevertheless, throughout the intervention, their own capacities and competencies have been strengthened, resulting in the project's success and the strengthening of their own reputation.

4 SUSTAINABILITY

Probably the most sustainable project achievement is the awareness raising and

sensitisation of the peninsula population and the public sector on the importance of environmental protection, land use planning and benefits of preservation. The relevance, urgency and importance of forest protection has been recognised at the highest political level in the president's Strategy Policy Unit (SPU), and it can be expected that the GoSL will continue to address the issues in the future, with the lobbying pressure coming from civil society organisations.

Partially successful income generation activities and ALO have contributed to decreasing the pressure on the forest reserves. Communities developed considerable ownership for their water systems and established water committees, taking care of the maintenance themselves. A high sense of ownership is a good precondition for sustainability.

In project planning, a long-term strategic approach, acknowledging that a complex and ambitious intervention would need more than 5 years, was not sufficiently included. As a result, the project design, as well as Welthungerhilfe headquarters (HQ), did not anticipate the necessity for a second phase to establish and consolidate a National Park management structure in time.

It is quite obvious that a second phase is required for the establishment and/or consolidation of sustainable structures. The non-establishment of a National Park management structure within the GoSL is a limiting factor to sustainability, together with the unrevised law enforcement and the weak prosecution.

5 EFFECTIVENESS

Welthungerhilfe has a regional office in Monrovia, Liberia, to coordinate the country programmes in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Both country programmes are supported by the regional desk at the HQ level (Bonn, Germany).

The project office was established and equipped by Welthungerhilfe and is based in Freetown. The project holder has a functional administration system, based on clear rules and

² Environment Protection Agency, a cross-cutting government agency responsible for coordinating the various ministries involved in environmental issues.

³ The Strategy Policy Unit is a governmental body advising and responding in turn directly to the president of Sierra Leone.

regulations. Project execution responsibility at operational level is with the project manager.

The “Environmental Forum for Action” ENFORAC was formed in 2004 in response to the urgent need for stronger action to protest and advocate for Sierra Leone’s natural resources. It is a coalition of about 11–15 environmental NGOs, community groups and academic institutions whose united voices maximise their impact on policy, management and behavioural change for a healthy environment.

Welthungerhilfe and ENFORAC have long-term operational experiences. Staff, equipment, material and the funding of activities were realistically and appropriately calculated. The long project duration supported the joint implementation responsibility among the project holder and its partners, as it allowed for sufficient time to grow together, develop trust and build partner’s capacities. Today the project staff and the project partners are committed and dedicated. The project manager, who is also the Welthungerhilfe country representative, is professional, foresighted and utilises monitoring results for project cycle management.

At the time of project preparation in 2008, the general situation was different from today and it was difficult to foresee how achievable and realistic the full protection of the reserve would be. From today’s perspective, the project has achieved more than initially intended, with the national and international recognition of the WAPFR National Park. In principle, the majority of relevant activities were carried out and all planned outputs were achieved within the project period, although some not to their full extent.

Furthermore, the planned involvement of the different levels of stakeholders – starting at the ministry level, across district councils, community-based organisations (CBOs), villagers and the environment network ENFORAC – was certainly a major challenge for project management on the one hand, but also a key element for success, especially regarding awareness raising and sensitisation at different

levels on the other hand. It was crucial to include multi-stakeholder involvement in the project proposal, as was done.

The major shortcoming of the project was its delayed start, taking almost 2 years to really get it going. This was due to problems with expatriate staff recruitment and a high turn-over among the international project managers. Apparently, this had negative consequences for the effectiveness of the project. This could not be compensated by the project partner ENFORAC, who was neither the project holder, nor had signed the project contract.

6 EFFICIENCY

The total budget is €3.1 million with an investment of €2.4 million by the EC and €0.7 million by Welthungerhilfe. The budget corresponds with the common allocation of development projects. No major over- or underspendings were detected, except that because of currency exchange losses the budget was diminished by 2%.

The cost/performance ratio assessment shows that 62% of the budget was planned for communities’ empowerment and development, awareness raising, advocacy and lobbying, followed by 23% for the protection and conservation outcome, and finally 15% for pro-poor financing mechanisms and long-term financing options for forest conservation.

In terms of “carbon efficiency”, the project delivered much important data for further comparison, e.g. the cost for saving a tonne of carbon emission is about €59.20. This has to be regarded as expensive, as currently the theoretical estimated market price per tonne of carbon emissions is around €9. However, the economic value of conservation cannot be calculated by just carbon emissions. For example, one would have to calculate the costs that would be incurred if the water supply were organised from other sources in the interior of Sierra Leone.

In hindsight, the project achieved quite a lot by demanding community and individuals’ contributions and involvement. Not only the

ownership has been strengthened, but ultimately more “micro projects” than originally planned were supported.

The internal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system was managed by an M&E officer, who focused on achieved outputs and, to a certain extent, on the use of outputs and outcome, although the latter in a less well-documented and systematic way. Financial monitoring is carried out according to Welthungerhilfe standard financial procedures. In principle, reports are in line with donor requirements.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The project – Project Management Team (PMT), ENFORAC and MAFFS Forestry Department – should focus on ensuring as much as possible that a park management structure is established within the GoSL. It should also advocate and lobby for government to prioritise funding support for the second phase, as well as for law enforcement (revision of the forest law and penalties) and prosecution.

The recommended buffer zone plan (including worst-case scenario consequences and best-case socioeconomic income opportunities and a push for legislation) must be finalised for further ministry information and guidance.

Contacts (internet) with other international biodiversity reserves, national parks and ecotourism forums should be intensified for professional and financial support (partnership).

This type of complex and sophisticated project needs better support and management back up. The delay of 2 years to establish a functional project management is not acceptable. Prevention measures should have

been developed and a foresighted human resource management is highly recommended.

8 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND “LESSONS LEARNT”

The EC-funded project is providing a useful contribution to the overall Welthungerhilfe country programme of Sierra Leone. It is an important project for ENFORAC and Welthungerhilfe, first because of its topic, and second because of its challenging multi-stakeholder involvement, as well as the common project implementation with ENFORAC as partner from the Sierra Leonean civil society.

A 5-year project phase is desirable for this type of intervention and it is quite remarkable that the EC has managed to provide such an exceptionally long funding period.

The WAP Forest is of exhilarating beauty and unique in terms of its biodiversity. Its micro-climatic balancing function, its water sources – often described as the “white diamond of the peninsula” – are the most important “life insurance”, as are its other ecosystem services, for the peninsula residents and future generations.

The following lessons learnt can be deduced: projects with such a challenging concept and design and with little previous experience in terms of its implementation should be planned differently. Outcome mapping as the planning and preparation tool would have been more appropriated. It is advisable to integrate a pilot phase, or at least an inception phase. It is always helpful to start new and innovative projects with an Introductory Workshop and to consolidate further implementation with a review evaluation after two-fifths of the project period.