

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

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	29 October 2004, for the period 1 April – 30 September 2004
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	<i>HYR 1</i>
Project website	<i>None</i>

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).

Relatively few start-up activities were planned for the first 6 months of the project. The two listed in the proposal are:

- 1- Reconciliation of MIA and FDA (tribal reserve (TR) vs communal forest) law & regulations; completion of communal forest manual and adoption as FDA regulation, and
- 2- Training of FDA, MIA and NGO partners in TR/CF law and regulations, community consultations and awareness-raising techniques

Progress towards 1: a draft communal forest manual was prepared led by FFI with input from MIA and limited input from the FDA. The FDA has been the object of intense international attention, and getting its upper management to focus on communal forests has been difficult. At the technician level, their understanding of community forest management is quite limited. Thus FFI has been working with key individuals to make them more aware of the practical details of the various aspects of community forest management, and what establishing communal forests will entail. In November, focus group meetings will be held to review the draft manual, finalise a version for field testing, and train key staff in what it involves.

It was premature to expect the manual to be adopted as regulation so early in the project, before it is field-tested. However FFI expects the manual, or relevant bits thereof, will be formally adopted as regulation after they are tested and refined.

Progress towards 2: the training originally planned for September will have to occur in November for several reasons. First, most FDA technical and field staff participated in a month-long training course on basic forest management and law enforcement led by the US Forest Service and the international technical assistance to the Liberian Civilian Police Force. These staff were not available for any training on communal forests. Second, Dr Kay Farmer had to return permanently to the UK in early October for personal reasons. In her absence, FFI offered her post to another UK expert (Mr James Murray) but he declined. FFI then identified Dr Samuel Koffa, a Liberian national who has worked on community forest management in the Philippines since 1978. Dr Koffa, a native of the Sapu Park zone, is highly skilled and eager to return to Liberia. Thus he was hired and returned to Liberia in October. This delayed the start-up of any training and training material preparation.

In addition to the two activities above, and the hiring of Dr Koffa, FFI purchased a 4x4 vehicle for the

initiative, along with spare parts. FFI secured the donation of 50 or so large sacks of clothing and shoes for use as hospitality gifts during the initial awareness campaign, too, all of which was shipped together to Monrovia for this initiative in August-September. This was much less expensive than purchasing just the vehicle locally.

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 re-establishment of security of the project area (Sapo Park and its surrounding forests) remains problematic. Since October 2003, the Park was invaded by rebels and certain local villagers who began alluvial gold mining, fully aware that these are illegal inside the park. In the absence of any law enforcement, and with the UN Mission in Liberia's attention on securing densely populated areas, not the forested areas, the illegal activities in the Park expanded to the point where a rapid survey in August 2004 estimated up to 5000 miners, hunters, entrepreneurs and camp followers in three camps inside the Park. While this number may be high, even one-tenth that number represents a massive disturbance to the ecosystem.

The rebel leader inside the Park, who authorised others to settle there, has demanded reimbursement for his investments. No one is prepared to pay him anything, but he and his followers were heavily armed at the time of the demand. This part of the country is the very last one to be disarmed and demobilised, with an expected completion date of 31st October. It remains to be seen what the security status of the area will be beginning in November. FFI has strict security policies and procedures, and will not put its own or partners' personnel or property in danger.

This security hiccup may (1) delay the launch of field work until it is safe to do so, and (2) distort the demands by local residents of what they expect to gain from the forests surrounding their villages. They might initially reject communal forests as restrictive and non-remunerative. However many local residents may feel victimised by the same pattern of outsiders expropriating locally managed natural resources without sharing the benefits locally, as happened before the fighting. This feeling of victimisation was a major factor in their support for establishing communal forests in 2002-03 when the project was designed. Thus FFI does not know what reception this initiative will have initially.

Whatever the reception, we will pursue our initiative as best we can. If local residents choose not to have communal forests, then they must still negotiate with the FDA, the Ministry of Lands, Mines & Energy and MIA whether they may mine, log, hunt or pursue other extractive activities. This could prove much less advantageous to them than communal forests in the long run. FFI will work with its Government collaborators to explain this.

One final unforeseen issue: the co-financing that the French GEF tentatively agreed to provide has been delayed, which has led to some early funding gaps in procuring equipment. The Darwin Secretariat was approached to allow some money to be allocated from staff costs to equipment (vehicle) costs, and agreed. Earlier this week, the French GEF informed FFI that the proposal had been approved for the first of two stages in the approval process. This bodes extremely well for the second stage of the process, which will culminate in March 2005 and will be reported on then.

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

Few of these changes have been brought to the Darwin Secretariat's attention as the issues are still evolving rapidly and cannot be usefully discussed yet. Until such time as important decisions should be made – and it is too early now to make them – FFI will wait to gain more perspective on an appropriate course of action. Once we have this, we will approach the Secretariat with recommendations and for guidance.

Only the co-financing issue has been brought to the Secretariat's attention, and it was understanding and accommodating of the changes requested.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: only the co-financing and staffing issues have been

discussed to date (June-04 and then October-04)

Changes to the project schedule/workplan:

None to date except those minor delays described in section 1 above which do not warrant any formal change to the workplan, in FFI's opinion. However if the issues described in section 2 above start to delay field work, then FFI will indeed inform the Secretariat and seek to revise the timetable. For now, however, FFI is reasonably confident that the initiative can move forward with little more than 1 or 1.5 months delay.

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

None for now.

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. **N/A**

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.**