

# **IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES FOR CREATING A PROTECTED AREA NETWORK AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION CORRIDORS IN LIBERIA**

## **Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL)/Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) Final Project Report (July 2002 – February 2004)**

### **1. INTRODUCTION:**

This report describes the status of the SCNL/CEPF project implementation from its inception in July 2002 to the period when it officially ended in February 2004, which makes exactly one year and seven months.

The effective start date of the project was 1<sup>st</sup> July 2002 and scheduled to end 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003. The overall goal of the project is “to build and strengthen the capacity of the SCNL to complement the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) efforts in restoring and managing nature conservation programs at Sapo National Park”. The project is to also ensure the implementation of activities for the establishment and management of a protected area network and biodiversity conservation corridors in Liberia.

The project was designed to be implemented over a period of three years. CEPF decided to fund the project in two phases. Phase one started July 2002 and was to end June 2003. SCNL was accorded US\$159,292 for this phase. Due to the relative security environment in the country at the time, the implementation of the project between July 2002 and March 2003 progressed well. However, problems with the implementation began when the civil war escalated in May 2003, disrupting all field activities.

As a result of the war, SCNL undertook the development of contingency plans in response to the situation. Three contingency plans (April – October 2003, October – December 2003 and January – March 2004) were developed.

The description is done with direct reference to two of the five (5) targeted outcomes, listed:

1. SCNL operation is effective and efficient.
2. FDA Technical capacity support, development and infrastructure improved.
3. Baseline biological information for protected areas established.
4. Network of protected areas established/created.
5. Biodiversity conservation corridors established.

Based on the overall goal and specific objectives of the revised project edition, the expected outcomes to be addressed in this report include:

- SCNL operates effectively and efficiently
- Baseline biological (bio-monitoring) program in and around Sapo National Park continues.

## **2. IMPLEMENTATION:**

The project was officially terminated on February 28, 2004. The effective start date of the project was 1<sup>st</sup> July 2002 and the termination date should have been 30<sup>th</sup> June 2003. Reference to the two major outcomes of the project, a summary of achievements are given below:

### **Output 1: SCNL operates efficiently and effectively**

- The SCNL office capacity (administrative and managerial) was strengthened during the period of project implementation. However, the recruitment, training and assignment of additional staff were not completed, awaiting the establishment and proclamation of new protected area by the Government of Liberia (GOL). An email communication network installation was completed. Supplies and equipment for SCNL central office and field operation were purchased and are presently in use. SCNL Quarterly Newsletter production continued up to March 2003, but was intermittently disrupted by the escalation of the civil war in early May 2003. Production resumed in October 2003 and continued up to March 2004.
- Effective field operation and community involvement increased in the Sapo National Park area, but could not be implemented in other proposed protected areas, as these areas have not been established. Community outreach and education programs and meetings with community leaders were conducted in collaboration with the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) Division of Wildlife and National Parks staff and other stakeholders. The supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the project were carried out and reports are available. An audit into the financial records during the six months of the project was completed and report forwarded to the BOD and donors. The final financial audit of the project is currently being concluded.

## **Output 2: Bio-monitoring Program at Sapo National Park Continues:**

- Baseline data of forest indicator species, their presence, diversity, distribution, movement, reproductive and feeding habits were collected and analyzed. The selection and survey of additional transect zones and lines establishment for Sapo National Park continued. Standardized forms for data collection were updated for field recording. The monitoring and collection of field data on existing transect zones and lines, which started July 2002, continued up to November 2002. A Computer data based was established and managed under the supervision of Dr. Ekki Waitkuwait.
- The selection and training of additional trackers for the north and southern ends of Sapo was not conducted due to the lack of a field vehicle. Community awareness raising program on conservation of biodiversity and organization of community volunteers to assist in field work at Sapo were successfully completed.
- Despite progress made in the baseline biological data collection for Sapo, the program was disrupted and later suspended in early April 2003 due to the absence of the Seconded FDA Supervisor and lack of a field vehicle.
- The computer database established is now being integrated into the Sapo National Park management by the FDA.

To further realize the targeted outputs, the following activities were completed during the project period.

- Five additional staff members were recruited, trained and assigned at the SCNL Monrovia Office and the field during the initial stages of the project.
- E-mail communication network was installed and SCNL quarterly newsletter publication – the PepperBird was regularly produced and circulated.
- SCNL staff TOR and organization chart was revised, budget and work plan for 3-years prepared, but reduced to 1 year by CEPF.
- Office supplies and equipment for SCNL Monrovia office and field operations including 1 4x4 Toyota Hilux-double cabin, 1 Desktop computer, 1 laptop computer, 1 filing cabinet, 1 LG Color scanner, 2 HP deskjet printers, 1 UPS, 1 voltage stabilizer, 4 search protectors, 2 air conditioners and adaptors

among others, were purchased for effective implementation of bio-diversity program.

- SCNL collaborated with a number of national and international conservation organizations, including FDA, SAED, SAMFU, FFI, CI, etc. A Protected Area Officer was assigned at Sapo NP to implement and supervise field activities including the implementation of Public Awareness Campaign in collaboration with FDA.
- Community programs and meetings with community leaders were held around Sapo NP.
- Supervision, monitoring, evaluation and financial reports were prepared and submitted to BOD and donors
- Eight transect zones and lines in and around Sapo National Park were established, and standardized forms for data collection updated.
- Data on existing transect zones and lines were collected, analyzed and computer database established and managed.
- Community awareness program on conservation of bio-diversity was conducted and volunteers organized to assist in the field.

### ***2.1 Description of purpose-level targets planed that was not been achieved.***

The successful implementations of the bio-monitoring program have not been achieved due to lack of logistics and prolong absence of the seconded FDA Supervisor. Also, additional trackers could not be selected and trained for other areas around Sapo NP and other proposed protected areas mainly due to the absence of a competent trainer and the abnormal security environment.

### ***2.2 Actions taken to overcome the above problems***

The above-mentioned problem will be addressed as outlined in the 15-month project proposal submitted to CEPF in March 2004 and awaiting approval.

**2.3 Description of output-level targets planned for this project period that was not achieved.**

The FDA technical capacity support, development and infrastructure improvement was not done.

**2.4 Actions taken to overcome the above problem.**

The FDA technical capacity support, development and infrastructure improvement component of the SCNL/CEPF project was deferred by CEPF to 2004.

**2.5 Do the planned purpose-level targets for the next proposed project period need to be changed?**

No.

**3 Lessons learned**

***Failure of the SCNL Secretariat to effectively coordinate with the Board of Directors for***

***Precise and decisive action during crisis time, led to the depletion of project fund while***

***Over 25% of the targeted outcomes were not achieved.***

**3.1 Important lessons learned during the period**

- a. Armed conflict can drastically alter the context in which organizations operate, presenting new challenges and needs, yet occasionally presenting opportunities. Organizations therefore need to develop new and flexible strategies to adapt to these circumstances and sometime cease to function effectively.
- b. During times of conflict and insecurity, activities that were planned in peacetime may become difficult or even impossible to implement. Programs can suddenly become irrelevant or inappropriate. In such chaotic times, it becomes critical to have the organizational and programmatic flexibility to adapt to a changing context, and to address needs as they arise. Hence, reduction of staff number and activities in close consultation with the BOD, could have produced the desired results.

- c. As circumstances change during conflict, organizations need to refocus on a new set of short-term activities. Very often, these activities will need to place a greater emphasis on the links between natural resources and livelihoods. At the same time, while organizations are refocusing, they should take care not to lose sight of long-term conservation and resource-management goals.
- d. Despite the many administrative problems couple with escalation of the civil war, SCNL made significant progress (65%) in the implementation of the project from the onset.

### **3.3 *Did the involvement of stakeholders lead to changes in implementation?***

No.

#### **12.0 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

To carry out the set of activities for the fourth and final quarter (April – June 2003) of the project implementation, SCNL decided to develop contingency plans and maintain a skeleton (8 persons) staff in response to the security situation in the country. A total of three separate contingency plans were developed and submitted to CEPF. Although there was no response/reaction from CEPF relative to the plans, funds remitted were diverted to staff salary payments, office operation, and other activities that had no direct bearing on the approved SCNL/CEPF project budget.

Even though SCNL may have been concerned about maintaining its staff, ensuring that the office remains opened and avoiding the flight of personnel during crisis, the best management decision would have been to shutdown all activities, lay off non-essential staff and reduce the day-to-day operations.