

CEPF SMALL GRANT FINAL PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

I. BASIC DATA

Organization Legal Name: Farmers Associated to Conserve the Environment (FACE)

Project Title (as stated in the grant agreement): Taking Biodiversity Conservation to the Proposed Lake Piso Nature Reserve

Implementation Partners for This Project:

Implementing partners who participated at different levels include SCNL and PCF (PCF refers to Piso Conservation Forum a partner CBO at the project site) as well as FDA, CI and FFI. The last three participated in the training workshop at Sembehun. Other institutions mentioned in the project document as partners but did not participate because of their busy schedule are the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU).

Project Dates (as stated in the grant agreement): November 1, 2005 - October 31, 2006

Date of Report (month/year): December 23, 2006

II. OPENING REMARKS

Provide any opening remarks that may assist in the review of this report.

Lake Piso wetland was proposed for protected area management by Verschuren, J. in 1983¹. The area is now a RAMSAR site and an IBA. Since 1998, FACE has been engaged in conservation activities in the area along with other national NGOs and Forestry Development Authority (FDA). It implemented a UNDP sponsored awareness raising project in the area in 1999 and an NC-IUCN small-grant sponsored project in 2004. The later project inspired the local people to value conservation actions in the area. To maintain conservation momentum in and document information necessary for conservation/management planning for the region, the project "Taking Biodiversity Conservation to the Proposed Lake Piso Nature Reserve" was envisaged by FACE. Therefore the intent of the project was to establish a well-structured but handy database on the Lake Piso region and also to encourage sustained community-based conservation actions kindled in the area by the UNDP and the NC-IUCN funded projects. The fundamental strategy was to involve the local people in all conservation/management activities and constantly engage them in these activities from assessment through decision making to implementation levels.

The project did not start on the actual starting date (November 1, 2005) as indicated in the project due to communication problems. It started one month later (i.e. December 3, 2005).

However, the desired results of the project were obtained through the following actions:

- A rapid assessment of biodiversity/habitats and surveys of socio-economic factors of the project area were conducted².

¹ Verschuren, J. (1983). Conservation of tropical rainforest in Liberia. Recommendations for wildlife conservation and national parks. Unpublished report of the IUCN to the Government of Liberia. Gland, Switzerland.

² *Analysis of the results of the assessment/surveys is near completion after which a final comprehensive report to contain a computerized database on the area will be produced (hopefully by end of January 2007).*

- A nursery was established at Sembehun (a town near and in the south of Lake Piso) and a quick-impact training of community members was conducted in nursery management. Trees produced as an output of the nursery activities were shared among and planted by villagers interested in tree farming.
- Eight (8) community members were given a short training in the production of solar energy-efficient devices for fish smoking and drying. Though the selected target users of the devices comprehended the concept of energy efficiency and valued the devices, they think the low capacity of the products cannot serve commercial fish drying purpose, rather the devices could only be used for home purpose.
- A workshop³ was conducted in Sembehun (the participants were all community representatives). At this workshop,
 - a) Local community members were trained in awareness creation/raising techniques and habitat/environmental monitoring; and
 - b) In a participatory manner, participants developed a model management plan framework for a future protected area of the Lake Piso region.
- Three canoes are being produced to assist Piso Conservation Forum (PCF) continues its monitoring activities in the Lake Piso communities.

These results show that the project was successfully implemented.

Unfortunately, a comprehensive document, to contain computerized information on the biodiversity and socio-economic parameters of the project area as well as other relevant information resulting from the project implementation, could not be submitted along with this technical report due to late completion of processing the raw data. The document should be released by the end of January 2007. FACE asked CEPF to accept this time set for the completion of the document.

III. NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What was the initial objective of this project?

Initially, the purpose of the project was to promote conservation actions in the proposed Lake Piso Nature Reserve region in order to reduce biodiversity loss. Two basic objectives set were:

- Establish computerized database on the biological and socio-economic factors relating to the management and conservation of the biodiversity of the proposed Lake Piso Nature Reserve; and
- Build the capacities of the local communities of the Lake Piso region in order to enable them efficiently and properly manage and conserve the biodiversity of the region.

2. Did the objectives of your project change during implementation? If so, please explain why and how?

No, there was no change in the objectives of the report. Rather with the approval of the funding organization, an additional activity (purchase of three canoes for PCF) was done to facilitate the CBO carry out its activities.

³ The managing Director of the FDA (John T. Woods) announced to participants at the workshop that the Liberian Government, through the FDA, anticipates gazetting the Lake Piso region as a protected area by the end of the year (2006). Also results of the workshop will be included in a detail/comprehensive report expected by the end of January 2007.

3. How was your project successful in achieving the expected objectives?

The project was successful in achieving the objectives as follow:

Objective	Achievement(s)	Comments
1. Establish computerized database on the biological and socio-economic factors relating to the management and conservation of the biodiversity of the proposed Lake Piso Nature Reserve	The two main activities that should lead to the development and establishment of a computerized database were successfully carried out.	The success here will be actualized when a comprehensive report is produced. Work on the final database report is currently in progress. Hopefully it should be completed and submitted by the end of January 2007.
2. Build the capacities of the local communities of the Lake Piso region in order to enable them efficiently and properly manage and conserve the biodiversity of the region	<p>Eight (8) members of the proposed Lake Piso Nature Reserve region were trained in construction of improved fish smoking (drying) devices, three in nursery management and 30 in awareness raising techniques.</p> <p>Additionally, three canoes are in the production phase for PCF. The canoes are intended to facilitate PCF to patrol the lake.</p>	<p>Initially, some fish smokers in the area showed interest and demonstrated their commitment to adopting this simple technology.</p> <p>PCF has committed itself to patrolling the lake to observe human activities in the region and raise awareness when and wherever threats are observed.</p>

4. Did your team experience any disappointments or failures during implementation? If so, please explain and comment on how the team addressed these disappointments and/or failures.

Yes.

(a) There was experience with disappointment with the attitude of the local people regarding the use of the mud-oven fish smoking device. Initially, the local people selected to test the device were enthused and highly interested in it. About a month later, the enthusiasm declined. A little later, the people stopped using the apparatus and reverted to their former method (open-end drum fish smoking). It was observed that the people could not dry (at a turn) the quantity of fish they desire (i.e. to them the device has low capacity). The team was disappointed because the interest and commitment of the people in adopting this simple technology was short-lived. The team encouraged the selected users to continue using the device until it can be redesigned. A new design was made but not produced as the project neared its end. Although the situation was disappointing, it was not regrettable because the lesson learned will be a guide in the development of similar devices in the future.

(b) The failure experienced was that it was impossible for FACE to produce a comprehensive report on the bio-inventory and socio-economic surveys and submit the final document at the same time along with this final technical report. This failure was due mainly to the long period of time needed to enter and process the field (raw) data as well as delay in analyzing the data. FACE continued its efforts to ensure that the document is finalized by the end of January 2007.

5. Describe any positive or negative lessons learned from this project that would be useful to share with other organizations interested in implementing a similar project.

Positive Lessons learned

Lesson 1

Early engagement of local communities in biodiversity management/conservation planning for a protected area could lead to a conflict-free protected area establishment. Environmental conservation institutions have long been lobbying for gazettement of the proposed Lake Piso Nature Reserve but it appeared that there was some reluctance in the past in taking the decision to effect the gazettement because of the socio-economic nature of the area (e.g. extensive settlements). However, with the level of engagement of the local communities over the past eight years and especially recent efforts by FACE and SCNL in creating conservation awareness as well as engaging the local people in conservation actions in the region, the local community and local authority are now anxious to see the area gazetted. There is high hope that gazettement of the area will soon take place as the Liberian Government has also anticipated taking immediate decision (the site can be feasibly categorized as 'Multiple-use' protected area). FACE and SCNL jointly conducted a workshop where community members of the region received training in awareness creation/raising. The workshop was also an opportunity to obtain the local people's views on a framework for future management plan for the area (if gazetted). During the workshop, the FDA Managing Director (John T. Woods) revealed to participants that the Liberian Government anticipates gazettement of the proposed Lake Piso Nature Reserve very soon. This revelation increased the inspiration of the participants and the local government authorities. Both the participants (representatives from most of the settlements) and local government authorities expressed their readiness to accept any conservation programme for the area. Consequently, the participants' enthusiasm increased and made important input in the workshop discussions that followed relating to framework for future management plan for the area. The information generated in this session of the workshop was great and should be useful for future management plans as well as for raising funds for managing the area.

The lesson learned: The mere immediate appreciation of future conservation program for the area when the news was revealed by the FDA Managing Director indicates the local people may readily accept and cooperate with conservation program in the area. Also engaging the local communities at an early stage by FACE and SCNL should lead to a conflict-free "Lake Piso Multiple-use Reserve" in the future. Additionally, continuous engagement of the local communities and authorities should make significantly positive impact on the sustainability of future conservation/management program for the area.

Lesson 2

Community mobilization and partnership encouragement can influence local community's willingness to committing itself to conservation initiatives. FACE recent experience with PCF (the CBO formed as an impact of the NC-IUCN-funded project in 2004) participation in the implementation of the project demonstrates that activating local communities and encouraging them to meaningfully take part in conservation activities is a realistic way of sustaining conservation actions in a given region. During the implementation of the project, PCF actively participated in all the project activities. Some members of the organization have committed themselves to monitoring human activities in the area even after the NC-IUCN project ended in December 2004. Also and without secured mobility, some PCF members continue to raise conservation awareness.

The Lesson: Local people in the Lake Piso region are willing to committing themselves to conservation initiative because they are always encouraged by conservation projects in the area to get actively involved in conservation activities.

Negative Lessons learned

Lesson 1 - shortfalls in innovating community

Fish smokers selected for testing the mud-oven fish dryer showed interesting the apparatus and demonstrated their commitment to adopting the use of it. Also, fish producers who realized the advantages in using it made arrangement with the trainees to construct some for them. This was an indication that the people accepted the change quickly. However, building the idea of change from the existing open-end drum method of drying/smoking fish to the mud-oven method was quick but could not be sustained. The open-end drum method produces a huge volume of smoke and utilizes much more wood than the new method but produces very large quantities of smoked fish which was the main interest for the fish producers. On the other hand, the people appreciated the wood consumption efficiency of the mud-oven fish smoker as well as the very low volume of smoke it produces; but its output was observed far lower as compared to the traditional open-end drum method.

The lesson: People can be innovated quickly and easily if the activities leading to their innovation are community-based and the community is encouraged to actively participate; however, the innovation can be short-lived if their desire or expectation shortfalls. High technology cost and low income of a community can also be obstacles to adopting change.

6. Describe any follow-up activities related to this project.

FACE has established partnership link with the African mangrove Network (AMN) in Senegal. It is seeking support from AMN to maintain conservation actions in the Lake Piso region, one of the largest (if not the largest) mangrove habitats in Liberia. Meanwhile, FACE will continue collaboration with SCNL and PCF to seek support for follow up activities related to this and former projects in the area until funding assistance can be secured.

7. Please provide any additional information to assist CEPF in understanding any other aspects of your completed project.

Nil

IV. ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Provide details of any additional donors who supported this project and any funding secured for the project as a result of the CEPF grant or success of the project.

The following was indirect cost to the project. The AMN helped build the human resource capacity of PCF because of the latter's active involvement conservation activities in the Lake Piso region.

Donor	Type of Funding*	Amount	Notes
African mangrove Network	B	US\$ 564	Air ticket for Eric B. Fahnbulleh (PCF member) to train in mangrove afforestation in Senegal.

***Additional funding should be reported using the following categories:**

- A** Project co-financing (Other donors contribute to the direct costs of this CEPF project)
- B** Complementary funding (Other donors contribute to partner organizations that are working on a project linked with this CEPF project)
- C** Grantee and Partner leveraging (Other donors contribute to your organization or a partner organization as a direct result of successes with this CEPF project.)
- D** Regional/Portfolio leveraging (Other donors make large investments in a region because of CEPF investment or successes related to this project.)

Provide details of whether this project will continue in the future and if so, how any additional funding already secured or fundraising plans will help ensure its sustainability.

The project will continue in the future. As mentioned earlier, the project area is under consideration for immediate gazettelement by the Liberian Government. Also, the Lake Piso region has been considered a pilot site for BirdLife International program in Liberia. Furthermore, BirdLife International has designated SCNL as its Liberian partner while FACE is seeking similar partnership with AMN. FACE and SCNL, being the two national NGOs having longstanding operational records in the area, have great opportunities to secure funding for conservation actions for the area. These two national NGOs have already begun networking fundraising possibilities. FACE in particular will continue its fundraising initiative for sustaining conservation momentum and actions in the region.

V. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FACE is currently working on a more detailed documentation on the project results to include computerized database on bio-inventory and socio-economic surveys as well as other information emanating from the project activities. The document should be completed on or before January 31, 2007. Upon its submission, it would be appreciating if the document can be made available on CEPF Web site.

Additional recommendation would be the need to strengthen mangrove conservation action not only in the Lake Piso region but also in all mangrove communities in Liberia, especially Marshall wetland, Monrovia and its environs, St. John River basin, Cestos River basin, Greenville and its environs and Harper and its environs.

VI. INFORMATION SHARING

CEPF aims to increase sharing of experiences, lessons learned and results among our grant recipients and the wider conservation and donor communities. One way we do this is by making the text of final project completion reports available on our Web site, www.cepf.net, and by marketing these reports in our newsletter and other communications. Please indicate whether you would agree to publicly sharing your final project report with others in this way.

Yes We do agree for this report to be publicly shared with others.

No

If yes, please also complete the following:

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