



Social Mitigation and Livelihood Strategy for the Krahn-Bassa Proposed Protected Area

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Introduction

Globally recognized best practices for Protected Area Management do not only acknowledge the importance of conservation for local communities, but also the importance of local communities for conservation. Especially in places where there is a traditional connection of people with the natural environment and where local communities strongly depend on the use of natural resources to survive, active participation of communities in the management of natural resources, protected areas and species is key to the success of conservation and its sustainability.

Furthermore, livelihood projects supporting local communities and mitigating impacts that the establishment of a protected area may have on the livelihood of adjacent communities must form a significant part of the management strategy for protected areas.

The Forestry Development Authority (FDA) is currently working with governmental and non-governmental partners, both national and international, to create Liberia's 4th national park in the Krahn-Bassa National Forest, currently still called Krahn-Bassa Proposed Protected Area (KBPPA), located in Grand Gedeh Sinoe and Rivercess Counties in southeastern Liberia.

The FDA and her partners have endeavored to start promoting the involvement of local communities already during the pre-gazettement phase of KBPPA and to support alternative livelihoods through pilot projects that have been implemented at KBPPA since 2020 (and are following successful initiatives in other areas in Liberia). An improved **social mitigation and livelihood strategy**, to be developed together with local communities and other relevant stakeholders, will be implemented after the gazettement process of KBPPA has been finalized. This strategy will form a significant part of the management plan for KBPPA that is being developed by FDA, her partners and communities. A roadmap for the implementation of the livelihood activities will be developed with the participation of local communities and committees/governance structures will be formed at different levels (from Community Development Committees to a Management Committee that will be formed with the various stakeholders and will be one of the monitoring bodies for the implementation of the roadmap).

Major cornerstones of the social mitigation and livelihood strategy for the future Krahn-Bassa National Park will be:

1) Krahn-Bassa National Park Inception Conference

In order to have an effective collaboration of stakeholders and the strong participation of local communities right from the start and following the example of Liberia's newest protected area, Grebo-Krahn National Park, the Krahn-Bassa National Park Inception Conference will be held as soon as possible after the gazettelement process has been finalized. **Benefits of this conference will be the following:**

- All stakeholders of Krahn-Bassa National Park (KBNP), including local communities, will be brought together and will discuss and develop strategies and roadmaps in a collaborative and participatory manner.
- In addition to the information given during previous consultation meetings and workshops, FDA and her partners will be able to give further explanations and to clarify any misunderstandings and answer questions that may arise linked to the establishment of KBNP (e.g. concerning access to the forest and illegal activities).
- Local communities will play an active role in the management and protection of KBNP right from the start.
- Collaboration of stakeholders will be efficient and complementary right from the start.
- In addition to information from previous socio-economic and livelihood surveys, the conference will provide a platform to local community members to inform FDA, her partners, donors and other stakeholders about their needs and preferences for alternative livelihood projects. This information will significantly contribute to the social mitigation and livelihood strategy for KBNP.
- Issues raised by communities and other stakeholders as well as the roadmap that will be developed for the social mitigation and livelihood strategy and the overall management and protection of KBNP will allow all stakeholders, including FDA, other government institutions, partners, donors and community members to immediately commit to the implementation and funding of some of the activities identified in the roadmap.
- All stakeholders have a common vision and goal and therefore will be able to work together as a team right from the start.
- Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders as well as preliminary timelines will

be defined during the conference

- At the end of the conference, a resolution will be signed by all stakeholders, thereby providing the framework for all future activities and forming the basis for the KBNP management plan.

2) Livelihood support

Socio-economic research conducted by FDA and her partners (Wild Chimpanzee Foundation, WCF) gave an insight into the existing livelihood practices of communities and their use of natural resources in and around KBNP. Additionally, prior to the gazettement, an additional livelihood assessment will be conducted, as well as additional research into illegal value chains, in order to address issues linked to illegal activities such as mining, poaching, logging and farming inside KBNP more effectively in the future.

Ongoing and future livelihood activities at KBNP are and will be focusing on employment and the creation of alternative protein sources. The following are examples of ongoing and planned activities. A strong emphasis is on the involvement of youth and women.

a) Employment and payment of stipends

Ongoing and future activities are and will be providing employment for local community members, for example as Community Ecoguards, biomonitors, and amateur theater group team members. Furthermore, after the completion of the gazettement of KBNP, donor funding will allow to recruit FDA auxiliaries, supporting the FDA forest rangers. The construction of basic infrastructure for KBNP, i.e. ranger posts and hopefully the park headquarters and research sites, will provide temporary employment for community members. In the long term, agricultural, research and ecotourism activities will create more employment opportunities for the local communities, provided no illegal activities are jeopardizing the integrity of KBNP and donor commitments linked to its effective protection.

The Community Ecoguard Program has been established at KBPPA in 2020 and 32 Community Ecoguards (incl. 11 women) are regularly patrolling the forest and raising awareness in local communities.

b) Alternative protein sources

Aquaculture and breeding of domestic animals are ways to create alternative protein sources for local communities with the aim of reducing the level of poaching, including the hunting of threatened species. Pilot projects have been implemented by FDA and partners in other landscapes and there is potential for an establishment of such projects in interested communities around KBNP.

c) Agriculture

Improved agricultural practices following conservation and climate-smart agriculture principles, farmer field schools, the training of Master farmers, and farmer to farmer exchange are all ways to improve the livelihood support for the local communities. The type of crops will be defined based on the requests of local communities, as identified in the livelihood assessment. FDA and her partners are committed to increase the collaboration with the development sector (such as the NGO Welthungerhilfe) in order to increase the number of agricultural projects for communities around KBNP.

Agriculture projects will especially focus on local women, to ensure better sustainability of projects.

d) Beekeeping

Following successful beekeeping projects at other protected areas, a beekeeping program has been established with an initial group of 84 beekeepers at KBPPA in 2020. First harvests were done in 2022 and there is big potential for an expansion of the beekeeping activities with technical support from the NGO Universal Outreach Foundation.

Based on preferences of and conversations with local communities, e.g. also during the Inception Conference for GKNP, additional livelihood activities could be considered, especially those aiming at gender balance and rainforest-friendly and climate-smart practices. Partnerships with the public sector are possible, but would need to fit into the overall conservation aims. Within the framework of future projects, there are also plans village savings and loan schemes.