

Stakeholder Engagement Plan

November 2017

CEPF Grant 100786

Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia

Communities as Environmental Stewards of the Largest Guinea Rainforest Block

Liberia

Grant Summary

1. Grantee organization: Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia
2. Grant title: Communities as Environmental Stewards of the Largest Guinea Rainforest Block
3. Grant number: CEPF 100786
4. Grant amount (US dollars): \$329,553.60
5. Proposed dates of grant: 1 November 2017 – 30 June 2020
6. Countries or territories where project will be undertaken: Liberia
7. Date of preparation of this document: November 2017
8. **Introduction:** The proposed project area within the Gola Forest in western Liberia is an area of uniquely high biodiversity value with 60 globally threatened species. It is a critical wildlife corridor linking the Gola Forest National Park, the proposed Foya Nature Reserve, and the Gola Rainforest National Park in Sierra Leone. Together these form the Greater Gola Landscape which represents the largest single block of remaining Upper Guinea Forest.

SCNL is presently collaborating with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) to implement the GolaMA Project which aims to conserve this internationally important forest corridor by supporting communities to manage their forests while improving livelihoods and establishing a pilot model for sustainable financing. The project is working with the two clans in the target area, Normon and Tonglay, to establish Community Forests within Liberia's legal framework. The population of this area is small, while the area to be managed is fairly large. A very rough estimate of the combined area of the two proposed community forests is about 25-30,000 ha. The two clans are currently implementing Step 5 of the 9-step Community Forest legal process.

Based on discussions with community members, we know that the communities are interested in conserving parts of the forest and in sustainably using other parts to improve their livelihoods. The conservation goals are reinforced by MOUs between SCNL and the Clans and between SCNL and the individual communities. In the MOUs, the Clans and communities commit to conserving part of their Community Forest (the areas of High Conservation Value) and SCNL commits to continuing to support the communities to improve their livelihoods.

The GolaMA Project is expected to end December 2019. This proposed CEPF project will work in harmony alongside and then extend beyond the GolaMA Project, building the capacity of the communities to embed the Community Forest Management Agreements (CFMA) in their lives – through developing CFMA-compatible livelihoods, and strengthening appropriate CFM governance structures and sustainable financing for community implementation of CFMAs. The GolaMA Project is supporting the two clans to establish Community Forests; the added value of the CEPF project is to ensure that these are well-functioning Community Forests with strong governance structures and sustainable financing, where community livelihoods are compatible with sustainable CFM. Specifically, the project will:

- 1. Empower and support 15 communities (14 GolaMA communities plus 1 new community) to engage in rainforest-friendly and climate-smart income-generating activities in and around their community forests**
- 2. Build the capacity of 2 Community Forest Management Bodies (CFMBs) to govern community forests on behalf of their communities**
- 3. Support 2 Community Forest Management Bodies to manage a small loan scheme that supports community members to take up rainforest-friendly and climate-smart activities as well as secure resources for community forest management**

4. Deepen the capacity of SCNL and the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) to engage communities for biodiversity conservation,

all within the overall objective of conserving 30,000 ha of a critical wildlife corridor linking three protected areas across Liberia and Sierra Leone, together forming the largest single block of remaining Upper Guinea Forest.

9. **Summary of Previous Stakeholder Engagement Activities:** Given that the GolaMA Project has been operational since April 2014, the previous stakeholder engagement activities relevant to CEPF 100786 are far too numerous to describe here. The following provides an overview of the kinds of activities that have been undertaken thus far:

Engagement activities about the GolaMA and CEPF Projects generally:

- Consultation with local leaders to develop the GolaMA project, particularly with the District Commissioner
- Project launch meetings with local leaders in the project area and with major stakeholders in Monrovia
- Introductory town hall meetings in each project community
- Baseline socio-economic survey carried out with every household in the project area so that project staff could use the opportunity to introduce the project to every household individually
- Bi-annual meetings of the Project Implementation Monitoring Group (PIMG) consisting of local leaders and local government officials to exchange and consult about project activities
- Annual meetings of the Project Steering Committee consisting of senior representatives of the FDA, the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, SCNL, RSPB as well as the Paramount Chief and the County Superintendent, to provide oversight to the projects and approve any changes
- Provision of supplies during the Ebola outbreak
- Meeting of all chiefs in Kongba District to introduce the GolaMA project. The chiefs formally blessed the project at this meeting
- Town hall meetings in various communities to introduce donor representatives and senior staff from RSPB and SCNL
- Consultations with FDA staff about CEPF proposal
- Partnership agreements among all partner organisations and with sub-contractors

Engagement activities about Community Forestry:

- Series of meetings in each project community including town hall meetings to describe community forestry process, participatory mapping with whole community, participatory mapping with women only, meetings to update community on CF progress
- At least 2 workshops annually with different groups of community leaders to learn about and implement different aspects of the community forestry process
- Systematic informal meetings of project staff with individuals and small groups throughout each project community
- Exchange visits of 32 community members to learn about existing Community Forests in Nimba County
- MOU's between SCNL and each clan and between SCNL and each community in which Clans commit to putting aside part of their community forests for conservation and SCNL commits to continue supporting livelihoods activities in the communities

Engagement activities about livelihoods activities:

- Focus group discussions with groups of women about preferred livelihoods activities
- Focus group discussions with groups of men about preferred livelihoods activities
- Town hall meetings to share information about different livelihoods activities
- Focus group discussions following different training activities

- Focus group discussions with hunters and bushmeat traders to consult about the bushmeat trade and preferred alternatives
- Consultative meetings with artisanal miners about possibilities for improving mining methods

10. Project Stakeholders: The key stakeholder groups for CEPF 100786 are:

- 15 project communities in the Tonglay and Normon Clans, Kongba District, Gbarpolu County
- Important sub-groups within the communities are Clan and village leaders (chiefs, youth leaders, women leaders); elders; women; youth; farmers; miners; hunters; bushmeat traders
- Regional FDA staff (Regional Forester for Region 1 and other regional staff)
- FDA staff from headquarters in Monrovia, especially those from the Conservation and Community sections
- Regional and HQ staff from the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy
- Regional Ministry of Agriculture Staff
- Traditional authorities for the project area (Paramount Chief, Acting Paramount Chief, Clan Chiefs)
- Government authorities for the project area (District Commissioner, County Superintendent, County Statutory Superintendent)
- Sub-grantees: VADEMCO, Universal Outreach
- Partner organisations in the implementation of CEPF 100786: RSPB, Gola Rainforest Conservation LG
- Community Forestry Working Group, an FDA-led working group

11. Stakeholder Engagement Program: SCNL's approach to stakeholder engagement in the GolaMA and CEPF 100876 projects is to integrate stakeholder engagement with all other activities. There is therefore no stand-alone stakeholder engagement programme but all activities include stakeholder engagement. There are several goals of the stakeholder engagement:

- Ensure the long-term success of the project and project activities through the active support of all stakeholders.
- Ensure that all activities are designed to reflect the reality of the situation in the project area and contribute to meeting the objectives of community members.
- Particularly for the establishment of the Community Forests, ensure that there is general consensus within the Clans for each decision that needs to be made throughout the process.
- Ensure that all stakeholders have a good understanding of the project and what it is trying to achieve so that they can make informed decisions with respect to activities supported by the project.

Multiple methods will be used for all stakeholder engagement and will vary from one activity to another. The example of demonstration swamp rice farms carried out by the GolaMA Project can serve as an example to illustrate this:

- Community interest in swamp rice farming was established through responses on the baseline socio-economic survey; focus group discussions about livelihoods activities with men and women separately; discussions about livelihoods activities at PIMG meetings; informal discussions with community members
- Community members were informed about the possibility of establishing a demonstration site through town hall meetings; informal discussions with community members
- Participation in the activity was formalised in a written agreement with SCNL outlining the responsibilities of community members and SCNL
- Throughout the process of establishing the demonstration sites, relevant traditional authorities were kept up-to-date about progress through discussions with project staff
- Feedback from the participants was obtained through focus group discussions
- At harvest time, the results of planting swamp rice were shared through visits to the demonstration sites by interested community members, including members of the PIMG; interviews with

participants on community radio; posting photos of the rice fields on bulletin boards in each community

- Senior stakeholders are aware of the results of the demonstration sites through updates given at meetings of the PSC and PIMG; circulation of project reports to PSC and PIMG members

12. Consultation methods: As noted above, multiple methods will be used for stakeholder engagement and will vary according to activity and stakeholder group. Consultation with stakeholders will take place throughout the life of the project and consultation methods will again vary according to activity and stakeholder group. The consultation methods that have been used previously and which we expect to continue to use in the future include:

- Town hall meetings with the whole community or particular sub-groups (e.g. women, miners)
- Surveys/questionnaires e.g. questionnaire for participants in a training activity, before and after the activity
- Focus group discussions with specific groups e.g. groups of women to discuss livelihoods activities
- Town hall meetings that include participatory methods such as participatory mapping
- Discussions at meetings of stakeholders such as the PIMG or PSC
- Informal discussions with community members
- Key informant interviews e.g. interviews with some individual hunters
- Workshops e.g. a workshop with community leaders to discuss possible boundaries for the Community Forests
- Exchange visits e.g. to the swamp rice demonstration sites
- Suggestion boxes installed beside the project bulletin boards

13. Other Engagement Activities: In a very real sense, all of the community-based activities in CEPF 100786 are engagement activities. As noted above, SCNL has signed MOUs with the two Clans and with all individual communities in which the Clans and communities commit to conserving part of their Community Forest (the areas of High Conservation Value) and SCNL commits to continuing to support the communities to improve their livelihoods. CEPF 100876 enables SCNL to honour this commitment, thereby engaging the communities in this conservation work, as well as to provide training to the Community Forest Management Bodies, developing their capacity to effectively govern the Community Forests on behalf of the communities. Specific activities include:

- rainforest friendly livelihoods activities including beekeeping, cocoa production, oil palm production, intensification of groundnut and rice production
- training for a small loan programme
- training to effectively manage the Community Forests

14. Timetable: As noted above, stakeholder engagement is integral to all project activities and all project activities incorporate stakeholder engagement. Therefore the schedule for stakeholder engagement is really the same as the schedule for the whole project. Some upcoming key activities to note include:

- Discussion of CEPF 100786 with PIMG: 1 November, Kongbor
- Future PIMG meetings: April, November 2018; April, November 2019; April 2020
- Discussion of CEPF 100786 with PSC: 21 November, Monrovia
- Future PSC meeting: Nov/Dec 2018; Nov/Dec 2019
- Town hall meeting with Camp Alpha (new community) to introduce the project: 1st week of December, Camp Alpha
- Baseline survey and focus group discussions in Camp Alpha: Jan. and Feb. 2018, Camp Alpha
- Demarcation of Community Forest boundaries: 2nd week of December 2017; Tonglay and Normon Community Forests
- Election of Community Forest governance structures and associated training: Jan-March 2018, Kongbor and Normon

- Signing of Community Forest Management Agreements and associated training: April-August 2018, Kongbor and Normon

15. **Resources and Responsibilities:** With apologies for the repetition, it is important to note that stakeholder engagement is integral to all project activities and all project activities incorporate stakeholder engagement. Therefore all staff at all levels will carry out stakeholder engagement relevant to their particular areas of responsibility. For example, the Project Manager and Project Coordinator have responsibility for project-wide stakeholder engagement activities such as the town hall meeting noted above to introduce the project to Camp Alpha or for PIMG and PSC meetings. Community Mobilisation Officers (CMOs) have responsibility for carrying out surveys in the communities where they work. The Monitoring and Evaluation Officer has responsibility for carrying out focus group discussions with participants in a training activity.

Given the way in which stakeholder engagement is integrated within all project activities, there are no resources allocated specifically to stakeholder engagement but are included as part of all budget lines.

16. **Grievance mechanism:** The project will provide local communities and other interested stakeholders with the means by which they may raise a grievance with SCNL, the CEPF Regional Implementation Team, the CEPF Secretariat or the World Bank. Affected local communities will be informed of the objectives of the project and the existence of a grievance mechanism. The email address, telephone number, and physical address of SCNL, the CEPF Regional Implementation Team, and the CEPF Grant Director will be made publicly available through announcements at public meetings, through notices placed on community bulletin boards, and via announcement on community radio. We will share all grievances – and a proposed response with the Regional Implementation Team and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days. If the claimant is not satisfied following the response, they may submit the grievance directly to the CEPF Executive Director at cepfexecutive@conservation.org or by surface mail. If the claimant is not satisfied with the response from the CEPF Executive Director, they may submit the grievance to the World Bank at the local World Bank office.

17. **Monitoring and Reporting:** Stakeholder and third-party involvement in the monitoring of project impacts will take place through the following activities
- Baseline and end-of-project socio-economic survey administered with all households in the project area.
 - Focus group discussions and/or questionnaires with participants in all livelihoods training activities.
 - Focus group discussions and questionnaires with all participants in the small loan programme
 - Before and after self-assessments by SCNL staff of their ability to support community livelihoods activities and to support community-based forest monitoring
 - Before and after self-assessments by Community Forest Management Bodies (CFMBs) of their ability to manage their Community Forests and a small loan programme
 - External end-of-project assessment of CFMB capacity
 - External mid-term evaluation of the GolaMA Project will cover CEPF 100786 activities and will include focus group discussions and key informant interviews with stakeholders
 - External end-of-project evaluation of the GolaMA project will cover CEPF 100786 activities and will include focus group discussions and key informant interviews with stakeholders