

National forestry policy and implementation strategy



Forestry for communities, commerce and conservation



REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



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PREFACE

Liberia is richly endowed with natural resources and these serve as the basis for the country's development and future prosperity. Forests in Liberia cover about 4.3 million hectares (or about 45 percent of the land area) and forestry has long been one of the most important sectors in the country.

Over the last 14 years, a prolonged civil conflict has led to great loss of life, economic collapse, mass migration and internal displacement, as well as destruction of much of the country's infrastructure. The forestry sector has suffered from these problems and, in particular, is characterized by weakened forest governance. Most recently, the use of forest revenues to fund armed conflict has been acknowledged and resulted in the United Nations Security Council placing sanctions on all exports of timber and timber products from Liberia in July 2003.

To restore the economy and heal the wounds of the civil conflict, it will be necessary to rehabilitate and reorientate the forestry sector. In this post-conflict period, social, economic and political changes have created expectations that will present new challenges to the forestry administration and other stakeholders in the sector. To meet these challenges and avoid the problems of the past will require a number of policy reforms across the sector.

The post-conflict period has also presented a window of opportunity to update the inappropriate policies of the past in a new climate of openness. Taking advantage of this, the government has already started by consulting widely to develop a new vision for the forestry sector, which is outlined in this policy.

In very broad terms, forestry policy will continue to focus on maximizing the benefits of the forestry sector to Liberian society, but with a special emphasis on the contribution of the sector to poverty alleviation. It will do this by seeking to balance and integrate the commercial, community and conservation uses of Liberia's forests, so that they can continue to produce vital environmental goods and services as well as support the economic development of the nation. It is also expected that the role of government will need to change in the future to reflect the demand for greater public participation in the sector.

This document describes the aims and objectives of the new forestry policy and presents a number of strategies that will be pursued to achieve these objectives. In collaboration with our local and international partners, the government will implement this policy so that Liberia's forests can once again contribute to the welfare of every Liberian citizen.

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NATIONAL FORESTRY POLICY

1 Introduction

Liberia is situated within the tropical rainforest belt on the West Coast of Africa. The total land area is 9.58 million hectares, of which forests cover about 4.30 million hectares or 45 percent of the land area (see Table 1). In recent years, the forest area has decreased somewhat, largely due to uncontrolled logging and an expansion of land used for agriculture. The annual rate of deforestation is currently estimated to be about 12,000 hectares (0.3 percent), while the recorded planting of new forests to date has amounted to only about 11,000 hectares in total.

Table 1 Land and forest area statistics

Land Type	Area (in million ha)	Proportion of total land area (in percent)
All land	9.58	100
Forest	4.30	45
Protected forest	1.70	18
Unprotected forest	2.61	27

Despite Liberia's small size, it contains a significant amount of biodiversity, including: over 2,900 different vascular plants (including 225 tree species); 600 bird species; 150 mammal species; and 75 reptile species. In addition, Liberia accounts for the largest remaining remnant (42 percent) of the Upper Guinea forest of West Africa. Liberia's forests also produce a wide range of other environmental goods and services that benefit Liberia and the rest of the World.

About 60 tree species have been harvested and exported from Liberia in the past, but only a few of these species account for the majority of production. For example, in 1998, Niangon (*Heritiera utilis*) accounted for approximately 50 percent of industrial roundwood production.

1.1 Contribution of the forestry sector to the national economy

Historically, the forestry sector has been a strong contributor to the economy of Liberia, in the form of industrial output, national income, employment and export revenues. For example, the production of forest products accounted for around five percent of Gross Domestic Product in the 1980s, rising to 20 percent in the late 1990s. Forest products also accounted for 5-10 percent of export earnings in the 1980s, rising to over 50 percent in 2000.

For the most recent years, statistics about the production and trade of forest products are somewhat uncertain. However, in 2002, 36 forest concessionaires were operating in Liberia and it is estimated that the value of timber exports amounted to over USD 100 million (or 60 percent of Liberia's total export revenues). It is also estimated that about 10,000 people were employed in the forestry sector at this time. Rubber plantations have also made a significant contribution to income, employment and exports in Liberia (with exports of rubber valued at around USD 60 million in 2002). Rubberwood is also a locally important source of woodfuel and may potentially be harvested for wood processing.

In addition to the contribution of the formal forestry sector to the national economy, informal activities in the sector are also vital to the well-being of many Liberian citizens. Fuelwood

and charcoal production employs numerous people and these products remain by far the most important sources of energy in the country. Similarly, the harvesting and sale of bushmeat makes a significant contribution to local income and employment, as well as providing a major share of protein in the average Liberian’s diet.

The rapid expansion of production and exports in recent years has not, however, been without problems. Forest degradation has occurred, due to over-harvesting and the selective harvesting of only a few species. Similarly, biodiversity has suffered from widespread wildlife poaching. Government supervision of forest concessionaires has also been inadequate, leading to many violations of forest regulations and the misappropriation and non-payment of the majority of forest charges.

In this post-conflict period, there is an urgent need to improve the livelihood of all Liberians. This urgency has increased the demands placed on the sector at the same time that the existing forestry institutions and infrastructure is least capable of responding. In view of this, this policy sets out a number of aims and objectives that meet both the immediate need for rehabilitation in the sector and the outlook for the medium term (next 10 years). The proposed strategies also reflect the current situation in the sector and the prospects for improvements in capacity and resources over the next decade.

2 Previous and existing policies and legislation

This forestry policy will build upon existing government policies and legislation and reflect Liberia’s commitments under international conventions and treaties. However, in some areas, it is expected that new forestry legislation will be required (and this is outlined in a later section of this document). Table 2 presents a summary of some of the relevant policy developments in Liberia over the last 50 years and the text below describes in more detail some of the more important legislation affecting the forestry sector.

Table 2 Summary of policy developments affecting the forestry sector since 1953

Year	Development
1953	Creation of Bureau of Forests and Wildlife Conservation
1956	Liberia Code of Law, Subset 2, permits the creation of government reserves, native authority reserves, communal forests and national parks
1976	Creation of Forestry Development Authority
1983	Creation of Sapo National Park
1988	Wildlife and National Parks Act
2000	The New National Forestry Law
2002	Production of the National Environmental Strategy and the Environmental Protection and Management Law
2003	Proclamation of the East Nimba Nature Reserve
2003	United Nations Security Councils places sanctions on the export of timber and timber products originating from Liberia
2003	Establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency
2003	Establishment of a protected areas network
2003	Extension of Sapo National Park
2006	National Forestry Reform Law is passed and timber sanctions are lifted

2.1 National legislation

Bureau of Forests and Wildlife Conservation (1953): The first Liberian forestry administration - the Bureau of Forests and Wildlife Conservation - was created in the Ministry of Agriculture in February 1953 as part of “*An Act for conservation of the Forests of the Republic of Liberia*”. The Bureau concentrated mostly on forest inventories and concession allocation, but it was gradually realized that the Bureau did not have the financial freedom and flexibility necessary to supervise the sector.

The Forestry Development Authority (1976): The Forestry Development Authority was created by a Special Act in December 1976. This Act repealed all previous forestry and wildlife laws and granted the Forestry Development Authority the power to issue, amend and rescind forestry and wildlife regulations. The Act defined the objectives for the sector, which may be grouped into three broad themes: establishing a permanent forest estate made up of National Forests and National Parks; optimizing the contribution of forestry to the national economy; and increasing public involvement in forest conservation and management through the creation of communal forests and agroforestry programs.

The Forestry Development Authority’s functions cover the following: formulating forestry policy; forest resource management; control and management of concessions; collection of revenue from forest activities; research (including market intelligence); and training. The Forestry Development Authority has issued 27 regulations that deal mostly with the administration and management of forestry and wildlife activities (including forest charges, fines and penalties). Until now, there has been little assessment of the impact of these developments or any reformulation of policy. Consequently, the Forestry Development Authority has remained highly centralized institution, with a predominant focus on industrial production.

Revised National Constitution (1986): The Constitution gave the government the power to manage the national economy and natural resources of Liberia and required the legislature to ratify agreements (including forest concessions).

The New National Forestry Law (2000): In 2000, “*The New National Forestry Law*”, amended or repealed certain provisions of the existing forest laws. The final version remains controversial, as it transferred powers over the sector from the legislature to the executive.

Environmental Protection Agency (2003): The National Environmental Commission was created in 2001 and transformed into Environmental Protection Agency in 2003. The Agency is to provide an inter-ministerial mechanism for addressing and coordinating responses to Liberia’s environmental problems. It should also establish a policy framework for environmental issues (including forest management, nature conservation and environmental impact assessment), but this has not been done yet.

National Forestry Reform Law (2006): In 2006, “*An act adopting the national forestry reform law of 2006*” was passed, which amended the National Forestry Law of 2000 and the Act Creating the Forestry Development Authority. The Law recognized the problems of the past and stressed the integration of community, conservation and commercial forest management for the benefit of all Liberians.

2.2 International commitments

Liberia is a party to the following international conventions and agreements:

- The Convention on Biological Diversity;
- The International Tropical Timber Agreement;
- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;
- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species; and
- The RAMSAR Convention on Wetland Management.

The national forestry policy will fully take into account the commitments and obligations that Liberia must meet as a member of the international community. The government will also take advantage of the range of technical, financial and other types of support that are available through these and other international mechanisms.

In addition to the above, this policy also takes note of the fact that timber exports from Liberia were sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council. An immediate priority will be to continue implementing the reforms that led to the lifting of sanctions, so that the Liberian forest industry can export again and resume its rightful place as a driving force for the economic development of the nation (see Box 1).

Box 1 United Nations Security Council sanctions on Liberian exports of timber

Timber sanctions were imposed on Liberian exports of timber and timber products in July 2003 and the international community set the following two main requirements for the lifting of these sanctions:

1. that the government should establish full authority and control over timber producing areas; and
2. that they should ensure that government revenues from the timber industry are not used to fuel conflict.

In addition, the international community encouraged the government to establish oversight mechanisms for the timber industry that promote responsible business practices.

Although timber sanctions have now been lifted, the Government continues to work with the international community on forestry sector reform and the following actions have been identified as essential to further reform:

- **Regulatory reform:** reform of the Forestry Development Authority, including building human, technical and institutional capacity, so that the government can re-establish control over forest areas.
- **Revenue reform:** to ensure that forest revenues are collected and used for their proper purpose.
- **Concession monitoring:** to prevent future conflicts and ensure the legitimacy of forest concession operations.
- **Forest inventory and land use planning:** to determine the optimal and sustainable use of forest resources and provide information for monitoring and enforcement.
- **Conservation areas:** investment in conservation areas to ensure the adequate protection of forest resources of high environmental value.
- **Public participation:** increasing the participation of civil society and indigenous people in the sector to reduce conflict and increase legitimacy.

This policy includes measures that will support progress in all of these areas.

3 Development of the forestry policy

This forestry policy has been developed on two foundations. The first is a set of guiding principles discussed and agreed with international partners. These principles reflect the current “*state of the art*” with respect to forestry policy formulation. The second is a collection of technical work and consultations with local stakeholders that have ensured that the policy reflects the current aims, objectives and capacity of all stakeholders to implement the policy.

3.1 Guiding principles

Historically, the main focus of the forestry sector in Liberia has been the commercial harvesting of forest products. Discussions with local and international partners have resulted in a consensus that the optimal use of forest resources will result from a more balanced and integrated development of Liberia’s forests for commercial, community and conservation uses (see Box 2). An objective of this policy will be to ensure that these different uses are balanced and, where possible, integrated to achieve maximum benefits for the nation as a whole.

Box 2 Forest management for conservation, community and commercial uses

Commercial forestry includes the production and processing of wood and non-wood forest products for profit. The aim of commercial forestry is the sustainable production of forest products and the development of viable forest-based industries. Revenues from forest taxes and charges can be used to finance public sector administration of the sector and government expenditure on public goods and services.

Community forest management includes the production of wood and non-wood forest products, plus the use of forests for other purposes such as: cultural rituals; future farmland and settlement areas; and the protection of sacred sites. Community forest management focuses more on the interests of people who live in and on the fringes of forest areas.

Forest conservation includes biodiversity conservation (at the landscape, site and species level) and maintenance of the other environmental functions of forests (e.g. soil and water protection). It includes protection of specific forest areas as well as measures to enhance the environmental quality of other forest areas (e.g. through rehabilitation of secondary forests). The aim of forest conservation is to sustain and enhance these functions for current and future generations.

In many cases, these uses can be combined. For example, timber production can be combined with a certain amount of forest conservation in a National Forest, or community forest management can include the commercial production of forest products (in which case production would be governed by the rules established for commercial forestry). However, in some cases, it is necessary to focus almost exclusively on a single main use of the forest.

In addition to the above, the policy has taken into account international experiences in forestry policy development and implementation, including the following:

Sustainable development: development of the forestry sector must ensure that Liberia’s forests are managed sustainably, so that they will continue to produce a full range of goods and services for current and future generations.

Poverty alleviation: the forestry sector must make an appropriate contribution to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially in terms of reducing poverty, protecting the environment and increasing food security. With respect to poverty alleviation, it is important that the policy should protect vulnerable and marginalized groups that depend on forests for their livelihoods.

Public participation and awareness: experience has shown that policy implementation is likely to be improved with increased public participation in the sector and partnership between government, the private sector, communities and other stakeholders. As part of this, it is also important to raise public awareness of the contribution of the sector to society and the potential consequences of mismanaging forests.

Inter-sectoral collaboration: experience also suggests that forestry policy will be more effective if it is formulated and implemented in agreement with other relevant branches of government (such as agriculture, mining, energy and environment). It is also essential that the policy conforms to broader national development goals so that it will receive the political support necessary for implementation.

Regional and international co-operation: a number of issues in the forestry sector can only be addressed effectively at the international level. Therefore, it will be important for Liberia to agree on these issues with neighboring countries (Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire).

Capacity building: implementation of this policy will require a strengthening of financial, human and technical capacity amongst all relevant stakeholders and institutions. In particular, the issue of the financial sustainability of the forestry administration should be addressed.

Rule of law: in view of the current situation in Liberia, it will also be essential to pay particular attention to strengthening forest governance and law enforcement and resolve a number of issues regarding land tenure.

National policy commitment: commitment from the government to implement reforms is a key pre-requisite for the success of any new forestry policy.

Monitoring and evaluation: the development and implementation of this policy should be seen as the first step in a continuous process of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the sector. Progress should be reviewed periodically, in consultation with all stakeholders, to revise and implement any changes that might be necessary in light of future developments.

3.2 Technical work and public consultations

The first stage of the process for developing the forestry policy was the production of a number of short technical studies on the current status of the forestry sector in Liberia. These were then reviewed by four thematic working groups, working under the supervision of a steering committee. The themes covered were as follows:

- forest management, reforestation and community forestry;
- conservation and wildlife management;

- forest utilization and industry; and
- forest information, institutions, training and legislation.

The working groups and steering committee included a range of different stakeholders with an interest in the Liberian forestry sector.

The groups then developed draft proposals for the forestry policy after consultations in Monrovia with a wide range of stakeholders from government, civil society, the private sector, academia and international organizations. As part of this process, they also consulted with non-governmental organizations, chiefs, local people, county superintendents and city mayors, in both Tubmanburg and Robertsport (see Box 3), so that a wider range of views could be obtained.

Finally, a draft of the policy was reviewed at a workshop in Monrovia on 7-8 June 2005. Participants at the workshop included representatives from all major stakeholders based in Monrovia, plus representatives of local authorities (from counties where forestry was considered relevant) and other selected interest groups based outside the capital. Workshop participants reviewed the aims, objectives and strategies within the policy and, in particular, they focused on the priorities, timing and responsibilities for implementing the policy.

Box 3 Summary of the consultations in Tubmanburg and Robertsport

Concerns over consultation and participation in the forestry sector were the major issues raised in consultations with local people in Tubmanburg and Robertsport. The chiefs and local authorities took great exception to the conclusion of timber concession agreements (in the past) without the concurrence of local authorities. In particular, they felt that they were often adversely affected by these decisions, which were taken by government officials based in the capital.

The two communities were also quite vocal in their claims that they are in the best position to be co-implementers of any forest policy, because they already reside in and depend on the forest for their daily needs and subsistence. They proposed that a Memorandum of Understanding should be produced to establish their participation in timber, wildlife and conservation activities and the sharing of any benefits arising from these activities.

A major conclusion of all of these consultations was that an important emerging priority is how community forest management can be developed to deliver more benefits to local people, working in partnership with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and development partners. Because Liberians are so dependent upon their local forest resources, reform and rehabilitation of the forestry sector must restore the connection between communities and forests and future development should include communities as partners in the management of their forest resources.

The consultations also revealed that the new forestry policy should take note of the following:

- the need to resume control over the forest estate and rehabilitate the economy;
- the problems of receding natural forest cover, increased poaching and illegal harvesting;
- the increasing pressure on forests to produce more forest products and the potential offered by plantation development and agroforestry;

- the very weak management of the forest estate in the past and, therefore, the need for a change driven by strong political will coupled with appropriate forest governance;
- the need for commitment to international initiatives in the forestry sector, including concerted action at the regional and sub-regional levels; and
- the need to manage forests sustainability, to reduce poverty, improve living conditions, reduce conflict and improve the welfare of marginalized groups.

4 National forestry policy statement

The national forestry policy statement below includes a broad aim for the future direction of the sector and a number of specific objectives that the government will strive to achieve in the immediate post-conflict period.

4.1 Aim

The aim of the forestry policy of Liberia is:

To conserve and sustainably manage all forest areas, so that they will continue to produce a complete range of goods and services for the benefit of all Liberians and contribute to poverty alleviation in the nation, while maintaining environmental stability and fulfilling Liberia's commitments under international agreements and conventions.

4.2 Objectives

In order to achieve this aim, the following specific objectives will be pursued:

1. **To ensure that commercial forestry, community forestry and forest conservation activities are integrated and balanced to optimize the economic, social and environmental benefits from the forest resource.**
2. **To conserve a representative sample of forest ecosystems so that important environmental functions are maintained.**
3. **To contribute to the national development goals of poverty alleviation and increased food security by increasing the opportunities for forest-based income generating activities.**
4. **To grant more equitable access to forest resources so that the potential for future conflict is reduced and the benefits from forestry development are shared throughout Liberian society.**
5. **To ensure that all stakeholders participate in the formulation of forestry policies and in the conservation and management of the forest resource.**
6. **To maximize the contribution of the sector to income, employment and trade through the development of appropriate processing activities.**

- 7. To ensure that forestry development contributes to national development goals and international commitments (including regional cooperation and trans-boundary issues) and is co-ordinated with other relevant branches of government.**
- 8. To ensure that activities in the forestry sector (including forest management, plantation development, harvesting, conservation and industrial development) are based on sound scientific and technical principles.**

4.3 Implementation strategy

The objectives above are all of roughly equal priority. However, achieving some of these objectives will require relatively more effort than others. All future public plans, programs and projects in the sector will be directed towards meeting these objectives. They will be implemented within the framework set-out below, which include activities that will benefit the conservation, community and commercial uses of forests, as well as a number of cross-cutting activities.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

5 Strategy for commercial forestry

The strategy for commercial forestry will focus on improving forest concession management, reforestation and forest plantation development and modernization of the wood processing industry.

5.1 Forest concession management

Background: In forest concessions, sustainable forest management should maintain the capacity of the forest to produce future harvests. In addition to this, it must also be economically viable and, wherever possible, provide social and environmental benefits or, at the very least, seek to minimize or eliminate any negative impacts of forest management. The government is responsible for the regulation and monitoring of the sector, while forest concessionaires are responsible for forest management and reporting on their operations.

Historically, forest concession management in Liberia has suffered from a lack of basic information about appropriate forest management and harvesting practices and the rules and regulations governing forest concessions have been poorly designed and weakly enforced.

Rationale: The following activities will aim to establish a transparent and efficient forest concession system that will result in sustainable forest management in forest concessions. This will contribute to objectives 1, 3, 4, 7 and 8 of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for forest concession management will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

5.1.1. Develop and implement a set of rules and procedures for forest management in concessions, including a logging code and a new forest concession contract that sets out requirements for the following: forest management plans; environmental impact assessment; legal and financial qualifications; and local participation in the sector.

5.1.2. Demarcate forest concession boundaries and implement a transparent and competitive concession allocation system.

5.1.3. Develop and implement an effective production monitoring system.

5.1.4. Develop and implement a mechanism to share the benefits from forest concession activities between the government, private sector and local communities.

5.1.5. Develop and implement procedures for awarding concessions or licences to local communities and local, small-scale enterprises (see also activity 6.1.1).

Responsibilities: The Forestry Development Authority will be responsible for most of the above activities, in consultation with the private sector and local communities. Their role will be to facilitate the developments described above and monitor and control (enforce) the established rules and procedures. In addition, forest certification will be encouraged, to strengthen the monitoring of operations.

5.2 Reforestation and forest plantation development

Background: Reforestation and forest plantation development can provide new sources of wood for the processing industry and other forest products (e.g. fuelwood, building poles and non-wood forest products). In addition, enrichment planting in degraded forests and tree planting on degraded land, farmland and around urban areas can improve the environment and provide opportunities for income and employment generation.

Over the last 30 years, the Forestry Development Authority has been responsible for forest plantation establishment and management and has created around 11,000 hectares of forest plantations. In addition, they have encouraged local people to plant trees in agroforestry schemes to promote income generation and food security.

The success of public sector tree planting has been limited by poor site-species selection and inadequate management, resulting in poor yields and low economic returns. In addition, local people have been hired as labor to plant and care for trees rather than being taken on as partners in forest plantation development and sharing the benefits from such developments.

Rationale: The following activities will aim to reduce the pressure on natural forests and provide new opportunities for income generation by expanding the area of forest plantations and agroforestry schemes to create new, financially viable sources of forest products for processing and local use. This will contribute to objectives 1, 3 and 8 of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for reforestation and forest plantation development will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

5.2.1. Develop and implement a national reforestation program, based on sound scientific and technical principles (best practices) and including realistic annual targets for new planting, enrichment planting and agroforestry.

5.2.2. Develop appropriate mechanisms and incentives to encourage involvement of the private sector and local communities in reforestation.

5.2.3. Encourage tree planting for environmental improvement and income generation in green belts within and around urban areas.

Responsibilities: The private sector, individuals, local communities and community-based organizations will be responsible for reforestation in the future. The role of government will be to create an enabling environment for forest plantation development and to facilitate tree planting for social and environmental benefits, by providing technical advice and other incentives for tree planting. The government will also be responsible for monitoring tree planting activities to ensure that they follow best practices.

5.3 Modernization of the wood processing industry

Background: The wood processing industry can be a source of investment and employment in the Liberian economy and should contribute to value added in the sector. However, historically log production has been export-orientated and focused upon a few very high-valued species. This dependence on a limited range of species (and harvesting above the sustainable yield in recent years) has probably affected the sustainability of forest management.

Even in the period prior to the recent civil conflict there were few large-scale processing plants and not all forest concessionaires installed sawmills. Sawmills produced lumber primarily for export with residual production for domestic markets. Only three plywood/veneer plants were constructed and these operated for a short period before being destroyed or looted along with much of the rest of the installed wood processing capacity.

Rationale: The wood industry will need to be rebuilt and it is expected that the majority of new investment will be as a result of the allocation of forest concessions. The following activities are aimed at promoting value added in the wood industry, increasing the utilization of lesser-used and lesser-known timber species and ensuring improvements in efficiency in the industry. This will contribute to objectives 6, 7 and 8 of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for the modernization of the wood industry will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

5.3.1. Create an adequate legal and regulatory framework for the wood industry.

5.3.2. Ensure access to export markets.

5.3.3. Provide market intelligence and other information to the wood industry.

5.3.4. Promote training programs in the wood industry.

5.3.5. Ensure that the export of round logs is discouraged to encourage more local processing.

5.3.6. Encourage the production of diversified wood products, such as treated and kiln-dried sawnwood, wood based panels, pulp and paper.

5.3.7. Encourage the development of the cottage industry, such as rattan processing.

Responsibilities: The private sector will be responsible for investing in new wood processing plant and equipment. The government will be responsible for encouraging investment and ensuring compliance with all relevant laws (e.g. through the revision of concession contracts and monitoring procedures). It will also help to increase international market access for logs and wood products through inter-governmental negotiations with trading partners. However, the government must ensure that processing capacity does not exceed the sustainable yield from the forest resource and that a balance is achieved between domestic and export demand for forest products. The government and private sector will provide funding for technical assistance and training both to the formal wood industry and to the informal sector (e.g. local carpenters).

6 Strategy for community forestry

In addition to the need for greater involvement of local people in all aspects of the forestry sector, special attention should be given to the potential for forests to contribute more to local people and communities. The strategy for community forestry will focus on the production of bushmeat, wood energy and other non-wood forest products, as well as the management of forests by local communities to meet a variety of differing objectives.

6.1 Community forest management

Background: For the large number of people who live in rural areas, forests and trees have always been an integral part of their livelihoods. With appropriate management, they can be used both as a sustainable source of forest products and as areas that are protected for important social and cultural uses. The Liberia Code of Law (1956) permitted the creation of government reserves, native authority reserves, communal forests and national parks, but few native authority reserves and communal forests materialized. Consequently, the government managed the entire forest estate and the issues of community forest management were never properly addressed.

Community forest management will present a number of challenges in Liberia, because the government and other institutions have very little understanding or experience with the management of common property resources. To overcome these challenges, it will be essential to assess the needs and perceptions of local communities and individuals.

Rationale: The following activities will encourage local communities to sustainably manage their forests by creating rights, transferring control and building capacity for forest management within local communities. This will contribute to objectives 1, 3, 4 and 5 of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for community forest management will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

6.1.1. Establish a framework for community forest management that allows communities to maximize benefits from all potential uses of forests and to grant user and management rights and responsibilities to them (see also activity 5.1.5).

6.1.2. Empower local communities to identify opportunities, set objectives and local management rules and liaise with government and other interested stakeholders.

6.1.3. Provide extension and technical assistance in community forest management.

6.1.4. Locate and practice community forestry on communal land.

Responsibilities: Local communities will be responsible for community forest management. The role of government will be to create an enabling environment for community forest management and to co-ordinate activities. In collaboration with non-governmental and community-based organizations, government will also facilitate community forest management by providing technical advice and extension services and enforcing the agreed rights and responsibilities of local communities.

6.2 Bushmeat and hunting

Background: Liberians have always been very dependent on bushmeat as a source of protein and, in recent years, it is believed that hunting for bushmeat has accelerated rapidly. This increase can be attributed to greater demand from urban areas and neighboring countries and the high level of income that can be quickly achieved from hunting.

In addition, the civil unrest has weakened the government's ability to control these activities. For example, it is now estimated that prohibited or fully protected wildlife species account for about 35 percent of bushmeat sales and partially protected species account for a further 40-50 percent.

Rationale: The following activities aim to re-establish control over bushmeat hunting, to bring the level of hunting down a sustainable level and stop the hunting of protected species. This will contribute to objectives 1, 2, 5, 7 and 8 of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for bushmeat and hunting will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

6.2.1. Enforce the ban on hunting of all protected wildlife species in Liberia.

6.2.2. Design and implement programs to support income generating activities in rural communities as an alternative to commercial hunting.

6.2.3. Design and launch a national awareness campaign about bushmeat and hunting issues.

Responsibilities: Government, in collaboration with non-governmental and community-based organizations, will be responsible for implementing these activities. The role of government will be to facilitate and co-ordinate activities (e.g. through revising and enforcing legislation in this area). Non-governmental and community-based organizations will play a significant role in implementing programs and liaising between government and rural people.

6.3 Wood energy and non-wood forest products

Background: Liberia has never been more dependent on wood energy as a source of national and household energy supplies than at present. The continued absence of a functioning national electricity grid or cost-effective alternatives for the majority of both urban and rural people means that the dependence upon fuelwood and charcoal is unlikely to be lessened in the short term. Likewise, non-wood forest products often fulfill vital safety net functions in rural livelihoods and could further contribute to poverty alleviation as additional sources of household income and small business development.

However, the lack of an adequate regulatory framework and clear access and utilization rights has prevented the rational exploitation of these resources by forest and rural communities, as well as the private sector. In particular the commercialization of charcoal and non-wood forest products has largely been restricted by petty (and often unenforceable) regulations.

Rationale: The following activities are intended to improve household wood energy access and utilization and enhance the contribution of non-wood forest products to livelihoods and the economy. This will contribute to objectives 1, 3, 5 and 6 of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for the improving wood energy supplies and the production of non-wood forest products will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

6.3.1. Ensure adequate legal and regulatory frameworks for the production and commercialization of fuelwood, charcoal and non-wood forest products.

6.3.2. Conduct periodic market surveys and provide market information on wood energy and non-wood forest products.

6.3.3. Encourage rural extension services to promote the use of wood energy and non-wood forest products as an alternative livelihood for rural communities and the adoption of improved technology in the production and utilization of wood energy.

Responsibilities: The government, private sector, non-governmental and community-based organizations will be responsible for revising legislation and regulations governing wood energy and non-wood forest product use. The government, non-governmental and community-based organizations will assist by implementing market surveys and providing rural extension programs.

7 Strategy for forest conservation

Forest conservation includes the management of specific sites of high conservation value and the integration of conservation objectives into all aspects of forest management. The strategy for forest conservation will focus on wildlife and protected area management, management of wetlands and mangroves and the development of ecotourism and nature tourism.

7.1 Wildlife and protected area management

Liberia contains two of West Africa's three largest remaining rainforest blocks. These blocks contain many plants and animal species that are endemic and whose survival is severely threatened outside Liberia. They have also been identified by international agencies as a "biodiversity hot spot" and, therefore, a priority for global conservation efforts.

There are currently two strictly protected areas in Liberia: Sapo National Park (established in 1983); and East Nimba Nature Reserve (established in 2003). In addition to these, six other protected areas have been proposed and the government has committed to establishing a biologically representative network of protected areas covering at least 30 percent of the existing forest area (Protected Forest Act, 2003). Currently, the main threats to Liberia's protected areas are agricultural encroachment and uncontrolled hunting, fishing, logging and mining.

Rationale: The following activities are intended to ensure effective conservation and management of wildlife resources. This will contribute to objectives 2, 5, 7 and 8 of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for the wildlife and protected area management will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

7.1.1. Collect and analyze biological and socio-economic information to determine the status of existing and proposed protected areas and finalize the establishment of an appropriate protected areas network.

7.1.2. Increase community participation in wildlife management in all forest areas and, in particular, through collaborative management of protected areas.

7.1.3. Increase public awareness of forest conservation issues (see also activity 7.2.3).

7.1.4. Strengthen and improve alternative livelihood opportunities to reduce rural dependence on forests and wildlife (see also activity 6.2.2).

7.1.5. Improve co-operation with neighboring countries to address trans-boundary conservation issues (see also activity 8.4.3).

Responsibilities: The government and non-governmental organizations will be responsible for supporting and implementing the scientific and technical aspects of wildlife and protected area management. Along with community-based organizations, they will support and facilitate community participation in wildlife management and raised public awareness.

7.2 Management of wetlands and mangroves

The coastline of Liberia includes a few areas of wetlands and mangroves, which provide subsistence and economic benefits to the local population and are of some importance for biodiversity conservation. In addition, Liberia has acceded to the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands.

Liberia's wetlands and mangroves provide a habitat for several protected species as well as commercially useful species of plants and animals. They also protect the coastline from erosion and are used to provide other goods and services such as fuelwood.

Liberia's wetlands and mangroves have been degraded in recent years, largely due to uncontrolled collection of fuelwood and construction materials.

Rationale: The following activities are intended to identify and protect the remaining wetlands and mangroves under a multiple-use management regime. This will contribute to objectives 1, 5, 7 and 8 of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for the management of wetlands and mangroves will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

7.2.1. Assess the current status of wetlands and mangroves, to determine the extent of the resource and its ecological integrity.

7.2.2. Develop and implement a national wetland and mangrove management plan.

7.2.3. Increase public awareness of the importance and value of wetlands and mangroves (see also activity 7.1.3).

7.2.4. Provide technical and financial support to local communities for the management of wetlands and mangroves, including training and the development and implementation of community-based management programs.

Responsibilities: The government, non-governmental and community-based organizations will be responsible for implementing these activities. The role of government will be to provide scientific and technical advice and financial support for management activities. This will include the government agencies responsible for fisheries as well as forestry.

7.3 Development of ecotourism and nature tourism

Much of ecotourism and nature tourism is focused on forests and their related wildlife. The development of such activities presents emerging challenges and opportunities for forest management. For example, the development of ecotourism and nature tourism can generate much-needed income and employment for rural communities without the harvesting of forest and wildlife resources.

Rationale: The following activities are intended to strengthen the opportunities for the development of ecotourism and nature tourism so that income and employment in the sector will increase. This will contribute to objectives 2, 3 and 6 of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for the development of ecotourism and nature tourism will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

7.3.1. Establish park entrance user fees and use the revenue collected to invest in tourism-related infrastructure in parks.

7.3.2. Develop and implement a marketing strategy to promote ecotourism and nature tourism in Liberia.

7.3.3. Encourage private sector investment in community-based ecotourism and nature tourism.

7.3.4. Integrate ecotourism and nature tourism into rural development and forest management plans.

Responsibilities: The government will be responsible for facilitating these developments, in collaboration with the private sector, non-governmental and community-based organizations.

8 Cross-cutting activities

In support of the strategies above, a number of cross-cutting activities will also be implemented to strengthen the overall framework for the development of the forestry sector. These will include activities in the following areas: land tenure, ownership and land use planning; public administration (including financial management); research, information, education and training; and legislation and law enforcement.

8.1 Land tenure, ownership and land use planning

Background: Forests are the most important natural assets for many rural people and access to forest resources is recognized as a crucial element in enabling them to achieve their goals of cultural survival and social and economic development. Insecure land tenure discourages investment in forest management, encourages over-exploitation and can lead to conflicts over access. Successive governments in Liberia have gradually increased government control over land and natural resources, which has led to many of the problems described above.

Land-use planning is the systematic assessment of the economic, social and environmental benefits of alternative land uses, to identify and select suitable land uses on any particular site. It also includes the development of processes to assess and manage the conversion of land from one use to another. Competing uses for land include: forestry; agriculture; mining; and urban and infrastructure development. It is generally accepted that there has been inadequate land use planning in Liberia, leading to environmental degradation and conflicts over land use.

Rationale: The following activities aim to clarify land tenure and ownership and improve land use, to support sustainable forest management and reduce conflicts over land. This will contribute to objectives 1, 2, 4 and 7 of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for land tenure, ownership and land use planning will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

8.1.1. In collaboration with other government agencies, establish a system for classifying and defining forest land use and produce maps showing the total forest estate and the allocation of forest areas according to this classification.

8.1.2. Review the existing laws on forest land tenure and ownership and, within the forest estate, identify, classify and map forest areas by ownership and define the ownership and management rights and responsibilities of different forest users.

8.1.3. Develop a process and procedures for managing land use change, so that the suitability of proposals to convert forest to other uses can be assessed and agreed.

8.1.4. Maintain collaboration between government agencies with responsibilities for land use and land use planning.

Responsibilities: These activities will be implemented by all stakeholders with an interest in land issues, with a particular responsibility vested in the National Legislature. The role of government will be to co-ordinate and facilitate the dialogue between stakeholders and to enforce any agreed rules and procedures.

8.2 Public administration

Background: Public administration of the forestry sector includes the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policy. This may include an enforcement function and it can include direct activities in the sector (such as the management of forest resources, provision of technical advice and collection and dissemination of information). Nowadays, it also usually includes facilitating dialogue with and amongst different stakeholders in the sector.

The goal of a forestry administration is to steer future developments in a direction that meets the many and diverse demands of society. To do this in a way that is efficient and fair, it is important that the forestry administration is open, transparent and accountable and encourages public participation in the policy process. This is often referred to as “*good governance*”.

The main branch of government responsible for the forestry sector in Liberia is the Forestry Development Authority. Historically, it played a major role in the development of the sector by performing a wide range of regulatory and management functions. However, as a result of the political and civil conflict, the capacity of the Forestry Development Authority has been eroded by the theft and destruction of infrastructure and equipment and the attrition of skills and staff motivation. Corruption and poor governance has also weakened its ability to carry out the functions described above.

Rationale: The following activities aim to strengthen the forestry administration and will contribute to all of the objectives of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for public administration will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

8.2.1. Introduce sound financial management, including independent oversight of expenditure and revenue collection, regular revision of forest charges and adequate funding to implement forestry policy.

8.2.2. Improve transparency and accountability, by strengthening the monitoring, evaluation and reporting of all activities.

8.2.3. Raise the level of performance of Forestry Development Authority staff to ensure independence, accountability and professional management.

8.2.4. Improve public participation in the sector through consultation with all relevant stakeholders about the future design and implementation of policy.

8.2.5. Increase efficiency by decentralizing decision making and delegating authority (where this is feasible and appropriate) and minimizing the costs of complying with forest laws and regulations.

Responsibilities: The above activities will be implemented by the Forestry Development Authority, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders. Gradually, over time, the role of the Forestry Development Authority will shift from operational activities towards more of a focus on policy, supervision, oversight and regulation of the sector. It is also expected that civil society and independent entities will eventually play a greater role in monitoring.

8.3 Research, information, education and training

Background: Scientific and technical knowledge is the foundation for sustainable forest management. It is essential that this knowledge should be accumulated and disseminated to all stakeholders in the sector.

Currently, there is very little information about forest management and silviculture in Liberia and much of the documentation of earlier research programs (undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s) has been lost. In addition, the country suffers from a lack of specialized knowledge and trained manpower in all aspects of forest management and wood processing.

Rationale: The following activities will support sustainable forest management by improving the collection and dissemination of information and increasing the skills of all stakeholders in the Liberian forestry sector. This will contribute to objectives 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8 of the forestry policy.

Activities: The strategy for research, information, education and training will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

8.3.1. Update and restore the infrastructure (buildings, equipment and facilities) for research, education and training.

8.3.2. Create an up-to-date forest information database to monitor sustainable forest management (including: forest resources; production; consumption; and other information) and establish a program to collect, update and disseminate this information often.

8.3.3. Update the skills of all stakeholders to raise forest management to an international standard, through professional and on-the-job training.

8.3.4. Assess the needs for research to support forest management, harvesting and processing and commission research in high priority areas.

Responsibilities: Most of the above activities will be implemented by the main research, education and training institutes in Liberia, drawing on the existing capacities and expertise available in other West African countries. In addition, government and the private sector will collaborate in some activities, especially the collection and dissemination of information and training by the private sector. The role of government will be to support (i.e. fund) and coordinate these activities.

8.4 Legislation and law enforcement

Background: Implementation of the above policy will require a review of existing legislation and, most likely, the amendment of some legislation. In addition to this, there will also be a need to strengthen the procedures for law enforcement.

Rationale: The following activities will support the implementation of this policy and contribute to all of the objectives set-out above.

Activities: The strategy for legislation and law enforcement will include the following activities (in approximate order of priority):

8.4.1. Review and, where necessary, update all existing forest legislation (including laws, regulations, administrative rules and procedures) so that they support the aim and objectives of this policy.

8.4.2. Strengthen forest law enforcement, through training and adequate funding of forest law enforcement activities and stricter penalties for illegal activities.

8.4.3. Improve co-operation with neighboring countries to strengthen forest law enforcement with respect to illegal and unreported trade in forest and wildlife products (see also activity 7.1.5).

8.4.4. Develop and introduce a process for public consultation, adjudication of disputes (ombudsman) and public reporting of forest law compliance.

Responsibilities: The above activities will be implemented by the Forestry Development Authority and Ministry of Justice, in consultation with other relevant stakeholders. The role of government will be to facilitate the dialogue and implement any necessary changes.

LIBERIA-Landcover in 2004

0 50 100 150 kilometers

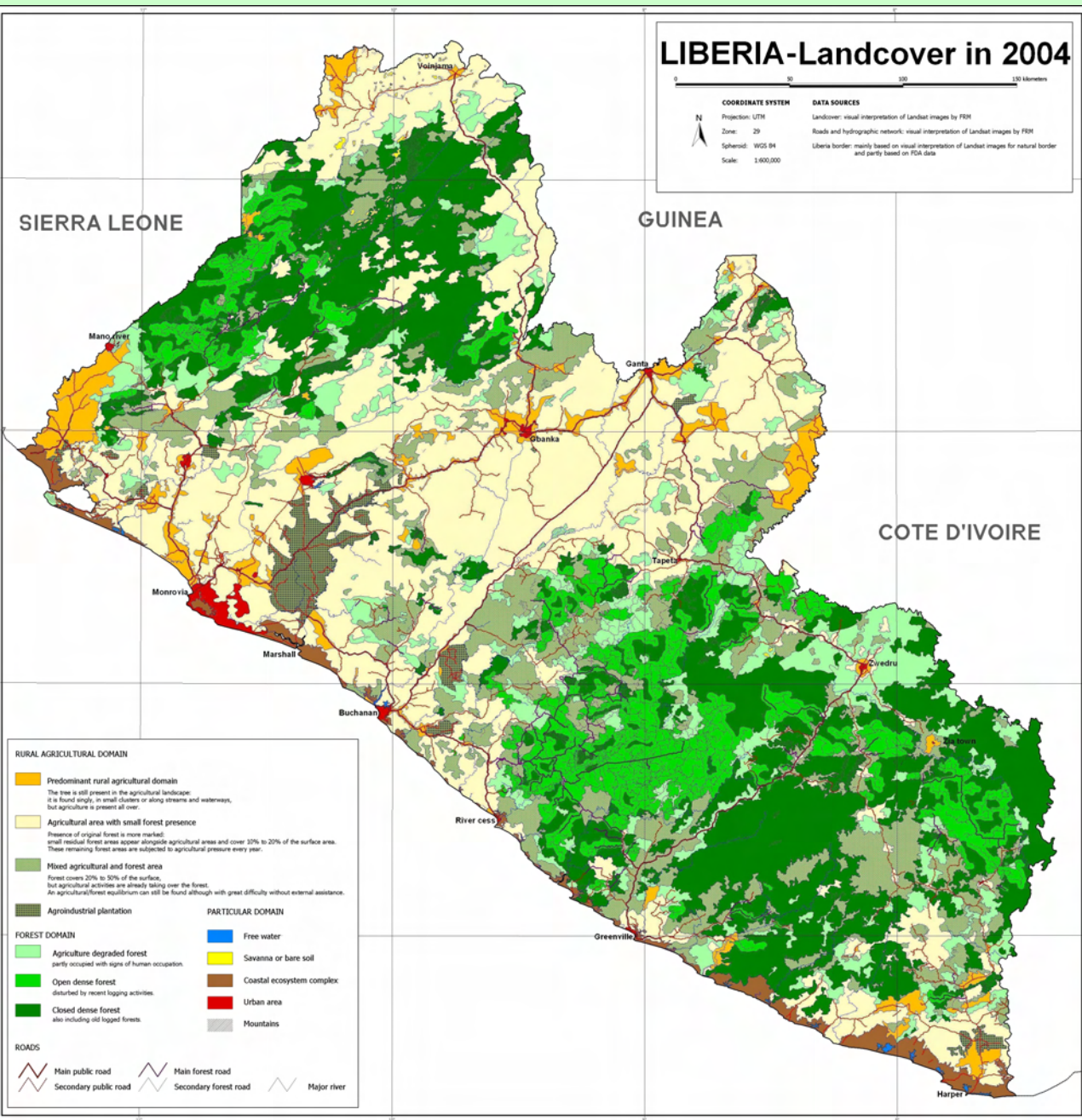
COORDINATE SYSTEM
 Projection: UTM
 Zone: 29
 Spheroid: WGS 84
 Scale: 1:600,000

DATA SOURCES
 Landcover: visual interpretation of Landsat images by FHM
 Roads and hydrographic network: visual interpretation of Landsat images by FHM
 Liberia border: mainly based on visual interpretation of Landsat images for natural border and partly based on PSA data

SIERRA LEONE

GUINEA

COTE D'IVOIRE



RURAL AGRICULTURAL DOMAIN

- Predominant rural agricultural domain**
 The tree is still present in the agricultural landscape; it is found singly, in small clusters or along streams and waterways, but agriculture is present all over.
- Agricultural area with small forest presence**
 Presence of original forest is more marked; small residual forest areas appear alongside agricultural areas and cover 10% to 20% of the surface area. These remaining forest areas are subjected to agricultural pressure every year.
- Mixed agricultural and forest area**
 Forest covers 20% to 50% of the surface, but agricultural activities are already taking over the forest. An agricultural/forest equilibrium can still be found although with great difficulty without external assistance.
- Agroindustrial plantation**

FOREST DOMAIN

- Agriculture degraded forest**
 partly occupied with signs of human occupation.
- Open dense forest**
 disturbed by recent logging activities.
- Closed dense forest**
 also including old logged forests.

PARTICULAR DOMAIN

- Free water**
- Savanna or bare soil**
- Coastal ecosystem complex**
- Urban area**
- Mountains**

ROADS

- Main public road**
- Main forest road**
- Secondary public road**
- Secondary forest road**
- Major river**