

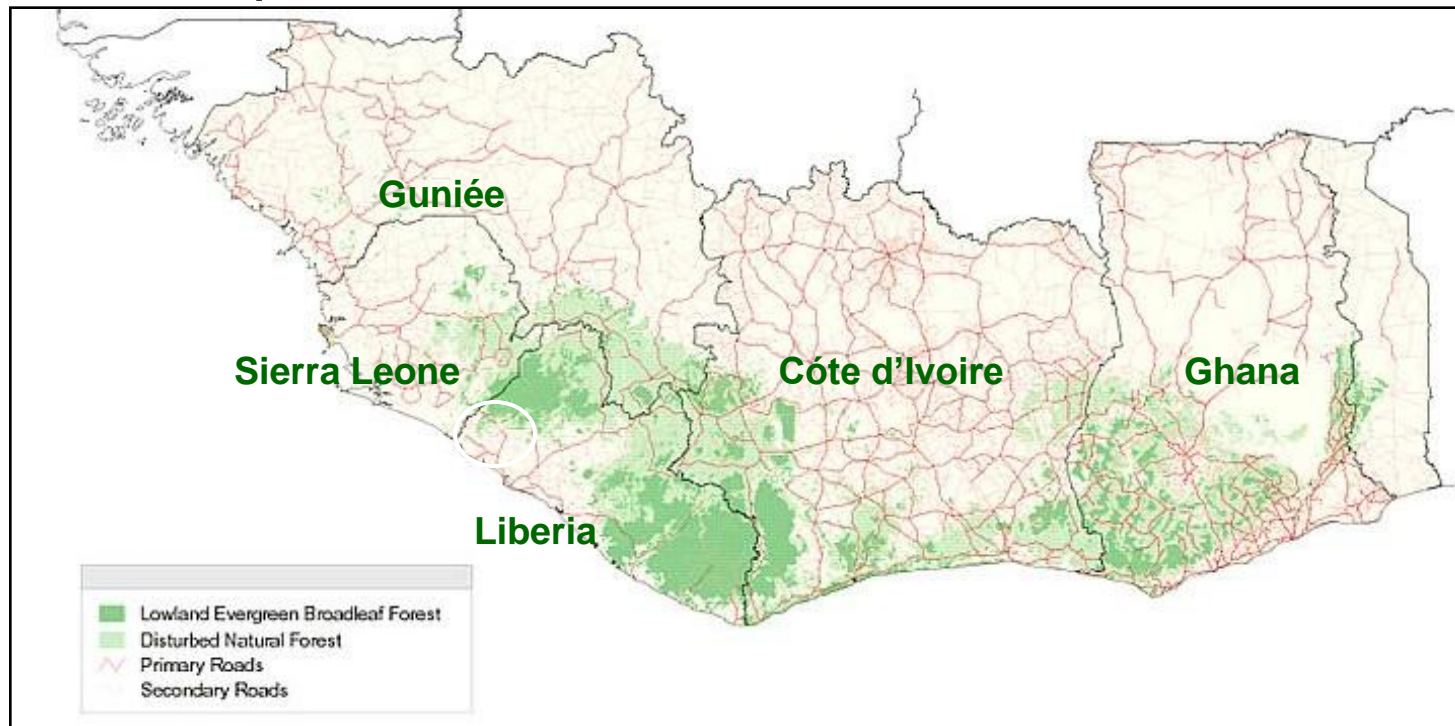
# The Gola forest programme: an innovative approach to conservation



Government of Sierra Leone  
Conservation Society of Sierra Leone  
(CSSL- BirdLife in Sierra Leone)  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
(RSPB- BirdLife in UK)

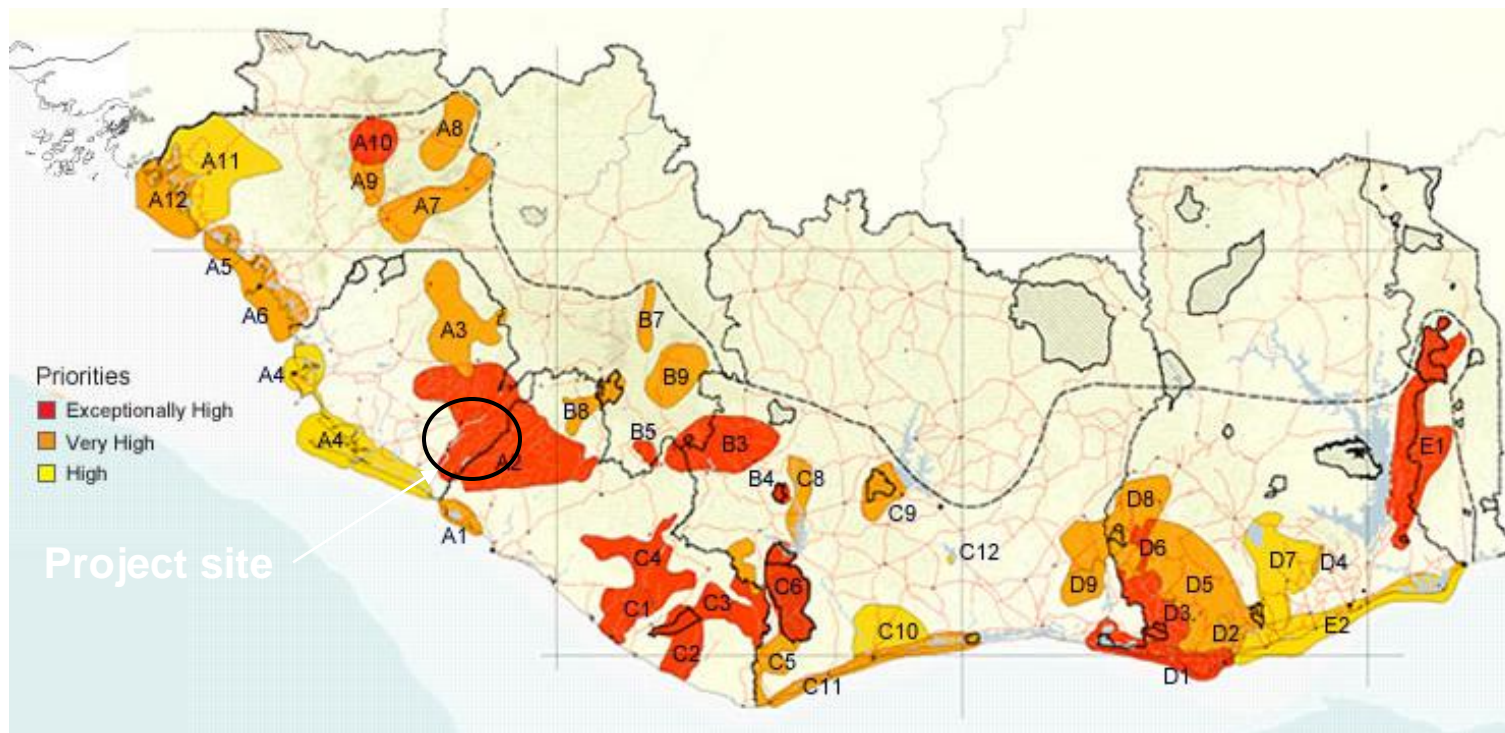
# What's at stake?

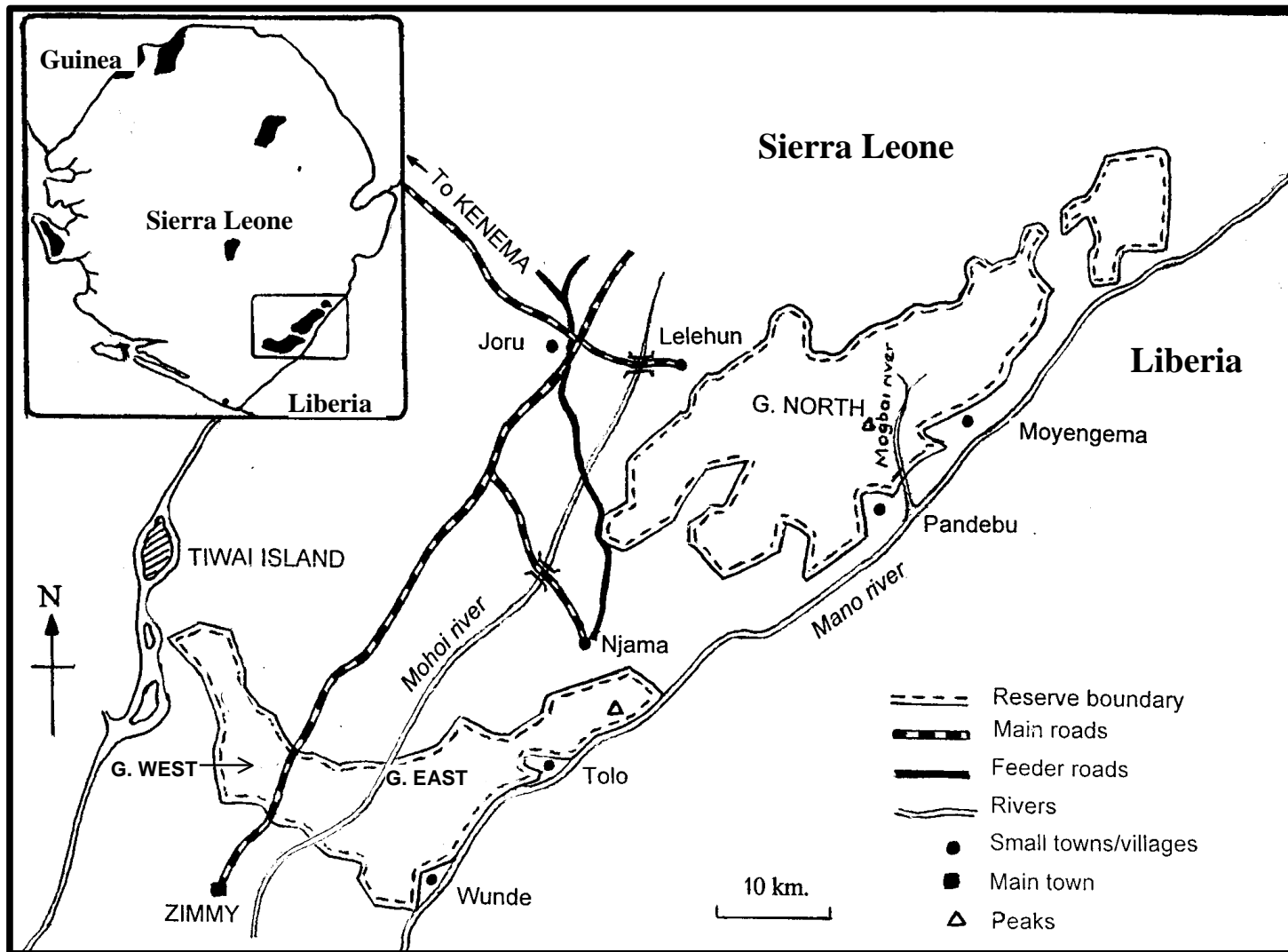
- Largest tract of Upper Guinea rainforest in Sierra Leone
- Global biodiversity hotspot-Conservation International
- Global 200 Ecoregion- WWF
- Endemic bird area (BirdLife International)
- Chimp area.....



# Priorities within the Hotspot

- Conservation priority setting workshop in 1999, brought together specialists from all taxa to prioritise sites within the UGF region.





Gola forests: 74,000 hectares  
in south-eastern Sierra Leone



# Rare bird life

- 274 bird species
- 14 bird species of global conservation concern
- Stronghold for the Picatharte de Guinée and Pintade à poitrine blanche in Sierra Leone



*Picatharte de Guinée*



*Chouette-pêcheuse rousse*

# Endangered mammals and plants



*Western chimpanzee*

- 56 mammal species
- 13 rare and threatened species
- Western chimpanzee, forest elephant, hippopotame pygmée
- At least 2000 plant species, over 150 large tree species

# Sierra Leone - Background

- Empire of Mali 13-15<sup>th</sup> Century
- Portuguese visit in 15<sup>th</sup> century coined name *Serra Loya* - Lion mountain

## Colonialism

- 1787 'Province of Freedom' purchased and colonised by freed slaves.
- 1808-1961 - British colony.

## Independence

- Independence in 1961, political struggles since until civil war that spilled over from Liberia in 1990s
- War ended in 2002 with free and fair elections following disarmament.

## Poverty

- Ranked 175 of 177 countries on the 'Human Development index'
- Life expectancy at birth in 2001 36.5yrs
- GDP per capita 2001 was US\$470



# Sierra Leone seeking a brighter future



Alhaji (Dr) Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, President of Sierra Leone, meeting BirdLife delegation, 2004

- Rebuilding a post-conflict society
- Trying to restore livelihoods and create sustainable development





Pressures...

- Gola commercially logged in the 1960-80s, badly.
- Post conflict situation has seen rise in illegal logging with chainsaws.
- Big interest from commercial companies to log again

# Gola programme: Vision



*....to secure the long term  
conservation of the Gola  
forests for people and  
biodiversity.*



# Long-term objectives

- Maintain Gola's biodiversity
- Provide sustained income for local communities
- Secure protected area status for the Gola forests



*Red colobus monkey*



# Innovative approach

- Stop the logging of wildlife-rich tropical forests by buying the management rights
- Establish a 'conservation concession' to restore and protect the forest ecosystem





## A 15 year partnership

**RSPB, CSSL and the Government have:**

- **Monitored wildlife in the Gola forests (1990-1995)**
- **Developed interim management plan for Gola (1993)**
- **Completed a feasibility study for the project (2002-04)**



# Community relations



**“ There is an urgent need to protect and conserve the Gola Forest Reserves because of their unique biodiversity and the many products and services they provide to people”**

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*Joint statement of local chiefdoms, government and BirdLife at the Gola forest planning workshop, July 2003*

# Initial objectives

In 2004-2007 RSPB, CSSL and the Government will:

- Develop a detailed management plan for the Gola forests, in consultation with stakeholders
- Address immediate threats to the Gola forests and support some immediate development needs of the local communities
- Raise US\$ 10 million for an endowment fund



# Why a conservation concession?

- Will help to mitigate risk of FD entering into Logging concession in the short term by making payments to protect and by providing support and training.
- Concession payments are an incentive to local communities and will provide resources and employment
- The ability to maintain this in perpetuity is necessary to ensure that the conservation of the resources continues and that commitment from the government and communities is maintained.





# Funding

- US\$1 million start-up costs for the initial phase funded by RSPB, Darwin Initiative and Conservation International
- US\$10 million to be raised in the initial phase to establish the endowment fund
- 5 shareholders contributing US\$ 2 million needed. RSPB and CI already make up two shareholders. Others approached.

# Operations

- Final negotiations ongoing
- Communities- support for projects and direct payments
- Local government- capacity building
- FD- magt costs for Gola
- Central Govt- compensation for royalties

# Long Term Management Structure

The GolaTrust  
Representatives of GoSL and Communities, Funders

Managment Board  
Communities, CSSL, Forestry Department, RSPB

Gola Park Director  
Forestry Division

# Long term Partners...

## Conservation Society of Sierra Leone

- Foremost national conservation organisation in Sierra Leone
- Will provide in environmental education, advocacy and biological research and monitoring



## Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security

- represented by the Forestry Division
- The lead agency for all protected areas in Sierra Leone, will manage the consession long-term
- Currently very low capacity.



# So far...

- Strong support from local communities
- Political support at all levels of government
- Community development initiatives
- Research activities
- Forest guards employed and regularly paid
- Considerable reduction in illegal activities

# Challenges

- Raising the funds
- Making sure support of key stakeholders is retained
- Implementation of joint agreement
- Building capacity of FD and communities to manage in the long term

# Thank you

