

Thematic report on protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity

Please provide the following details on the origin of this report.

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Please provide summary information on the process by which this report has been prepared, including information on the types of stakeholders who have been actively involved in its preparation and on material which was used as a basis for the report.

The project hired the services of a consultant with background in protected areas management, who later identified competent resource persons from a cross-section of line ministries and agencies involved in environmental and/or biodiversity conservation. The stakeholders involved in the preparation of this report include:

- University of Liberia (UL).
- National Environmental Commission of Liberia (NECOLIB).
- Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy (MLME).
- Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA).
- Ministry of Agriculture (MOA).
- Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (MPEA)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)
- Forestry Development Authority (FDA)
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- Local and international Environmental NGOs in Liberia
- Private Institutions
- Business Community

The duties of the resource persons were to visit key stakeholders/institutions identified by the project to acquire the needed information. A team of five technical resource persons through interview reviewed, discussed and scrutinized the acquired information. The resulting information was produced and submitted as a thematic report to the National Environmental Commission of Liberia for comments.

Materials used for the preparation of this report were:

- Direct information through interview granted by sectoral agencies/ministries,
- Annual reports from the Forestry Development Authority (19989-99).
- 1988, 1999 and 2000 Forestry policies and legislation of Liberia
- The 1976 Act creating the Forestry Development Authority.
- The Ten-Year Forestry Sector Programmes and Projects Plan
- National Environmental policy of Liberia.
- The Environmental Protection and Management Law.
- The Environment Protection and Management Act.

Reports on the Tri-national (Liberia, Cote D'Ivoire and Guinea) meetings on Mount Nimba.

Protected areas or areas where special measures need to be taken to conserve biological diversity

System of protected areas

1. What is the relative priority afforded to development and implementation of a national system of protected areas in the context of other obligations arising from the Convention and COP Decisions?					
a) High	X	b) Medium		c) Low	
2. Is there a systematic planning process for development and implementation of a national system of protected areas?					
a) no					
b) in early stages of development					X (further comments below)
c) in advanced stages of development					
d) yes, please provide copies of relevant documents describing the process					
3. Is there an assessment of the extent to which the existing network of protected areas covers all areas that are identified as being important for the conservation of biological diversity?					
a) no					
b) an assessment is being planned for					
c) an assessment is being undertaken					X (further comments below)
d) yes, please provide copies of the assessments made					

Regulatory framework

4. Is there a policy framework and/or enabling legislation in place for the establishment and management of protected areas?					
a) no					
b) in early stages of development					
c) in advanced stages of development					X (further comments below)
d) yes, please provide copies of relevant documents					
5. Have guidelines, criteria and targets been adopted to support selection, establishment and management of protected areas?					
a) no					
b) in early stages of development					X (further comments below)
c) in advanced stages of development					
d) yes, please provide copies of guidelines, criteria and targets					

6. Does the management of protected areas involve the use of incentive measures, for instance, of entrance fees for park visitors, or of benefit-sharing arrangements with adjacent communities and other relevant stakeholders?	
a) no	
b) yes, incentive measures implemented for some protected areas (please provide some examples)	X (further comments below)
c) yes, incentive measures implemented for all protected areas (please provide some examples)	

Management approach

7. Have the principal threats to protected areas and the biodiversity that they contain been assessed, so that programmes can be put in place to deal with the threats, their effects and to influence the key drivers?	
a) no	
b) an assessment is being planned for	
c) an assessment is in process	
d) yes, an assessment has been completed	
e) programmes and policies to deal with threats are in place (please provide basic information on threats and actions taken)	X (further comments below)
8. Are protected areas established and managed in the context of the wider region in which they are located, taking account of and contributing to other sectoral strategies?	
a) no	
b) yes, in some areas	X (further comments below)
c) yes, in all areas (please provide details)	
9. Do protected areas vary in their nature, meeting a range of different management objectives and/or being operated through differing management regimes?	
a) no, most areas are established for similar objectives and are under similar management regimes	
b) many areas have similar objectives/management regimes, but there are also some exceptions	
c) yes, protected areas vary in nature (please provide details)	X (further comments below)
10. Is there wide stakeholder involvement in the establishment and management of protected areas?	
a) no	
b) with some, but not all protected areas	X (further comments below)
c) yes, always (please provide details of experience)	

11. Do protected areas established and managed by non-government bodies, citizen groups, private sector and individuals exist in your country, and are they recognized in any formal manner?	
a) no, they do not exist	X (further comments below)
b) yes, they exist, however are not formally recognized	
c) yes, they exist and are formally recognized (please provide further information)	

Available resources

12. Are the human, institutional and financial resources available adequate for full implementation of the protected areas network, including for management of individual protected areas?	
a) no, they are severely limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	X (further comments below)
b) no, they are limiting (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	
c) Available resources are adequate (please provide basic information on needs and shortfalls)	
d) yes, good resources are available	
13. Has your country requested/received financial assistance from the Global Environment Facility or other international sources for establishment/management of protected areas?	
a) no	X
b) funding has been requested, but not received	
c) funding is currently being requested	
d) yes, funding has been received (please provide copies of appropriate documents)	

Assessment

14. Have constraints to implementation and management of an adequate system of protected areas been assessed, so that actions can be initiated to deal with these constraints?	
a) no	
b) yes, constraints have been assessed (please provide further information)	X (further comments below)
c) yes, actions to deal with constraints are in place (please provide further information)	
15. Is a programme in place or in development to regularly assess the effectiveness of protected areas management and to act on this information?	
a) no	
b) yes, a programme is under development (please provide further information)	X (further comments below)
c) yes, a programme is in place (please provide further information)	

16. Has any assessment been made of the value of the material and non-material benefits and services that protected areas provide?	
a) no	
b) an assessment is planned	X (further comments below)
c) an assessment is in process	
d) yes, an assessment has been made (please provide further information)	

Regional and international cooperation

17. Is your country collaborating/communicating with neighbouring countries in the establishment and/or management of transboundary protected areas?	
a) no	
b) yes (please provide details)	X (further comments below)
18. Are key protected areas professionals in your country members of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas, thereby helping to foster the sharing of information and experience?	
a) no	
b) yes	X (further comments below)
c) information is not available	
19. Has your country provided information on its protected areas to the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre in order to allow for a scientific assessment of the status of the world's protected areas?	
a) no	X
b) yes	
20. If your country has protected areas or other sites recognised or designated under an international convention or programme (including regional conventions and programmes), please provide copies of reports submitted to those programmes or summaries of them. <i>See further comments below.</i>	
21. Do you think that there are some activities on protected areas that your country has significant experience that will be of direct value to other Contracting Parties?	
a) no	
b) yes (please provide details)	X (further comments below)

Further comments

Re: 2. b)

In early stages of development. Reassessment of the forest cover of Liberia is in progress under the aegis of the Liberia Forest RE-Assessment Project. Also socio economic surveys are being carried out to acquire information for the development of proposals for setting up a protected area network in Liberia. Two workshops have been held to discuss the management plan of Sapo National Park (the only protected area). The most recent workshop considered at a five (5) year management plan and extension of the park to link it to the Grebo National Forest. There are plans to discuss the linking of that proposed park to the Tai National Park in Cote D'Ivoire, to create West Africa's first regional protected area.

Re: 3. c)

Yes, Between 1976-1977 IUCN conducted some basic studies, which identified some areas of conservation significance in Liberia. Recommendation was submitted to the Government of Liberia to declare the area by law (some as national parks and some as nature reserves). Prior to this, a systematic forest inventory carried out from 1960-1967 identified twelve (12) National Forest Reserves on the basis of the presence of commercially important timber species. There is an ongoing Forestry Reassessment Project funded by the European Union and Conservation International, and supervised by the Fauna and Flora International. The project is assessing the forest cover of Liberia with the aim of establishing a network of protected areas. Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and Conservation International (FFI) and (CI) are currently undertaking reassessment of the forest cover of the entire county.

Re: 4. c)

In advanced stages of development. The National Environmental Policy Framework, The Environment Management Law and The Environment Management Act have been enacted by the National Legislature and approved by the President of Liberia. The Act will create the Liberia Environmental Protection Agency. Also other instruments that relate to protected areas conservation and management are in place; these include the New Forestry Law of Liberia of 2001, and the Wildlife and National Parks Act of 1988.

Re: 5. b)

Yes. In advanced stages of development. The Liberia Forest Re-assessment Project being implemented by FFI and CI in collaboration with the Government of Liberia (GOL) in setting up guidelines, criteria and management framework for protected areas management in the country.

Re: 6. b)

Yes. Incentive measures implemented for some protected areas to a limited extent; policies exist for collection of fees from all visitors entering the Sapo National Park for research, tourism or other purposes permitted within the framework of the park's management plan and Forestry Law.

Re: 7. e)

Yes. (National Forestry) Programmes and policies to deal with threats are in place. The most serious threats to biological diversity/protected areas in Liberia are shifting cultivation, hunting, logging, settlements and mining. The New Forestry law of 2001 and the Wildlife and national Parks Act of 1988 provide measures to deal with these threats. Also the National Environmental Policy of Liberia makes provision to deal with all threats to protected areas and the biodiversity they contain.

Re: 8. b)

Yes. In some areas (In the only proclaimed national park – Sapo National Park and the eleven National Forests in the country. The National Forests are set aside for sustainable use forest management activities, especially timber production)

Re: 9. c)

Yes; protected areas vary in nature. The protected areas identified in Liberia are Nature Reserves, Game Reserves Forest and National Parks. These have their own management regimes and reflect the IUCN classification system.

Re: 10. b)

With some but not all. The Sapo National Park was established with the involvement of all the key international, national and local stakeholders. On the contrary, only the Government of Liberia (GOL) has been involved in national forest establishment and management, except for the technical assistance provided by the United States Agency for International Development and the German Technical Cooperation through the German Forestry Mission to Liberia in 1950s and 1960s respectively. Notwithstanding this, there is now a new thrust, whereby stakeholder dialogues are on going for the management of Sapo National Park and proposed protected areas.

Re: 11. a)

No. They do not exist.

Re: 12. a)

They are Severely limiting. The needs are:

- a) Training of protected areas manager,
- b) Capacity building support for key institutions responsible for protected area management, and
- c) Logistics and equipment for conducting protected areas management activities.

Re: 14. b)

Yes; constraints have been assessed and more intensive assessment is ongoing through the Liberia Forest Re-assessment Project.

Re: 15. b)

Yes; a programme is under development and there are existing instruments and tools for regularly assessing the effectiveness of protected areas in the country. These include the New Forestry Law and the Wildlife and National Parks Act. When published, the Environmental Protection and Management Law will also serve as enforcement tool.

Re: 16. b)

Assessment planned. This has become necessary due to concern expressed by local community people adjacent to the Sapo National Park.

Re: 17. b)

Yes; through the efforts of Fauna and Flora International (FFI), Liberia is currently collaborating with Guinea and Ivory Coast for the conservation and management of the Mount Nimba Massifs and their biological resources. Two tri-national meetings have been held to discuss this issue. These massifs are shared between the three countries. Liberia has engaged Guinea and Sierra Leone in a discussion for the establishment of the Mano River (MRU) Elephant Conservation Reserve.

Re: 18. b)

Yes. Only one member has been identified. However, there has been no programme for fostering the sharing of information and experience by the IUCN.

Re. 20

Yes, Liberia has protected areas and sites recognized and designated under international conventions or programmes (See annex for reports).

Re. 21. b)

Yes. In the past 19 years of the existence of the Sapo National Park, the management team has been able to effectively subdue all serious conflicts in the communities of the park through constant dialogues and awareness/educational Programmes. Besides, the local communities around the Sapo National Park have taken so much interest in the Park that they report unwanted activities in the Park. The people's interest has been enlisted through community development projects initiated by many NGOs and WWF from which they have benefited immensely.

Liberia has not yet developed its National Biodiversity Action Plan although the proposal is under consideration by the United National Development Programme (UNDP), nor has it undertaken a comprehensive review of its biological diversity and related issues since the civil war broke out in 1989. Since the end of the civil war late 1996, conservation actions have been slow to restart. However, Sapo National Park has been the centerpiece of conservation efforts in Liberia for about two decades, both before and after the civil war.

In 1999 an international group of 150 scientists, stakeholders and policy makers in Elmina, Ghana, to review biodiversity conservation priorities for the Upper Guinea Rainforest ecosystems. Within the region, Liberia emerged as the country with the greatest potential for rainforest conservation. This meeting also identified Sapo national Park as one of those priority areas within the biological corridor to the Tai National Park in Ivory Coast. Presently, there are other proposed protected arrears identified by the Alliance for Conservation in Liberia, World Wide Fund for nature of Liberia, Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia, Society Against Environmental Degradation and Farmers Associated to Conserve the Environment) for protection. Socio-economic, biological and other surveys are being conducted to gather data for supporting the gazettelement of the proposed protected areas and extension of the Sapo National Park. Prior to the meeting in Elmina, conservationists and forest managers in Liberia agreed that an obstacle to establishing a protected area network was the lack of up-to-date information on the status of Liberia's biological diversity and capacity building. In 1997, results of rapid surveys in the Southeast of the country indicate that wildlife populations had increased since the war, though the wildlife faced severe threats from commercial hunting, logging, shifting cultivation and settlements in post-war period. Therefore, the creation of a protected area system in the country will allow the Government to Liberia to choose a balance between biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development considerations. Notably, it is important that a network of protected area system be of conservation priority for Liberia. There is great hope with the assistance of the country's international partners.

ANNEX: DECLARAION OF THE TRI-NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON MOUNT NIMBA (LIBERIA, GUINEA AND IVORY COAST)

Declaration of N'zerekore on the Tri-National Management of The Nimba Mountains

The Participants of the tri-national workshop of N'zerekore on the sustainable management of the Nimba Mountains, held from 12 to 15 February 2002 in N'zerekore on the topic "Tri-national Programme for the integrated conservation of the Nimba Mountains", noting:

- the Convention on Biological Diversity,
- the authoritative but not legally binding Declaration of Principle on a world –wide consensus on the management, conservation and ecologically viable utilization of all types of forest, adopted during the United Nations Convention on Environment and Development in June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, known as the Forests Declaration, - the Declaration of Paris of the Tenth World Forest congress (September 1991), - the forest Declaration of Delhi (Forestry Forum for Developing Countries, September 1993), - the inclusion of the Mount Nimba World heritage Site on the list of World Heritage Sites in Danger by the World Heritage Committee during its meeting held in Santa Fe (USA), - the Declaration of Serville (1995) strongly emphasizing developing international cooperation for the effective management of trans-boundary biosphere reserves,- the need to strengthen cordial relations and a climate of peace and harmony between the three nations concerned with the Nimba Massif, in accordance with the UNESCO programme on the Culture of Peace, Publish herewith this Declaration of N'zerekore on the tri-national management of the Nimba Mountains, whose principal objectives concern the following points:
 - Establishing contact on the one hand between the technical teams in Cote d' Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia responsible for the management of the Nimba Mountains, and on the other hand between these technicians and local communities,- Sharing information, identifying gaps and possibilities with a view to develop practical means for international cooperation for the conservation of the Nimba Mountains and to prepare a common management strategy,- Involving and motivating the governmental and private sectors, as well as local communities, who are the principal stakeholders in any management master plan for the Nimba Mountains, and to create a tri-national biosphere reserve of the mountains.

This Declaration concerning the Nimba mountains follows from the afore- mentioned Declarations. To this end, the Participants propose:

1. that the relevant nations, namely the Cote d' Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia, support natural resources conservation actions through co-ordination and harmonization of their interventions in their Nimba Mountains conservation programs and through mobilization of supplementary financing from donors;
2. that the nations include the development of socio-economic and scientific infrastructure for the Nimba Mountains in national development priorities;
3. that the nations prioritise, encourage and create the conditions for partnerships with international organizations for improved preservation of natural resources;
4. the participation of local populations, and in particular women and youth, in planning, utilization and management of the Nimba Mountains, which is today an incontrovertible social, cultural, ecological and economic reality;
5. that the international community and NGOs become more involved in projects supporting to national areas by providing increased and permanent support to national and tri-national institutions;
6. Setting up a tri-national steering mechanism for undertaking actions for the sustainable conservation of the Massif;
7. the submission for approval of a draft framework agreement to the respective governments.

The center for the Management of the Environment of Mount Nimba (CEGEN), the Directorate for nature Protection (DPN), will be responsible for carrying out the activities in points 6 and 7 of this Declaration in Guinea, Cote d' Ivoire and Liberia, respectively.

Prepared in Nzerekore, 15th February 2002
