

Project Title - Conservation of the Sierra Leonean Western Area Peninsular Forest Reserve (WAPFoR) and its Watershed

Project background: The Western Area Peninsular of Sierra Leone, which is part of the Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem, is home to roughly 1 to 1.5 million people (20% of the country's total population), including the capital city of Freetown. The WAPFoR, occupying the centre of the peninsular, covers about 17,000 hectares of closed forest. The reserve was declared in 1916 and gazetted as a non-hunting forest in 1973. The reserve is one of the eight biodiversity hot-spots of the country and host 80-90% of Sierra Leone's terrestrial biodiversity.

The water catchment area for Freetown and the peninsular is dependent on the Reserve, moderating the water supply in a climate with distinct and severe wet and dry seasons. The steep slopes, which prevail over the whole area, are easily eroded and washed out once deforested. Without the water retention and storage capacities of the tropical rain forest ecosystem, villages could face severe flooding.

Pressures from the neighboring communities and the demand from Freetown for an expansion of the city's perimeter are leading to encroachment on the Reserve area. Although formally demarcated under the 1972 Wildlife Act, inadequate enforcement by the government has been unsuccessful in preventing the continued exploitation of the forest.

Due to these pressures the overall area of the forest reserve has decreased by 32% since its constitution. The actual perimeter of the area covered by high forest does no longer correspond to the official demarcation of the WAPFoR in wide areas and no physical demarcation (sign posts) of the Reserve's boundaries exists.

Target Groups and Beneficiaries

The immediate target groups for the project are 50,000 people living in around 30 villages adjacent to the WAPFoR in Mountains, Waterloo, Kent and York Districts. The project is expected to benefit about 1.5million people of Freetown

Project objective

Participatory processes in decision making on sustainable use of natural resources are introduced and contribute to reduce rural poverty in the Western Area Peninsular (WAPFoR).

Specific objective: The Sierra Leonean Western Area Peninsular Forest Reserve (WAPFoR) and its Watershed are conserved and sustainably managed for the benefit of the adjacent population, particularly the poor.

Main Activities

A1: Elaborate a participatory land use plan which leads to a new forest demarcation area, core and a buffer zone. Develop training programs for key planners and managers in the design and implementation of incentive measures to protect the Reserve. Facilitate stakeholder meetings to discuss and develop protection mechanisms. Strengthen the law enforcement instruments and promote the establishment of an institutional framework for coordination.

A2: Promote alternative income generation options for adjacent villages of the forest reserve to reduce pressure on the forest. Encourage farmers to adopt agroforestry, woodlot planting and

sustainable forest management in a buffer zone in order to increase the supply of fuel-wood. Encourage traditional practices and knowledge that are beneficial to the sustainable management and utilization of forest biodiversity. Strengthen civil society organizations active in the protection of natural resources. Organize environmental awareness raising programs in cooperation with civil society. Investigate alternatives to decrease/replace the use of firewood for fish smoking. Support pilot activities emphasizing the direct connection between forest conservation and safeguarding water supply.

A3: Facilitate the inclusion of private business sector for eco-tourism. Organize a preparatory study to investigate the potential of the project to tap into carbon finance (additional and long term financing option for the project). Link to a micro-finance program, giving the possibility to substitute fuel-wood/charcoal selling as an income source for the poor. Cultivate partnerships and alliances to leverage additional funding for the conservation of the reserve.

Outputs/Results

The Western Area Peninsular Forest Reserve (WAPFR) is newly demarcated and zonal management plans are established

Local communities around the reserve participated actively and benefit from services rendered through the reserve and additional programmes

Innovative pro-poor financing mechanisms for forest conservation are piloted: such as carbon finance programme (REDD, bio-carbon funds) and private business enhancement for ecotourism.

Implementing Agencies

Welthungerhilfe (WHH)

Environmental Forum for Action (ENFORAC)

Partners

Forestry Division of Ministry of Agriculture,

Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS)

Environmental Protection Agency (SLEPA)

Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and the environment.

Contact Persons

Mr. Simon Burdett

Head of Project (SLE 1008)

Welthungerhilfe (WHH)

30 Main Motor Road, Wilberforce, Freetown

Mr. Ansumana Swarray, National Coordinator,

ENFORAC, 18 Dundas Street, Freetown