

INCEPTION WORKSHOP
SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT PROJECT
UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO
COMBAT DESERTIFICATION-
FUNDED BY THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITY-
MANAGED BY THE UNDP LIBERIA'S COUNTRY OFFICE
IMPLMENTED BY
THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY OF
LIBERIA

WRITTEN/EDITED BY J. S. Datuama Cammue

Jsdcammue@yahoo.com

MONROVIA -LIBERIA

OCTOBER 30, 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Thursday October 30, the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme Country Office formally launched, the Sustainable Land Management Project at a colorful workshop held at City Hall of the Municipality of Monrovia. The inception workshop was attended by cross section of sectoral ministries, agencies, the UN System, local and international NGOs, civil society organizations and members of the fourth estate.

EPA Executive Director Ben Turtur Donnie told the assembled stakeholder representatives that the EPA and the UNDP with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) are undertaking the project to collect baseline data that will influence policy direction on land degradation and management. The project he said, will lay the basis for National Action Plan to combat desertification under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification as a contracting party. Liberia is among several LDCs (Least Developed Countries) that have not yet elaborated their National Action Plan..

The Project Manager T. Martin Somah, Sr. noted that the benefits Liberia stands to accrue from the implementation of the project include but not limited to:

- Reduced food insecurity
- Higher yield from more productive agriculture
- Improved livelihood for rural farmers & farm families
- Improved participatory governance system for land management

He said the project is part of Liberia contribution to the international effort to halt the worsening problem of land degradation under the UNCCD which calls on contracting parties to promote effective and innovative actions to address land degradation that has developed into a full scale crisis across the world. To this end, he said, the project will result into multi-sectoral framework to begin mainstreaming sustainable land management into national development agenda.

In his launching remarks, Mr. Paul Jallah, Director of Extension, Ministry of Agriculture, who proxy for Deputy Agriculture Minister for Extension Lwopu Kandakai, thanked the EPA and the UNDP for the project. He said the project is very important because it will lay the foundation for sustainable land use planning in the country. He therefore called on all stakeholders to lend their support to the project.

The formal launching remarks were followed by solidarity messages from array of stakeholder institutions and organizations in attendance. The workshop formally ended with a vote of thanks by Mr. Gabriel B. F. Sherman, Sr, Administrative /Financial Assistant to the Project and a lunch hosted by the Executive Director of the Agency, Hon. Ben Turtur Donnie and Project Manager T. Martin Somah, Sr. in the Banquet hall of the City Hall.

BACKGROUND

Since its accession in 1998 to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, Liberia has only been able to write its first National Report. In fact, Liberia is among countries that are yet to conclude their National Action Plan. This means much action is required to prepare the ground for the establishment of a functioning institutional framework for the implementation of the convention.

Information available on Liberia seems to suggest also that since the accession; only the National Focal Point and the National Coordinating Committee were put in place the same year. Another school of thought asserts that one possible reason for the inaction may have been due to the previous difficulty the GEF Council has to recognize land degradation as one of its areas. But with the adoption of land degradation as GEF focal area, and the approval of LDC (Least Developed Countries)-SIDS (Small Island Developing States) Portfolio project for Sustainable Land Management, paved the way for the approval of the first PDF (Preparatory Development Fund) under the convention for Liberia. The PDF process resulted into the development of a Medium-Size Project document in the tune of US\$ 960,000 which was proudly launched on Thursday 30, October, 2008.

With the approval and the commencement of the implementation of this project, Liberia may now move to complete key portions of its obligations under the UNCCD for contracting parties to do in order to internalize the operation of the convention into their national policies, laws, development policies and plans.

Prior to Liberia's accession to the UNCCD, there were national strategies to combat the effects of land degradation. Example, the 1953 Forestry Act ensured the establishment of national parks, reserves and the minimization of land degradation resulting from logging. Before the civil crisis, several training institutions dealt with land degradation issues. Some of them include Geology, Mining and Civil Engineering Departments, Science College, and College of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Liberia. Others include, the Road Maintenance Training Center operated by the Ministry of Public Work, the Central Agriculture Research Institute operated by the Ministry of Agriculture. Other government efforts to combat land degradation included several agriculture projects intended to improve soil conservation, and minimize land degradation associated with the traditional subsistence agriculture including the Lofa and Bong Counties Agriculture Development Projects, GZT sponsored agricultural and rural development projects in southeast Liberia, the AGRIMECO initiative among many others.

Liberia is now in transition with the development of a poverty reduction strategy as a basic development agenda from now until 2011, Land, forest resources are at the heart of Liberia's development requirement. The approval of LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project by the GEF Assembly now provides the opportunity under this project for the building of the requisite capacity for mainstreaming sustainable land management in the country's development agenda particularly the agricultural system.

The project is the best opportunity to address and strengthen institutional and human resource capacity to improve sustainable land management planning and implementation, thus enabling Liberia to strengthen policy, regulatory and economic incentive framework for the adoption of sustainable land management across sector ministries, agencies and institutions.

**WELCOME REMARKS
BEN TURTUR DONNIE
BSC FORESTRY, MSC FOREST MANAGEMENT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/ GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY OF LIBERIA**

ALL PROTOCOLS OBSERVED

I thank you for honoring our invitation to be at this workshop to join us launch a project that is expected to research the problems and advance solutions to one of the resources (land) that at the center of our age old conflict situation. The issue of land management which in the long run, if not properly handled could result in conflict a situation not the desire of anyone in here.

This project could not come at any better time than now; Liberia, many of you know acceded to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification on March 3, 1998 but our country is among several countries that yet to prepare National Action Plan for sustainable land management.

But before going into the nitty-gritty of that, let me tell you that Liberia has a land area of 37,000 square miles with only a population of 3.5 million. This mean each citizen can get as much acres of land without any problem. But our present land management system is as such that sustainable management is completely absent which has led to massive land degradation. How are we going to address that is what this project is about.

With the adoption of land degradation as a new GEF focal area, and the subsequent approval of the LDCs-SIDS (Least Developed Countries-Small Island Developing States) Portfolio Project by the GEF Assembly, makes Liberia eligible to access GEF funding under the UNDP-GEF LDC-SIDS portfolio project for capacity building and mainstreaming sustainable land management into development policies and plans.

One big problem that led to land degradation over the years fellow environmentalists, ladies and gentlemen, is the way our agriculture system has worked; I am particularly referring to the subsistence system of farming and the way rural people have been treated when it comes to land as a resource. Decision making on land has excluded these people which has not helped to ensure sustainable land management.

This project is intended to develop the appropriate framework for the sustainable management of land as a resource and the agricultural system so as to provide the opportunity to design a land policy that promote sustainable land management by way of developing a platform for a policy, regulation and economic incentive framework to facilitate wider sector adoption in order to drive home the need for sustainable resource management of which land is a key.

I take this time to thank the UNDP family for this project development and my dedicated staff who are working day and night to ensure the success of this project. I will like to also extend the Agency's appreciation for their level of cooperation during the project development process and the lastly, the United Nations Missions in Liberia for providing the secured and safe security environment without which it could have been impossible for my technicians to sit and work. I thank all of you who contributed to this realization. This project is very important because it will lead to the development of National Action Plan under the UNCCD without which our country can not access any assistance under the convention for sustainable land management. Thank you very much for coming and working along with us.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

T. MARTIN SOMAH, SR.

BSC FORESTRY

DIPLOMA-IGN.-WOOD TECHNOLOGY

POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA SAWMILLING

PROJECT MANAGER

While we have gathered here to the inception workshop entitled; "Mainstreaming and Capacity-Building for Sustainable Land management", we feel it is imperative that we reflect a little on the compelling reason why the project sustainable land management is necessary at this time in our country. Land degradation is worldwide in geographic extent and global in its environmental and socio-economic impacts.

The need to address the global problem of land degradation is increasingly urgent. It is a major cause and mechanism of global loss of productive land resources and contributes to loss of global biodiversity, loss of the earth's biomass, bio productivity, and climate change. It can also lead to economic instability and potential unrest in affected areas, put pressure on the economy and the stability of societies, and hinders the achievement of sustainable development.

In an effort to halt the worsening problem of land degradation, the Rio Summit known as the Earth Summit on Environment and Development, adopted the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) which aims to promote effective action through innovative local programs supportive of international partnership.

Background

Liberia signed the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) on March 3, 1998; we all know that land and forest resources- quality and quantity are at the heart of Liberia development requirement. With this project, the Government of Liberia will be able to strengthen its institutional and human resource capacity to improve sustainable land management planning and implementation.

ANTICIPATED NATIONAL BENEFITS

Fellow environmentalists, compatriots and members of the fourth estate, our country and us the citizens are expected to benefit from the implementation of this project in a much more practical way especially so when the project is been implemented at the time when the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) is also out for implementation. The project will enable Liberia to strengthen policy, regulatory and economic incentive framework.

You are aware that our economy is based primarily on agriculture (subsistence); the principal emphasis in term of benefit will be on how to enhance sustainability and productivity of the main economic/livelihood sector. Other specific national benefits will include but not limited:

- Reduce food insecurity
- Higher yield from agricultural production
- Improved livelihood for rural farmers/farm families
- Improved participatory governance system for land management

By the look of things ladies and gentlemen, the project will play a key role in integrating sustainable land management into our system of agricultural practices. By the time the project shall have ended, it will put us in a position to have developed a multi-sectoral framework to begin mainstreaming SLM (Sustainable Land Management) into the economic development of the country.

GLOBAL BENEFITS.

The Global benefits the project will offer, the principal one will be the development of sustainable agricultural system to enhance capacities for promoting and extending that system. Although the adoption of this improved system will not be widespread during the lifetime of this medium project but will result into specific benefits such as the following:

- Reduced deforestation and the conservation of forest ecosystems;
- Reduced emission of CO₂ to the atmosphere;
- Enhanced biodiversity conservation of forest areas.

STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVEMENT

Sector Ministries and agencies that will be involved include Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia, Forestry Development Authority, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Governance Reform Commission, and municipalities across the country.

Local Non-governmental Organizations that will be involved include: Pollution Control Association of Liberia, Safe My Future (SAMFU), Green Advocate, LIFE, Sustainable Development Institute etc. International NGOs include Conservation International, and

Fauna and Flora International. On the other hand, academic institutions participating in the project are the University of Liberia and Cuttington University.

I must also be quick to mention that the media's are one of the key partners during the implementation of this project. You are aware that the media critical role in national development is the dissemination of information to the wider population and getting feedback to policy makers from the people. We therefore consider the participation of the media as a critical component of our implementation strategy. I am overwhelmed with the huge presence of stakeholder representatives; I see it as a demonstration of your commitment to the implementation of this project. Please accept my appreciation for coming I thank you.

**MOSES MASSAH
BSC FORESTRY, MSC REGIONAL PLANNING
PROGRAMME MANAGER ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT UNIT
UNDP-LIBERIA**

On behalf of the country office of the UNDP, I extend thanks and appreciation to the Environmental Protection Agency for the launch of this very important project.

The history of this project started in 2004 when the present Director of the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia was then the head of the Energy and Environment Unit of the UNDP Liberia's Country Office. Today, we are in a Programme for the purpose of formally launching what "you initiated Mr. Director when you were with us; I am very happy that this is happening today".

This project is crucial to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals in Liberia and the Government of Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy, because, the project can be linked to the MDGs and PRS in so many ways. Key outputs expected at the end of the implementation of this sustainable land management project include:

1. Sustainable land management will be integrated into the agricultural production system of the country to ensure food security;
2. Knowledge system in support of sustainable agriculture system will be established;
3. Sustainable Land Management will be integrated into agricultural extension Programme of the country;
4. the project will lead to development of new farmer-centered participatory extension approaches.
5. Sustainable Land Management will be integrated into university curricula for agriculture;
6. Analysis to determine what is responsible for land degradation will be another key outcome of this project;
7. The project will also result into the development of National Action Plan for sustainable land management as required by the United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Desertification. This will enable our country to be one of the beneficiaries of number of different programmes under the convention.

Fellow citizens, stakeholder representatives, I want to say that UNDP is committed in advancing the process of achieving the MDGs and Liberia's PRS goals and stand ready to work with the EPA in all forms and shapes to ensure that. Please accept our congratulation for the launching of this vital project.

I thank you.

Other stakeholder representatives and institutions of higher learning delivered solidarity messages in behalf of their institutions to the occasion. In their separate messages, these institutions challenged the Agency and the Project Management Team to be exhaustive and intrusive in their research to find out the problems and advance proposals that will effectively address the problem associated with land degradation.

PAUL JALLAH
BSC AGRICULTURE, MSC AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION
DIRECTOR FOR EXTENSION
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE/RL

It gives me pleasure in my capacity as proxy for Deputy Minister Lwupo Kandakai to welcome all of you to this very important occasion. I would like to thank the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for providing the necessary funding for this project, the UNDP for agreeing to manage the project implementation and the Environmental Protection Agency for developing and executing this project.

Land as a resource, and its management in our country has been a subject of conflict and probably one of the main causes of our civil conflict. After a long period of conflict, we have come to the point to decide to manage our resources sustainably. This means that we need to consider how we can manage land as resource. We must take into account land use, farming system and the inhabitants majority of whom livelihood depend on tilling the soil.

To do these, ladies and gentlemen, require funds, mind and attitudes change. Remember Liberia still has the largest tract of rainforest in the West African Region, a natural sink for CO₂ gases. You can see by this means climatic stability in this region rests on our shoulders. This means fellow country men and ladies, managing our land sustainably meaning that our land policy must set the agenda for sustainable resource management.

I believe that is possible first when there is the proper policy which will come with the implementation of project like this and cooperation between and among sectoral ministries, agencies and institutions. Such will help us to consider what other people have at their disadvantage and what we have at our advantage.

Majority of the citizens depend on Land as resource for survival and as a resource. As a resource, there must be a clearly defined policy on its usage. The challenge to make this happen is what this project implementation has placed on the shoulders of stakeholders to set new standards to promote the sustainable use of land in our country.

I have the honor now therefore, that this unique project border on a key resource which has been a subject of bitter dispute between the people and the state, to officially launch it to research and find workable solutions to the problem of land management as a resource.

Thank you my country men and women for coming to be part of this historic making project launch..

CITY HALL DECLARATION

About 400 Liberians experts, professionals, ordinary people and international experts and stakeholder representatives met at the Banquet Hall of the Monrovia City Hall on October 30, 2008 to formally launch a GEF-UNDP funded sustainable Land Management project under the theme, “Building Capacity for Sustainable Land Management in Liberia. The project aims to develop a clear definition of land degradation and what influence it and alternative actions necessary to address land degradation and set new direction for land use and sustainable land management in Liberia.

The gathering agreed that Liberia does not have National Action Plan of sustainable land management as require under the UNCCD and that the project should result into the development of a National Action Plan.

The gathering also agreed that Sustainable land management is not integrated into the agricultural production system to ensure food security. To effectuate that, sustainable Land management should be integrated into university curricula for Agriculture and development of new farmer –centered participatory extension programmes.

The gathering called on the international community to lend technical and greater financial support to the project particularly to post project activities. The gathering further obliged civil society organizations particularly the mass media to disseminate information to the general population about the relevant of the project to the social-economic and cultural development of the country. Sectoral ministries and agencies were called upon to give their fullest cooperation and needed inputs into the project activities.

In Witness Whereof we have hereunto set our hands this 30 day of October, 2008 in the Monrovia City Hall.

With the passage of the resolution, the project was officially declared launched and lunch was hosted in honor of the participants by Hon. Ben Turtur Donnie, Executive Director of the Agency and the Project Manager, T. Martin Somah, Sr. The inception workshop was declared ended after a vote of thanks by the Project Accountant Gabriel B. F. Sherman, Sr.