

# COMMUNITY FORESTRY: AN EPITOME OF DECENTRALIZED FOREST GOVERNANCE IN LIBERIA



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# **Outline of Major Themes**

**Overview of Liberian Forest Management Strategy**

**Legal Framework for Decentralized Forest Management**

**Institutional Framework to Implement Community Forestry**

**Key Achievements**

**Community Forestry and Climate Change**

**Conclusions**

# **Overview of Current Liberian Forest Management Strategy**

**Fixing commercial logging targets without a sense of the expanse and nature (composition, structure) of the resource**

**Increasing outputs of logs without any thought of whether Liberia benefits at all**

**Practicing forestry exclusively on land government (says it) owns**

**Using strategies solely developed but untested by government functionaries (copying robust and credible forest management models that are at best misunderstood, at worst not understood at all locally)**

**Collecting fees for destructive logging (while paying lip service to concepts like sustained yield production and multiple use) that has resulted in the gradual erosion of the resource itself and is exerting dysgenic impact on the forest estate as a whole**

**Using members of direct forest dependent communities only as daily wage laborers and ignoring their right to benefit and their role in safeguarding the resource through the abundant resource management and use information stored in their language and knowledge systems**

**Establishing a “legal curtain” between people and forests, with policing the forest estate for the elite and timber merchants (with privileged access) as an abiding obsession.**

# **Legal Framework**

**The 1986 Constitution of Liberia (Article 7 provides for public participation in the protection and management of the environment and natural resources of Liberia)**

**The National Forest Reform Law of 2006(NFRL2006)(Assures sustainable management of the Republic's Forest Land, Conservation of the Republic's Forest Resources, protection of the Republic's Environment, and sustainable development of the Republic's economy, with the participation of and for the benefit of all Liberians**

**The Community Rights Law with respect to forest lands (CRL)(Supports communities' full engagement of the forests of Liberia by creating an enabling legal framework which includes implementing regulations promulgated in 2011,requires a management plan by community forest management bodies consistent with FDA guidelines and specifications**

# **Institutional Framework For and The Rebirth of Community Forestry**

## **The Forestry Development Authority (FDA)**

Monitors and evaluates community forestry management programs

Facilitates the resolution of conflicts upon the request of Authorized Forest Community

Assists in building the capacity of Authorized Forest Communities in sustainable forest management

Assists in securing financial and technical assistance for Forest Communities in support of their community forest management programs

**Revokes the authorized status of a community engaged in community forestry if it is established that the community is in a serious breach of the Forest Management Agreement signed between the community and the FDA**

# **Key Achievements**

**Heightened sense of social inclusion and representation**

**Demarcation of forest management areas( 5 in 2 counties totaling 20,004hectares)**

**Assessment and inventory of resource endowment of a given community forest area**

**Facilitation of preparation and implementation of community forest management plans**

# **Key Achievements cont'd**

**Gender sensitivity and equity in local resource management and governance**

**Clear understanding of livelihood strategies and existing resource management and use**

**Enhanced and clear understanding of land tenure and property rights issues on the community level**

**Trained community members, partner institutions in government and national NGOs in livelihoods that support forest management, community forestry, land and property rights issues, and the structuring of local institutions for better and improved resource governance**



# **Key Achievements cont'd**

**A trained cadre for improved forest management, forest protection and biodiversity conservation**

**Institutional restructuring and re-orientation (community, local government, national government, national NGOs)**

# **Community Forestry and Climate Change**

**Support for decentralized and participatory governance**

**Significant contribution to sustainable livelihoods and enterprises that are forest-based**

**Provision of equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms**

**Support for democratic processes such as fairness , and responsible and accountable leadership**

**Development and implementation of forest management plans**

**Encouragement of multi-stakeholder participation and engagement of the poorest in forest management**

# Conclusions

**Community forestry is a promising approach to participatory and decentralized resource management but is quite new in Liberia**

**This approach to forest management is accepted at the policy level but this does not translate into improved realities, not only because it is new but also because of the fear to let go of over-centralized power**

**Forestry governance reforms that recognized the rights of communities are a key to the goal of sustainable forest management**

**Institutional restructuring and re-orientation are important requisites for success**

**Clear understanding of the community and its customary rights to forest land is vital to reduce potential conflict and to inform community forestry initiatives**

**Multi-stakeholders involvement made possible by decentralized management has the strong potential to address climate change mechanisms such as REDD**

# Thank You!!!

