

Background

The FFI/ Darwin Initiative Project aims to reduce threats to biodiversity in the Nimba Mountains, by seeking a united view of the biodiversity governance required for sustainable development, sustainable livelihoods and conservation of biodiversity.

The main output is intended to be a Collaborative Management Plan (CMP) endorsed by stakeholders in Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Liberia and based on agreed principles and objectives.

The project has three main "pillars":

1. Sharing of data, information and experience to support effective collaboration.
2. Stakeholder inclusion – understanding who to involve and how to work with them.
3. Governance - developing an approach/common plan that can be endorsed by the 3 participating countries.

Implementation mechanisms include:

1. Data Sharing
 - Compiling information and data generated by existing initiatives and projects (a Nimba Atlas).
2. Stakeholder inclusion
 - Developing stakeholder networks, including representatives from *inter alia* ministries, mining companies, local and international NGOs and the communities concerned.
 - Creating a 'safe space' in which stakeholders feel able to discuss potentially conflicting objectives and reach agreement concerning priorities, possibly through thematic working groups.
 - A participatory Strategic Environmental Assessment to provide understanding of management objectives against a background of cumulative threats and pressures;
 - Capacity building and technical underpinning: technical inputs in terms of data organisation and management and the development of effective participative approaches to SEA. Assistance in developing practical and regulatory EIA capacity.
3. Governance
 - Reviewing previous trans-boundary initiatives and their effectiveness to identify suitable governance models for this initiative including earlier tri-national initiatives focusing on the Nimba Mountains; the Mano River Initiative (which makes some provision for dealing with environmental resources and may offer opportunities to 'host' this Nimba Region initiative); and other trans-boundary initiatives between Liberia and Sierra Leone and Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire – developing collaboration on environmental management at a bilateral level, and providing forums which may facilitate or assist with the management of Nimba Mountains.

Meeting objectives

The meeting focused on project tasks and responsibilities and the proposed workplan.

The objectives were to:

- a) provide an opportunity for FFI staff from the UK and Liberia to meet and participate in a field visit to Liberian Nimba, and to gain a better understanding of issues to be addressed;
- b) confirm roles and responsibilities of project team members;
- c) review the study area and confirm the initiative's area of interest and influence;
- d) review previous stakeholder engagement initiatives as a basis for identification of suitable mechanisms for stakeholder involvement;
- d) review the project route map and the main activities and outputs given the lower level of funding than that initially envisaged and the tight time frame.

Agenda

The meeting was conducted over two days and included a field visit to previous and proposed mine sites.

Items on the agenda were as follows:

Presentation/ Discussion	Made/ facilitated by:
Outline of meeting, meeting purpose, brief overview of project objectives and activities	Jo Treweek
Issues to address in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire	Abou Cisse and Gondo Gbanyangbe
Stakeholder engagement and community involvement. Activities carried out to date, and possible approaches going forward	Vaanii Kiazolu II and Adam Manvell
Managing threats, pressures and multiple stakeholder interests: discussion	Facilitator Kerry Young
Proposed approach to SEA and overview of the Atlas. Discussion about management objectives	Ruth Golombok
Study area: discussion	Facilitator Jo Treweek
Mechanisms for governance: discussion session	Facilitator Kerry Young
Commitments and objectives under the Darwin Initiative - process and activities to move the project to the next stages - how the objectives will be realised, and any alterations necessary to ensure realisable and sustainable results	Pippa Howard
Working group discussions concerning possible commercial, community and conservation objectives	
Closing Discussion	
Other relevant initiatives	
Introduction to NORAD's REDD Initiative	Dr Nouhou Ndam
STEWARDS project	Jordan Kimball
ARD's LCRFP	

Participants

Jo Treweek	FFI
Pippa Howard	FFI
Chloe Hodgkinson	FFI
Nouhou Ndam	FFI
James Kpadehyea	FDA

Darwin Nimba Project

Liberia | Guinea | Ivory Coast
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Project meeting Yekepa

22-23 January 2010

notes and actions

Gondo Gbanyangbe	FFI/ Guinea
Abou Cisse	CEGENS
Kerry Young	Independent/ FFI
John Howell	AML
Alvin Poure	AML
Vaanii Kiazolu II	AML
Ruth Golombok	Atkins
Adam Manvell	Independent/ FFI
Joel Gamys	CI
Borwen Sayon	CI
Roger Luke	ENNR
Jordan Kimball	STEWARD/ USAID
Amigos Morie	LRCFP/ ARD



Key conclusions and issues arising

1. There have been some changes since the proposal was submitted to the Darwin Initiative which may make it necessary to re-frame some project deliverables and revise expectations. In particular the project has lower funding than originally planned. The most effective way forward for the project is to build on previous tri-national initiatives and the work already carried out by CEGENS and companies working in the area, recognising that there is a need to build capacity within the region to implement management plans for the conservation of biodiversity.
2. There is an opportunity to assist or participate in updating and then “actualising” the 1990 management plan for the World Heritage Area. It will be necessary to consider how the Nimba Darwin Collaborative Management Plan might be aligned with this.
3. There is an opportunity to explore possible synergies between several existing initiatives which relate to sustainable management.
4. Community involvement is essential, but it will be challenging to facilitate because of the multiple levels of engagement required and the diversity of interests and views.
5. The project’s area of interest and influence should extend beyond the WHA boundary on the Guinean side and should capture areas within which land use changes can be expected to have a significant influence on conservation within the Nimba Massif.

There was recognition of the **need to build capacity within the region to implement management plans for the conservation of biodiversity, in particular the need for a counterpart to CEGENS in Liberia and in Cote d’Ivoire.**

It was agreed that **moving forward requires common agreement on**

- **objectives, with a clear statement of intent within a given time frame** and an agreed process for review and the scope of activities to be undertaken. This would lead to the development of a joint agreement or memorandum (a Nimba Protocol?) that stakeholders in all three countries could endorse and commit to implementing.
- **the governance, accountability and type of structure (a Nimba Stewardship Council?) to be put in place to take things forward**, to oversee the objectives and implementation of the CMP. For effective management the structure would need a manageable number of parties or participants, so the need to ensure equitable representation is important.
- It was recognised that **there is a need to try to find funding to help resource such a structure and that an overarching role for an international organisation would enhance objectivity and perpetuity of the structure and agreement.** USAID via the STEWARD programme or Mano River Union Initiative may be able to provide some resources for workshops. The possibility of a Nimba Initiative fitting within the MRUI as a regional programme could be looked at, alongside the possibility of funding from any international organisation.

Summaries of presentations and discussions

Summaries of presentations and discussions are given below. Copies of presentations can be found on the project website.

Outline of meeting, meeting purpose, brief overview of project objectives and activities: Jo Treweek.

Jo Treweek outlined the main goal of the Darwin Initiative project (to improve management to preserve biodiversity in the Nimba area) and the aim of the workshop (to develop collaboration and reach consensus on how to proceed with a Collaborative Management Plan for endorsement by a variety of stakeholders in all three countries).

There have been some changes since the proposal was submitted to the Darwin Initiative which may make it necessary to re-frame some project deliverables and revise expectations. In particular the project has lower funding than originally planned. This is due to reduced funding from private sector partners; global recession which has impacted on private sector development projects and the political instability in Guinea, which has stalled mine development. The most effective way forward for the project is to build on previous tri-national initiatives and the work already carried out by CEGENS and companies working in the area, recognising that there is a need to build capacity within the region to implement management plans for the conservation of biodiversity.

Issues to address in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire: Monsieur Cisse (CEGENS) and Gondo Gbanyangbe

Monsieur Abou Cisse introduced the work of CEGENS, the Guinean body responsible for all issues concerning the Nimba and Simandou mountains, and outlined key issues affecting management of Guinean Nimba. Parts of the Nimba mountains in Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire were designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1981, excluding a mining concession for which land in Bossou and the Dere forest was given protected status as compensation. UNESCO recognition led to the creation of CEGENS, whose scope of work is determined by a Board of Directors which includes government institutions, mining companies and NGOs. It works closely with FFI in Guinea to implement management plans.

In 1990, a management plan was developed for the World Heritage Area, but has not yet been put into operation. In 1992 the World Heritage Site was recognised as being under threat. The UNESCO Committee has requested Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire to have a common statement for the site. A bilateral statement with Cote d'Ivoire regarding the management of Nimba is due to be ratified this year, with facilitation from UNESCO (this could serve as a useful foundation for an agreement to manage a wider Nimba area including that part of the study area in Liberia). Technicians from both countries have developed a common statement which is due to be reviewed and hopefully validated by stakeholders at a workshop in March 2010. FFI (Guinea) are supporting CEGENS in this. The issue is followed by the National Office of Protected Areas within the Ministry of Environment & Forests in Cote d'Ivoire.

M Cisse identified the following strategic issues as being of particular importance for Guinea:

- the need for the governments to be brought together to ensure tripartite management of the Nimba area;
- updating and "actualisation" of management plans; and

- reviewing options for trans-boundary forest management in the Dere Forest.

CEGENS suffers from capacity limitations to meet these challenges including: insufficient funding, insufficient trained staff, technical equipment problems, the knock-on effects of war in Liberia, trans-boundary population movement, insufficient baseline data and other commercial forest activity. There is no infrastructure in Nimba to support the projects or for staff involved in park management.

At this juncture, consideration should be given to how to restart the tripartite meetings from 2000 and how to establish operational forest management plans (the 1995 Biosphere Reserve Management Plan was for Guinea only. A plan was prepared for Cote d'Ivoire around the same time by CI/ Birdlife International (Jamieson Suter, pers. Comm.) but these have not been updated and should be aligned).

With regard to the situation in Cote d'Ivoire, there is no institutional responsibility specifically for Nimba, there is a need for resources, redeployment of personnel, a presence near the site and a management plan for the site.

In conclusion, CEGENS was very supportive of the need for a conservation project to ensure joint management of the Nimba area and for a long-term, sustainable mechanism to be put in place, such as an international foundation/body which could oversee funding and activities that will be implemented at a national level in all three countries, validating decisions made. An important first step would be to set up a Liberian body to complement the role of CEGENS, such as a Nimba section within the FDA, and to build and support the capacity of all the institutions undertaking management of biodiversity in the Nimba area. Another recommendation was to have an agreement between the three countries to protect Nimba. Finally, just as UNESCO recognised that the trans-boundary nature of the site between Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire required an international approach, M Cisse felt that an agreement between the three countries would also be best overseen at an international level, for example by an independent international foundation.

Stakeholder engagement and Community Issues: Vaanii Kiazolu II

Vaanii Kiazolu II outlined the AML CSR programme and on-going activities in the area. AML places great emphasis on community engagement and has initiated many community-based initiatives in Yekepa and the surrounding area.

Opportunities and Challenges for Tri-national community engagement:

Adam Manvell

A review of possible approaches for identifying suitable mechanisms for community engagement, including how to identify which communities should be involved and why, while recognising the inherent challenges, in particular:

- The need to consider communities dependent on the forest/products, not just those abutting the area;
- The fact that communities have suffered from disenfranchisement historically, including the colonial creation of nature reserves without local consultation and the displacement of population by LAMCO;
- The tendency to oversimplify community definition and representation given the complexities of social organisation, resource access and dependence, their dynamics, diversity and linkages/networking.

To work towards reconciliation requires improved sociological awareness of communities; a move from prescription to contextual understanding; the setting and promotion of realistic social objectives and a move beyond token participation into something participatory and meaningful. There is a need to look at what works and the “Platform” could be used to share information and experience in areas such as alternative sustainable livelihoods; agro-biodiversity; agro-forestry, and a combination of agro-biodiversity with conservation of biodiversity concerns. Partnerships need to be developed with experienced and proven development organisations and experience of what works or doesn’t should be shared.

Key challenges going forward include:

- language, literacy and education levels;
- skills, both communication and technical;
- the administrative challenges given different ways of working
- the legacy of what has happened in this area in the past; and
- the differing agendas of those involved.

To be successful engagement will need to build on existing mechanisms available within the region and specifically within the Nimba area, with a focus on clear goals, using the Collaborative Management Plan (CMP) as a vehicle.

Proposed approach to the SEA and overview of the Nimba Resource Atlas: Ruth Golombok

Ruth Golombok introduced how the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is being used in the Darwin project, what challenges need to be addressed and what data would be needed to ensure a robust SEA. The SEA aims to help ensure a collaborative process towards objective setting as a basis for the CMP.

The SEA process enables planning for achievement of multiple objectives and provides a consistent framework for gathering the supporting information required. It influences the way projects are designed within a strategic framework and should give equal weight to social, environmental and economic factors. The SEA sits high up in the decision-making arena and is intended to capture important strategic decision making processes and requirements early in the decision making process and within the scope of a wider landscape. It also provides an opportunity to consider cumulative impacts.

Using an SEA in Nimba should enable development of an integrated solution that will be required for meeting Commercial, Community, and Conservation (CCC) aspirations across the countries concerned. It will give the Commercial interests certainty concerning policy and legal requirements and cost and risk management. It will support inter-sectoral collaboration and allow Communities to have their rights taken into account.

Challenges include the need for inclusive participation (who, when, how?); the need for data for all areas; the need to reach consensus on the objectives and the need for realistic timeframes to ensure pragmatic achievement of goals and objectives.

Ruth Golombok outlined the preparation of the **Nimba Resource Atlas** - a GIS based atlas of biophysical data for use by all stakeholders, which will act as a living database for use across the project and can be augmented as required or possible. Having outlined the sources of information for Liberia and Guinea it was agreed that a letter should be written to

the Ministry for Environment in Cote d'Ivoire to ask for access to country data to use in the Atlas. Contact will be maintained with John Howell for information that will be produced from the Wild Chimp Foundation.

Discussion

Defining the boundaries for the Darwin Initiative Nimba project: Jo Trewick

The workshop discussed how to define the physical boundaries for the project, looking at the rationale for any decision (geology, habitat, corporate interests?) and the possibility of a transition/buffer zone to be included due to threats and pressures from damaging land-use. By the end of the 2-day workshop there was a general consensus to include the length of the Nimba Range and outlying hills, extending to include West Nimba, all AML concessions and the area down to Kitoma in Liberia. From the Guinean side it was felt important to include the Dere Forest and Bossou as they are key compensation areas following from the mining concessions and World Heritage Site commitments.

Challenges of managing multiple stakeholder interests: Kerry Young

This discussion session looked at how to manage the interests of multiple stakeholders, the need to reach a common agreement on action for the Nimba area and the process that might be required to establish an over-arching body which will ensure decisions for Nimba are respected and oversee the implantation of the CMP.

To form effective relationships there have to be clear reasons to work together such as: common purpose: exchange of information, experience and expertise; a need to maximise the use of limited resources; or recognition that the shared influence of a wider stakeholder group will achieve more than individual action. Any common body or structure looking at the Nimba area will need to have equity to give mutual respect, transparency to give trust and mutual benefit to give sustainability.

Moving forward with the project requires common agreement on:

- objectives, with a clear statement of intent within a given time frame and an agreed process for review;
- the scope of activities, area, type of activities, focus, realistic etc.;
- the development of a joint agreement or memorandum that all three countries and stakeholders could endorse and commit to implementing (a Nimba Protocol?);
- the governance and accountability of the structure put in place to take things forward, to oversee the objectives and implementation of the CMP; and
- what the operating structure will look like (e.g. a stewardship council?). Additional operational structures such as working groups and a secretariat would require additional resources currently unavailable. An overarching role for an international organisation would enhance objectivity and perpetuity of the structure and agreement.

The structure will need to have strong governance based on agreed ground rules and accountability, and articulation of the basis and competency for the formulation of policy, objectives and recommendations proposed. Working together highlights the difference and

vested interests of various stakeholders, and there is a need to acknowledge the different contexts of origin and motivation for this initiative, including the political situation and culture, and the relative power, needs, tools, responsibilities, contribution and resources of stakeholders involved. There is need for a “safe place” to voice issues concerning the trans-boundary Nimba area and for action to be agreed. Potential conflict will need to be addressed for the agreement to work.

The move from exchange of information to jointly agreed action, via the SEA, is dependent on a common agreement by multiple stakeholders to be overseen by a common body. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a counterpart to CEGENS within Liberia and Cote d’Ivoire, and how local communities will be best represented within a tri-national structure - could NGOs play a role, would regional representation across the countries be possible? It is important for all stakeholders to maintain trust in the system and process and for their interests to be maintained and represented.

One way to work together could be by an “open” method of coordination. This is a flexible, decentralised approach which respects national competence. A common set of objectives and high level goals would be agreed, along with common indicators on how progress towards the goals would be measured and monitored. National strategies for action to meet common objectives could be shared, with joint evaluation and feedback on implementation to share what works, learning from one another to give positive interaction.

In the discussion it was recognised that there is a need to have a means, framework or body to ensure that momentum keeps growing, but a challenge to ensure representation and perpetuity given time and resource restraints. The inclusive and fluid stakeholder involvement in the Nimba Initiative would need to be reduced to representation at the level of a tri-national structure to ensure manageability and there is some urgency to demonstrate that things are happening. Given that AML will be mining in 18 months time, forests are under threat and biodiversity is continually reducing, it was suggested that it may be most effective to get something up and running, with a limited number of key stakeholders. Further representation, participation and input could be developed more fully as time allows. There are many pressures on the mining companies to develop compensation measures. For example, AML is offsetting their development in ways that are not necessarily visible, and it is critical that biodiversity is addressed immediately, with relevance and not reduced in importance or diluted.

Working Groups: Setting objectives for the Nimba Collaborative Management Plan

Three working groups engaged in preliminary discussion concerning potential objectives that the Collaborative Management Plan should deliver from Commercial, Community and Conservation perspectives. These represent the views of those present at the meeting and should not be considered definitive or final. The three groups identified 5 objectives and reported back on these at the end of the session.

Commercial

1. Strategic land-use planning to earmark land for specific uses – prioritisation of land-uses within certain areas (mining, agriculture, conservation) would make commercial planning more straightforward:

- a. try to design a clear understanding of how commercial interests can work in harmony with conservation interests
 - b. resource use can be undertaken without compromise to the surrounding area or other land-uses
2. Inter-regional collaboration for strategic development.
 3. Alignment of national policies and strategies with commercial strategies, particularly with respect to development and conservation activities, including:
 - a. clarification of policy frameworks dictating commercial interests within a framework of multiple land-users;
 - b. alignment with activities of INGOs (e.g. REDD, carbon etc.); and
 - c. government to sign up to REDD+ to enable “stacking” of carbon and biodiversity credits.
 4. Responsible government behaviour with respect to commercial agreements and contracts/licenses to operate (e.g. Rio Tinto in Simandou) – enables security and responsible development in timeframes required for development of huge infrastructure and mining developments:
 - a. government policy should support good commercial enterprise (disincentives, taxes, recognition for CSR activity);
 - b. level playing field for commercial operators ;
 - c. clarity on the boundaries of the concessions;
 - d. companies abide by IFC principles/ apply IFC Performance Standard 6;
 - e. companies operating in Nimba sign up to the EITI (extractive industries transparency initiative);
 - f. permitting and consent processes need to be clear, strong, transparent and abided by; and
 - g. improved capacity is required within government to deal with EIA process; and
 - h. enabling and strengthening communities to play a role in the region and engender socio-political stability.
 5. Good infrastructure development – roads, rail, power, water etc.
 - a. Local to port
 - b. International

Community

All of the Community objectives recognised two major problems: an underlying need for further data collection, and the difficulty in identifying the issues of the communities concerned and the groups working with them.

Potential objectives:

1. Better understanding of the links between ecosystem services, the livelihoods and biodiversity of Nimba.
2. Standards of living to be improved or maintained – with particular consideration given to the poorest and marginalised/vulnerable groups.
3. Continued sustainable use of forest resources for the community eg non-timber products and timber.
4. Mapping and maintaining sites or areas of cultural value.
5. Maintaining or improving agricultural productivity – including consideration of intensification, diversity, productivity and alternative technologies or practice.

There was recognition that it is difficult to address these objectives without conflict, and there may be a need for “peace-keeping” to deal with competing pressures. In addition the majority of the community are not really aware of the full implications of the impact of mining and development operations in the region.

Conservation

Protection of Nimba is the over-riding objective from the Conservation perspective.

1. Institutional dialogue between the three countries to ensure conservation of biodiversity – to establish a common conservation programme for Nimba, to set priorities: eg
 - a. hold a meeting or series of meetings to establish an international foundation for the protection of Nimba.
2. Maintain the ecological integrity of the area – prepare inventory of data, looking at both quality of information and quantification of what exists. Need for a tri-national monitoring team to ensure the integration of biodiversity data and priorities.
3. Build the capacity of the people responsible, including skills, technical training, equipment and finances. Train the people involved, making sure that the people understand the complexity of the issues
4. Establish a very good information system (GIS and other) to help develop an awareness raising/education programme to both share and bring in information from the communities. Need to harmonise data. Also an important tool for use in decision making by the authorities
5. Need to help support alternative livelihoods projects for adjacent communities to share experience and consider what has been a success elsewhere and where improvements are needed.

There was recognition of the need for a common international agreement which would stand separately from the national forestry laws of individual countries to ensure the protection of Nimba. This could be a MOU between the countries, or perhaps local bi-laws that are agreed between the provinces.

Other relevant or related initiatives

The REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) project - Dr Nouhou Ndam

Dr Ndam presented an overview of the REDD project FFI are running in Liberia, with support from NORAD. This is part of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD Programme) which is a collaboration between FAO, UNDP and UNEP.

The key objectives of the project in Liberia are to:

- test pro-poor approaches to REDD through on the ground activities;
- build capacity to understand and develop REDD concepts;
- enable civil society to engage in REDD governance mechanisms through regulation and consensus building; and
- share and disseminate REDD best practice.

If the project can help look at the development of alternative livelihoods this could help reduce pressure in the Nimba area.

The Land Rights Community Forestry Programme: Amigos Morie

Amigos Morie introduced the Land Rights Community Forestry Programme, a two year project managed by ARD covering:

- development of a legal and policy framework;
- land tenure and property rights/land disputes; and
- economic opportunities for community-based livelihood development.

The programme works with the FDA to empower communities to engage in community-based sustainable management of the forests. There are 2 pilot projects in Nimba which aim to build better working relations between communities and the FDA, look at demarcation and land use management of the East Nimba Nature Reserve and help in capacity-building.

The STEWARD programme: Jordan Kimball

Jordan Kimball from the USAID-funded STEWARD Initiative (Sustainable, Thriving Environments for West African Regional Development) presented an overview of the workplan and activities funded under the Initiative. He also provided an overview of the Mano River Union Initiative (MRUI). He hoped to be able to help support future workshops for the Darwin Initiative Nimba project, or to hold a day on the project at the next meeting of the Mano River Union Initiative. In the longer-term setting up a Nimba regional sub-group of the MRUI could be considered if resources were available.