

Land Grabbing and Land Reform Diamonds, Rubber and Forests in the New Liberia

"In Liberia, there is an immense territory rich with resources. Notwithstanding this, there are no improved or advanced methods of agriculture; the soil is scarcely stirred; there are no carts, wagon or other wheeled vehicles, no railroads; the mineral wealth remain almost untouched; and I am told on good authority that, in spite of all this wealth right at the very door steps of these people, even school teachers and ministers wear clothing manufactured in the United States or Europe, and eat canned goods that come from Chicago or Germany."

– Booker T. Washington, *The Negro in the South: His Economic Progress in Relation to his Moral and Religious Development*, 1907

"Liberian politics were like a crap game played with loaded dice. There was a kind of unwritten law that the President could take two terms of office and then he had to let another man in to pick the spoils."

– Graham Greene, *Journey Without Maps*, 1936

"The war was a good thing. The way the government was always cheating. We had to fight that war."

– Liberian diamond miner, Bomi County, 2007

About this report

This report is a joint publication of Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) and the Association of Environmental Lawyers of Liberia (Green Advocates). PAC has been a leader in the campaign to end conflict diamonds, in part by participating in the creation of the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme for rough diamonds. Green Advocates is Liberia's first and only public interest environmental law organization. A non-profit NGO, it is dedicated to protecting the environment, advancing human rights protection and advocacy through sound environmental practices, and giving voice to rural, indigenous, and tribal people. The paper was researched and written by Shawn Blore. The author, Partnership Africa Canada and Green Advocates would like to thank the many people who helped to make the report possible, especially Francis Colee of Green Advocates, who conducted extensive background research and analysis on natural resources extraction and revenue tracking. Numerous government officials provided generously of their time. They include: Joseph Neufville of the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission, Dr. Amos Sawyer and Wollor E. Topor, both of the Governance Reform Commission; John T. Woods, Charles K. Miller, Lawrence Y. Greene and Alfred Kotio of the Forest Development Authority; A. Kpandel Fayia, Gesler E. Murray, Jerome P. Wotorson, and Lawrence D. Shepherd of the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy. At the UN, thanks go to Andrea Tamagnini, Zainab Hawa Bungura and Joseph Sam Sesay of UNMIL, Arthur G. Blundell of the UN Panel of Experts, and Steve Ursino and Luigi Tessiere of UNDP. In Liberian civil society, thanks go to Ezekial Pajibo of CEDE, and a special thanks to Momo A. Binda of the Gold and Diamond Miners and Workers Union of Liberia.

Any errors or omissions are the responsibility of the author and the publishers of the study.

Introduction

Liberia's Natural Resources: A Blessing and a Curse.

Liberia is a country blessed with natural resources. Its natural endowments include diamonds, gold and iron ore, extensive stands of tropical timber, abundant water and cropland, and a climate and soil conditions conducive to the cultivation of cash crops such as rubber, cocoa and coffee. Thanks to very recent discoveries, Liberia can even boast oil and gas reserves, of undetermined but potentially sizeable proportions.

And yet despite this vast storehouse of natural wealth – or because of it – Liberia remains one of the poorest and least developed places on earth, with per capita GDP income of US\$152 (2004), 40% of the adult population illiterate, and life expectancy at birth of under 40 years.

Liberia, arguably more than anywhere in the world, is a darkly resplendent example of the resource curse, the phenomenon by which countries blessed with natural resources grow more slowly, stay poorer and offer less to their people than their comparatively resource poor neighbours.

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The mechanisms driving this counterintuitive situation include the volatility of revenues from the natural resource sector, currency appreciation that renders non-resource sectors uncompetitive, and the political corruption that often results from the continuous inflow of windfall resource sector revenue. All of these conditions – especially corruption – are or were present in Liberia, and all contributed in greater or lesser measure to its impoverishment. But to all these can be added one other, greater than the rest: war. This too was arguably a result of the very richness of the country.

Widespread public anger at the mismanagement of the country's natural resources was one of the proximate causes of the Liberian civil war. In the capital, an economic and political elite, many though not all of American descent, grew wealthy from resource contracts, or by

appropriating in a variety of questionable ways the funds derived from resource royalties. In the Liberian hinterlands, the broad mass of people saw resources vanish, with no roads, schools, or health care clinics coming back in return. The elites and the governing structures they erected came to be seen as illegitimate, engendering first resentment, and in time hatred. The support given by rural youth to several of the militia groups early in the civil war is testimony to this fact.

While the corrupt appropriation of natural resource wealth helped engender the civil war, the sheer richness of Liberia's natural treasures served to prolong it. Diamonds and especially timber provided Liberia's various warlording factions with the hard currency for continued weapons purchases, providing the means to sustain their control over these resource-rich areas, and a reason to continue fighting.

The fighting, which began in 1989, ceased only in 2003, with the departure of Charles Taylor and the arrival of UN forces. The peace, however, remains fragile, threatened by ethnic divisions, generational and gender strife and, most importantly, the unresolved issue of who will exploit, and who will benefit from Liberia's natural resources.

The election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as President of Liberia has provided a brief window of opportunity, during which reform of Liberia's natural resource sector can be undertaken. Given the clear link between natural resources and conflict, the importance of these reforms cannot be underestimated.

But just as the importance of reform should not be underestimated, neither should the challenge facing the president, nor the power of the opposition arrayed against her. For the country's elite, the civil war was a tragic aberration, a nightmare best forgotten. Well-represented in the Liberian congress, and installed in many of the key posts in Liberia's civil service, many in the Liberian elite see the return of peace as simply a chance to return to business as usual, an opportunity to re-create the Liberia they and they forebears knew, and exploited, for more than a century.

Resource Sector Reform

In its first year in office, the administration of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf made significant progress in reforming Liberia's resource-based and other industries. A key executive agency, the Public Procurement and Contracts

Commission (PPCC), reviewed 95 of the 98 contracts signed by the 2003-2006 National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL).¹ Of these, the PPCC recommended approving 52 contracts unchanged, cancelling 27 outright, and renegotiating 16 contracts, including those for Mittal Steel, Firestone rubber, and a further eight contracts involving Liberia's nascent oil industry.²

In the forestry sector, the Forest Concession Review Committee examined all of the numerous outstanding concessions and claims to Liberian public forest lands, and determined that not one conformed to Liberian law. Accordingly, on February 6, 2006 as one of her first acts in office (Executive Order #1) President Johnson-Sirleaf declared void each and every one of the numerous "concession agreements", "management contracts", "non-concession operator permits", "forest management utilization contracts", and "salvage permits".

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In this manner, the new administration has attempted to create what is in effect a *tabula rasa*, a clear playing field upon which to effect the reform of Liberia's resource sector.

That first step taken, however, there has been no follow up attempt to analyze the role the resource sector has played in Liberia's past economic development, or to plan how a reformed resource sector could best be made to serve Liberia's needs in the future. This is despite repeated calls by civil society organizations and local communities in natural resources-endowed areas about the need for a national conference or dialogue on the future of Liberia's natural resources. Instead, individual ministries have been left on their own to attempt the reform of their own particular commodity.

The result has been a scattershot approach. Different ministries and agencies have taken a wide variety of approaches to issues such as compensation to local communities, and the involvement of civil society in the oversight of natural resource exploitation.



Liberia's Forest Development Authority (FDA), in partnership with the international community and Liberian and international NGOs, is attempting a forest sector reform that will significantly empower local communities, both by channelling a significant share of royalties from commercial forestry into the hands of community development councils, and by placing large tracts of public forest land under local community control. The FDA has actively involved civil society in the development of this new system, and has further granted civil society a significant role in the oversight of community forestry and local community councils. That said, it should be noted that the mechanisms for local control and authority have yet to be formulated.

The Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, by way of contrast, has changed almost nothing in the way diamonds are exploited. It has done nothing to channel the proceeds of diamond exploitation back to local communities, and has steadfastly resisted any significant involvement by civil society in the reform process.

The shape of things to come in the rubber sector is yet to be seen, as the Agriculture Ministry has only just begun negotiations with the largest plantation, Firestone, to restructure a long-term concession agreement signed by the Interim Government. Reform of remaining plantations

¹ The three un-reviewed contracts related to telecommunications.

² The Mittal Steel renegotiations have been completed. Negotiations with Firestone are ongoing, with pro-bono assistance from legal experts at Harvard Law School.

has to some extent taken second priority to the basic task of removing ex-combatants from control of two of the country's largest plantations, Guthrie and Sinoe. That task is well underway in Guthrie, but has yet to begin in Sinoe.

One commonality to all three sectors has been an understandable, if regrettable, haste. With the Liberian economy at a standstill, and unemployment near 85%, the government wants to get resource industries up and running as soon as possible, and to put a restive post-war population to work. In the short term this makes sense from both an economic and security perspective. There is unanimity among Liberians, government officials and the international donor community that jobs will bring about stability, but this was the scenario of pre-war Liberia. Then, as now, the legal and physical infrastructure for solid, long-term investment was lacking.

The pre-war *status quo*, therefore, is hardly a goal worth aspiring to. The inequalities and lack of development inherent in the old systems were in no small measure responsible for Liberia's decade and more of instability and war. In the longer term, slower but more thoroughgoing reform of the resource sector will likely yield better results for both the economy and the security of the country.

Liberian officials, aid agencies and foreign lending institutions should thus pause to consider whether now, with everything up in the air and anything potentially possible, is not the most opportune time to undertake thoroughgoing reforms in the Liberian resource sector. The impediments to change, and the cost of failure, will only grow as time goes on.

The sections that follow examine the timber, diamond and rubber sectors, analysing the current process of reform with a view to suggesting ways in which the processes might conceivably be improved.

Diamonds

History

When the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on the export of rough diamonds from Liberia in 2001, it did so in the knowledge that diamonds were being used to keep the murderous regime of Charles Taylor in power, and to finance destabilizing incursions into Sierra Leone. The sanctions would be lifted only when Liberia could show significant progress towards compliance with the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), which has governed all international rough diamond transactions since 2003.

In the years since the sanctions were imposed, continued monitoring by a UN Panel of Experts and local civil society organizations, and periodic inspections by the Kimberley Process, were largely successful in bringing an end to medium and large scale mechanized mining in Liberia. The end of hostilities in Sierra Leone, meanwhile, and the resumption of legitimate exports from Freetown, seem largely to have ended cross-border smuggling of Sierra Leonean diamonds.



Paris Diamond Mining Camp, Sinoe County



Diamond mining site in Sinoe County

Small scale alluvial mining continued in Liberia under the sanctions regime, at times disguised, other times in plain sight. In Sinoe County, miners at the BOPC site mined and sold diamonds openly, with little or no fear of government interference. Alluvial miners in more accessible parts of the country such as Lofa and Nimba counties also continued to mine for diamonds, making use of the cover of class C (artisanal) gold mining licenses. Diamonds and gold often occur together in Liberia, so the pursuit of gold provided a convenient cover, even when it was clear from the equipment being used that the main target of the operation was diamonds. Inspectors from the Ministry of Lands and Mines seemed to turn a blind eye to such activity.

The sale of rough diamonds does fall under government scrutiny, with the result that – at least in Lofa and Nimba counties – the rough diamond trade went underground during the sanctions period. Diamonds mined in these counties still travelled to Monrovia, where the usual collection of exporters shipped them out to overseas markets, or held onto them until the sanctions might be removed. With the end of sanctions, the hope is that most of these diamonds will re-surface and will be exported legally with Kimberley Process certificates attesting to their origin.

How many diamonds will surface is an open question. The lack of accurate statistics makes estimating the size of Liberia's diamond sector an exercise in guesswork. Data from the 1980s – the last decade before war broke out and before statistics-gathering broke down – show annual exports of 200,000 – 300,000 carats per year, worth approximately US\$20 million to US\$30 million. About half of these diamonds are thought to have been smuggled in from Sierra Leone and other parts of West Africa.

A best guesstimate then, following sanctions, and assuming that most of Liberia's diamond production comes out into the open, is that the diamond sector is likely to pro-

duce on the order of \$10 million to \$15 million worth of rough diamonds each year. The export tax has been set at a rate commensurate with those of neighbouring countries to discourage smuggling, particularly from Sierra Leone. Combined with permit fees and assorted other levies, total government revenues from the diamond sector are likely to come in at around \$500,000 to \$750,000. This will be enough to cover the costs of regulating and administering the sector, but not much more.

Barring the discovery of a major new diamondiferous Kimberlite pipe, the diamond sector is thus unlikely to greatly enrich government coffers. Managed improperly, however, the artisanal diamond sector has a vast potential to negatively affect both the external image of Liberia and the internal peace and security of the country. Avoiding the latter two outcomes will require careful management by the Ministry of Lands, Mines, and Energy, and much greater coordination and cooperation with the diamond sector's civil society stakeholders.

Current Reforms

Compliance with the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme was listed by the UN as the key prerequisite for lifting sanctions on diamond exports. As a result, the government of Liberia has focussed all of its reform efforts over the past three years on developing a system of internal diamond controls rigorous enough to meet the approval of the Kimberley Process.

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By early 2007, the Ministry of Lands and Mines had developed a system of internal controls for registering diamond miners, traders and exporters, and for tracking diamonds as they move from the ground to the point of export in Monrovia. As a result, the UN lifted sanctions on diamond exports from Liberia in May 2007, and Liberia was admitted to the Kimberley Process.

But while a great deal of government effort has gone into making Liberia Kimberley compliant, there has been little thought and less effort inside the Liberian government on how best to make diamonds benefit local communities, or miners, or the Liberian people as a whole. Liberian civil

society has been almost as inactive on this issue. Unfortunately, there exists a widespread misapprehension in Liberia that membership in the Kimberley Process will take care of many of these issues, that the Kimberley Process, approved by the United Nations and supported by the international community, contains within it measures that require the government to reform the diamond sector in ways benefiting the Liberian people.

Alas, nothing could be further from the truth. The Kimberley Process is strictly and solely about controlling the trade in rough diamonds, in order to ensure that rough diamonds are not used to finance armed conflict. There is nothing in the KPCS requiring governments to improve the lot of diamond miners, to distribute the wealth from diamond mining to local communities, or to use the revenues from diamond mining for anything useful at all.

As a result of this misapprehension, reform of the diamond sector has been allowed to proceed with little of the civil society scrutiny and involvement that attended the concurrent reform of the forest sector. Instead, the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy has had a largely free hand, and reforms have been modest, focussing strictly on changes required to make the diamond mining and

export system KP compliant. Beyond that, the basic structure of mining claims and licenses has remained unchanged.

What's more, rather than involving civil society organizations in drafting these changes, Lands and Mines developed all of the procedures in-house. The Ministry is now faced with explaining these changes to miners and brokers, hopefully obtaining their acceptance in the process. With the Kimberley Process reforms more or less cast in stone, questions remain as to what role diamonds will play in Liberia's economy, and what role will be left for civil society in the management of Liberia's diamond resources.

The signs are not promising. The government's main concern has been ensuring KP compliance. But the KP legislation is integrated into Liberia's existing mineral and mining laws, which provide unsupervised and exclusive control over the mineral sector to the executive branch, which for much of the past decade was in the malevolent hands of Charles Taylor. Liberia's mineral legislation does not promote transparency or accountability. It does not require public participation or citizen oversight, nor is there anything in the mineral laws about benefit sharing with local communities. Clearly, the minerals and mining law, as well as the institutional arrangements and administrative structures within the Ministry of Lands and Mines need to be reviewed and reformed. Troublingly, however, there is a high level of resistance to reform within the Ministry of Lands and Mines. The Kimberley Process aside, no reform of either legislation or administration has so far been undertaken, perhaps because some in Taylor's inner circle have remained in the ministry as deputy and assistant ministers, while others act as consultants to the present minister, or sit on the influential Diamond Steering Committee.

Peace and Security Implications

More than any other ministry, the Ministry of Lands and Mines has resisted engaging with civil society as it goes about the task of reform. This is in sharp contrast to the forestry sector, where civil society actively participated in drafting new legislation, and has been given an explicit role as watchdog in the new system. Diamond industry stakeholders have been kept out of the loop as the new Kimberley Process procedures were developed, and were informed only afterwards as to how the new system would affect them.

The Kimberley Process

Conflict diamonds are diamonds used by rebel armies to finance war. Diamond-fuelled wars in Sierra Leone, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and elsewhere, took the lives of hundreds of thousands of people over the past fifteen years. Kimberley Process discussions began in 2000 in an effort to halt the trade in conflict diamonds. A series of intergovernmental meetings in which NGOs and industry played a key role led to the creation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) for rough diamonds, starting in January 2003. The KPCS is now legally binding in more than 45 diamond producing and processing countries, plus all those represented by the European Union. No rough diamonds can be traded among or between these countries unless they are accompanied by a government-issued Kimberley Process Certificate stating that the diamonds are clean. The certificate must be backed by a system of internal controls in each country, designed to give each certificate meaning.

In comparison with other resource sectors, Liberian NGOs active in the diamond mining sector – among them the Gold and Diamond Miners and Workers Union of Liberia (GODIMWUL), and the Gold and Diamond Broker's Association of Liberia – are quite weak, with limited membership, funding and organizational capacity. While this relative lack of capacity was not a factor in the Ministry's refusal to engage seriously with either miners or brokers, it has meant that neither organisation has had a spur to develop its own capacity. Outside funders, meanwhile, have had no impetus to devote the kind of funding and support they have provided to Liberian forest sector NGOs. The failure of government to engage with NGOs on mining sector reform will have several repercussions over the near and medium term.

Firstly, the lack of engagement between Lands and Mines and the miner and broker organizations will mean that buy-in to the new KP-mandated system of internal controls will proceed more slowly than it otherwise might have. There is even a small but not impossible chance that, having been ignored during development of the new Kimberley procedures, miners and dealers will in turn simply ignore the new regulations and continue to mine and buy diamonds outside government channels, much as they did in the past under UN sanctions. This could threaten the success of the Kimberley Process in Liberia, and perhaps leave open a window for the return of conflict diamonds.

Secondly, Lands and Mines' lack of engagement with miners and traders associations has left it without a partner in two upcoming reforms to the mining sector, each of potentially greater significance to the diamond sector than the Kimberley Process. The first of these processes, already begun, is the land reform process undertaken by the Governance Reform Commission under the leadership of former president Amos Sawyer. The second is a more thoroughgoing reform of Liberia's mining act, planning for which was just beginning in mid 2007 in the Ministry of Lands and Mines.

None of the several miners and buyers organizations were, at the time of writing, even aware of the existence of these two reform processes. However, while miners may not be represented at the table, they are certainly a presence in the Liberian countryside. Failure to obtain the input of miners will potentially doom any reforms to failure, and could ignite hostility and even violence among alluvial diamond miners in the field.

A perfect example of the Lands and Mines' poor rapport with the miners union can be seen in the experience of a Ministry team, sent to the diamond mining camps at the BOPC site in Sinoe county.

Located some three hours by rough jungle trail from the Sinoe county capital Greenville, the BOPC site (Butaw Oil Palm Company) has been home and workplace to tens of thousands of miners since diamonds were discovered there some time in 2003. The numbers dropped when an outbreak of cholera at the largest camp, nicknamed Paris, killed several hundred miners and scared many more away. However, the population of the camp remains in the thousands. Isolated and far from authority, the BOPC miners carry on their trade without even the fiction of a class C gold license. The trade in rough diamonds in the Paris camp is brisk, and open.

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The Lands and Mines survey team arrived at the Paris camp in March, 2007, ostensibly with the purpose of surveying mining claims in the area – in anticipation of the lifting of UN sanctions – so that mining in the post-sanctions era could go forward in a legal fashion as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, the survey team did not consult beforehand with elders of the Tassu people, who have traditional claims to the BOPC lands. Nor did they attempt to explain the mission to representatives of the miners union.

The Tassu leadership, once informed of the survey team's presence, was incensed that the Ministry seemed to be giving full recognition of the miners' claims to Tassu lands, without in any way consulting the Tassu. For their part, the miners were deeply suspicious of the validity of the surveying process, and in particular of the US\$260 fee that the survey team planned to charge each miner who wanted to have his claim legally surveyed and registered.

It is unclear whether this US\$260 fee for surveying every mineral claim was indeed legal under Liberia's mining act. The miners' suspicions stemmed not so much from knowledge of the act as from knowledge of the official who had sent out the survey team: James Konowa. At the time Assistant Minister for Mines, Mineral Resources Development and Conservation, Konowa had an unenviable reputation among rank and file miners. On numerous

occasions, union representatives had complained to the Minister of Mines, Eugene Shannon, alleging that Konowa was using his position to enrich himself illegally, passing out prime mining concessions in return for under-the-table fees. In the mining camp, the collective wisdom was simply that if Konowa was behind it, the survey was likely a scam.

Confronted with a hostile camp of thousands of miners, the survey team first called in a police backup team from Greenville. Still outnumbered, the team belatedly tried to engage the miners and Tassu in discussion, but by then it was too late. Just a few days after their arrival on the BOPC site, the survey team and its police escort were driven from the Paris camp at machete point by an angry mob of Tassu and miners.

Less than a week after this incident, Deputy Minister Konowa was fired from his post at the Ministry of Lands and Mines. The BOPC incident may have factored into his dismissal, but more telling was an investigation by Liberia's National Bureau of Investigation, which suggested that the deputy minister had indeed been using his position at the ministry for personal gain, much as the miners union had long alleged.

The survey incident should serve as a strong signal to the Ministry of Lands and Mines. Post civil-war, neither the ministry nor other Liberian authorities are strong enough to enforce their dictates in the field by decree. To accomplish its goals, Lands and Mines will have to begin to engage with diamond miners and their civil society organizations. Entering into substantive discussions with the miners union will be a necessary first step. Winning their trust – by taking allegations of corruption seriously – will be a necessary second step. Unfortunately, this lesson has apparently not yet sunk in at the ministry. If it doesn't soon, more violence of the kind seen at BOPC can be expected in the future.

Forestry

History

Liberia is one of the last remaining West African countries boasting extensive forest cover. Forests spread across some 4.3 million hectares in Liberia, about 45% of the country's total land area. These forest lands represent the largest remaining remnant – about 42% – of the once



Truck taking pit-sawn planks to market

extensive Upper Guinea forest. Liberia's forests hold a wealth of biodiversity, the economic potential of which remains largely untapped. The forest also provides local communities with a range of environmental goods and services, including fuel, food and shelter.

In addition, commercial exploitation of Liberia's forests has historically been a significant part of the country's economy. In the 1980s, forestry accounted for around 5% of GDP, and between 5-10% of export earnings. By the late 1990s, forestry's contribution to GDP has quadrupled to 20%, while the percentage of export earnings attributable to forestry soared to 50% in 2000.

While the macro numbers look impressive, the vast increase in GDP and export earnings was the result of the rapacious and uncontrolled liquidation of Liberia's forests, encouraged by the Charles Taylor regime. Taxes and royalties went largely uncollected during this period, and the funds that did come were largely used to fund the country's ongoing civil war. Few if any benefits trickled down to Liberia's people.

Recognizing the role timber was playing in the conflict, in 2003 the UN Security Council voted to impose sanctions on the export of Liberian timber. The sanctions were to remain in place pending a reform of the Liberian forest sector, bringing it into line with international norms, and ensuring that the proceeds from forestry benefited the Liberian people, instead of funding conflict.

Current Government Reforms

Upon taking power early in 2006, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf turned her attention immediately to the forest sector. Executive Order Number 1, signed February 2, 2006, declared null and void the dozens of forest concessions and timber licenses left over from the Taylor era.

The field clear for reform, the President then called into being a Forest Reform Monitoring Committee, composed of the Liberian Forest Development Authority plus local and international NGOs, and tasked this committee with overseeing the drafting of a new forestry law. The president's executive order made it clear that communities and civil society were to be given an institutional role in forest management under the new system. After extensive consultations and debate, the National Reform Forestry Law (NFRL) was passed on September 19, 2006.

According to officials from the FDA, the new law represents an attempt to balance conservation, community forestry and commercial forestry – what in forestry circles are called the three C's.

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The conservation provisions of the NFRL are clear and unambiguous: a minimum of 30 percent of Liberia's forest land is to be set aside in protected areas, linked together by a network of conservation areas. The total land area set aside for conservation is to total some 1.5 million hectares. By law, ten percent of stumpage fees, and ten percent of forest product fees are to be devoted to supporting the operational costs of this new and extensive Protected Forest Areas Network.

Local communities are also to share in the revenues from commercial forestry. Thirty percent of land rental fees are to be distributed to local communities. A further 30 percent are to be distributed equally to each of Liberia's 15 counties. FDA officials say they intend for these funds to be distributed to local development councils, which will consist of community leaders, clan and village chiefs, and local NGOs. However, the regulations governing the distribution of these funds were still being drafted at the time of writing.

The community forestry aspects of the law are less clear cut. The NFRL does state that 'to ensure that local communities are fully engaged in the sustainable management of the forests of Liberia', local communities shall be granted 'user and management rights' and 'control of forest use'. However, these community forestry rights depend upon regulations which have yet to be drafted. It is the details of these regulations that will determine how community forestry will work, and whether community forestry will truly be put on an equal footing with conservation and commercial forestry.

The relationship of local communities to commercial forestry operations has similarly been left for the regulations. According to the text of the NFRL, these as yet un-drafted regulations *may* include measures such as 'recognition and protection of community land tenure

rights', 'provision for security of access by communities to non-timber Forest Products and other Forest Resources' and a 'requirement to complete a social agreement between holders (commercial foresters) and communities that defines the parties' respective rights, roles, obligations, and benefits with respect to one another.' The use of the word 'may', however, leaves open the possibility that the regulations will impose none of these conditions.

True, the NFRL also contains a clause stating that the FDA must within one year draft a comprehensive law governing community rights with respect to forest lands. However, the uncertainty inherent in the NFRL was enough to provoke a coalition of 21 NGOs to send an open letter to the Liberian government, claiming that the new law had failed to adequately address community land tenure, access and user rights, and meaningful public participation. Instead of seeking a balance of conservation, community and commercial forestry, the NGOs wrote, the FDA was fast-tracking commercial operations.

There is more than a little merit to the NGOs claims. For one, though the designation of specific forest lands is supposed to await the completion of a forest inventory and a National Forest Plan, which in turn depend on further rounds of public consultation, as a practical matter the FDA has already begun mapping out which forest lands will be given over to conservation, which will be designated commercial, and which will be given to community forestry. Some 1.31 million hectares of Liberia's forest lands have thus been allocated for commercial forestry, while about 1 million hectares have been earmarked for conservation. Only some 0.5 million hectares have been allocated for community forestry. The fractions given to each don't exactly match the FDA rhetoric about all three C's being equal. These proposals are only preliminary, of course, and have all been derived from desk studies and introductory field inventories that are less than comprehensive. But map boundaries, once drawn, have a tendency to become entrenched.

Furthermore, with unemployment in Liberia running as high as 85%, the FDA is under tremendous pressure to resume commercial logging as soon as possible. FDA managers say the President herself has given them a firm deadline of October 2007 to get commercial forestry going again. Privately, FDA managers have also been informed that any budget requests for the coming fiscal year not clearly linked to economic growth and poverty reduction have little likelihood of receiving funding.

In their defence, FDA managers also say that much of the resistance to designating land for community forestry comes from communities themselves. Communities don't understand what community forestry is or what it will mean, say FDA managers. These same FDA managers say they themselves remain largely unclear as to how community forestry will function in practice. The international literature on community forestry deals mostly with goals and intentions, they say. The practical, legal and managerial aspects require to implement the goals remain hazy.

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Occupied as they are by the resumption of commercial forestry, FDA management have not had time to research the topic fully. The FDA, in fact, is currently being asked to accomplish a vast array of tasks: to develop legislation and regulations regarding community land tenure; to complete a forest inventory; to hold public consultations on a new national forest plan; to develop regulations regarding community forestry; and to survey and inventory concessions in preparation for a return to commercial logging.

Given the limited capacity of the Forest Development Authority, it is not surprising that some tasks are falling by the wayside. Community forestry appears to be one such orphan. Community land tenure may be another. While it is not yet certain that these two elements will in fact be significantly delayed, the implications of leaving them undone are worth exploring.

Peace and Security Implications

In prioritizing a return to commercial logging at the expense of other elements of forest reform, the government of Liberia is simply reacting to the most immediate threat. Official unemployment in Liberia is enormous, many of the unemployed are young men, and a significant number are ex-combatants. The government not surprisingly wants to provide these people with an income and an economic stake in the new order as soon as possible. Commercial forestry remains a proven source of jobs and export dollars with a long-established operating procedure, while community forestry, for Liberia, is a complete unknown.

Urgently required is a much fuller definition of the rights of local communities with respect to commercial forestry concessions. These concessions, once signed, are due to run for decades – in the order of 35 years, or long enough for the land to move through one complete harvest and regrowth cycle. It seems logical that the obligations of a commercial concession holder towards the local community should be spelled out before a company bids for the concession. Demands made afterwards for greater community benefits from, or access to, forest lands are likely to be resisted by commercial concession holders, on the grounds that such benefits and access reduce the value of the concession. Denying access to local communities will, however, inevitably lead to more conflict.

Also urgent is a serious effort to build capacity with respect to forestry issues in communities outside Monrovia. Local communities and community based NGOs are expected to play a significant role in implementation of the reformed forestry system, either by negotiating community rights agreements with commercial concessionaires, or by taking part in community and county development councils charged with spending that portion of the stumpage and land rental fees distributed back to the local and county level.

According to FDA managers, civil society is being included on the local development councils expressly as a check on the kind of corruption and collusion among rural elites that has been seen on similar councils elsewhere in Africa. While this seems a prudent and intelligent move, the unfortunate reality is that Liberian civil society simply does not at present have the capacity to take up this role.

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There are currently only 100 or so active registered NGOs in Liberia, and virtually all are based in the capital. Of these, only a handful have affiliates in the hinterland. None has the capacity to field a representative in each of the many districts in which community development councils are slated to begin operation. Given the role that government corruption and particularly corruption in the timber sector played in fuelling the recent civil conflict, it is imperative that community level civil society representatives be found and trained to take part in the new system. Unfortunately, little thought has yet been given to this task.

Rubber

History

Rubber has been one of the mainstays of the Liberian economy since the 1920s, when American industrialist Harvey Firestone set up the first Liberian rubber plantation on a 118,000 acre (48,000 ha) concession some 50 kilometres east of Monrovia. In the decades that followed, other foreign investors negotiated similar land concession agreements, some for even larger parcels of land.

In total, seven major rubber concessions were established in Liberia: Firestone, Liberia Agricultural Company (LAC), Guthrie, Liberia Company (LIBCO), Salala Rubber Corporation, Cavalla and the Sinoe Rubber Corporation (SRC).

Several of these plantations were abandoned or taken over by rebel forces during the years of the civil war. Other plantations changed hands, with some being taken over by management companies tied to officials in the Liberian government. In January, 2005, the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) negotiated a 36-year extension of the concession agreement to the Firestone plantation, despite the fact that the transitional government was forbidden to negotiate agreements extending beyond the duration of its mandate.

As a result of these factors, in February 2006 the newly elected government of Liberia established, in partnership with UNMIL, a Rubber Plantations Task Force to evaluate the situation in Liberia's major rubber plantations and to make recommendations for future action.

The task force's findings painted a fairly grim picture of the Liberian rubber sector.

Two of the largest plantations, SRC (Sinoe County) and Guthrie (in Bomi and Grand Cape Mount Counties) were under the control of ex-combatants. Two more plantations, Cavalla (Maryland County) and Salala (Bong County), had suffered through years of poor or indifferent management, and would need significant investment in order to be brought back up to standard.

The two largest plantations, Firestone (Margibi County) and LAC (Grand Bassa County) remained in good condition and were producing significant quantities of rubber. At the time of the report, the Firestone factory was producing between three and four thousand metric tonnes of

rubber per month, while LAC was producing some two thousand metric tonnes per month. However, as the Task Force pointed out, the benefits accruing to the Liberian government and people were at best debatable.

Neither Firestone nor LAC could provide evidence that they had consistently paid their taxes. And while both Firestone and LAC employed large numbers of Liberians (Firestone is the second largest employer in Liberia after the government, LAC is the third), wages paid to rubber tappers had hardly improved since the 1920s, while health and safety standards were non-existent, and living conditions on the plantations simply appalling. On both the LAC and Firestone plantations, rubber tappers had neither electricity nor running water. At the Firestone site, tappers were forced to fetch their water from polluted creeks. All this, despite ongoing high world demand and high world prices for rubber.

Current Reforms

Liberia's Agriculture Minister Chris Toe accepted the Task Force findings and undertook to reform the rubber sector. Among his chief concerns was bringing Guthrie and Sinoe, the two plantations occupied by ex-combatants, back under government control.

The government also undertook to improve occupational safety and working conditions for workers, as well as housing conditions and health and education services on the plantations. The government promised to encourage the formation of active and independent workers' unions on the plantations.

The minister also undertook to review, and where possible renegotiate, the long-term concession agreements with Firestone, LAC and Salala, with a view to increasing and standardizing the taxes and other fees payable to government. The government also aimed to ensure that the concession agreements are in compliance with Liberian law and international principles of responsible business practice. Renegotiation of the Firestone agreement is currently under way.

The government's focus on land rents and royalties is understandable. Rubber exports are one of the government's few reliable sources of foreign exchange, particularly for a government like Liberia's, living hand to mouth on a strictly cash-based budget.

Unfortunately absent from the Minister of Agriculture's statements is any indication that Liberia intends to make use of the current opportunity to re-evaluate the role of rubber in the Liberian economy. Seventy years as a primary resource producer has produced a small, reliable stream of government revenue, a large number of poorly paid jobs, and not much else in the way of development.

Firestone, after all, has been extracting rubber from Liberia for over 70 years, and has so far not manufactured so much as a single rubber band in the country.

Liberia should consider taking this opportunity to renegotiate its agreements with Firestone and LAC in ways that not only ensure improved health and environmental standards, and increased revenues for both workers and government, but that also facilitate the development of a secondary processing and manufacturing industry in Liberia. Firestone, after all, has been extracting rubber from Liberia for over 70 years, and has so far not manufactured so much as a single rubber band in the country. A creative and farsighted review of Liberia's rubber sector could put an end to Liberia's role as a cheap supplier of raw resources, and begin the long delayed shift to secondary processing and manufacturing.

Land tenure and community rights in the rubber sector are also major issues and have become flash points in recent time. Local communities have complained that the demarcation of rubber plantations in the 1920s, the 1950s and 1970s trespassed on burial grounds, sacred sites, water sources, fishing and hunting grounds, worship areas, farming and residential areas in ways that have led to the loss of access by these communities to resources that supported sustainable livelihoods.

The Agriculture Ministry has to date avoided addressing these community claims to rubber plantation concession lands. Indeed, in his response of May 2006 to the UNMIL Rubber Plantations Task Force Report, Agriculture Minister Chris Toe suggested that for the LAC, Firestone and Salala plantations – managed continuously by the original concession holders since the concessions were granted – there were no outstanding claims requiring legal review. However, LAC in particular has been a source of complaint by local communities for decades. If the Agriculture Ministry does not move to address these claims to LAC



Rubber Tapper, Sinoe Rubber Plantation

and other plantations, they will almost certainly re-surface at the land reform commission, or else in spontaneous acts of violence.

Peace and Security Implications

The main peace and security issue with respect to the rubber sector is the continued occupation of the Sinoe Rubber Company (SRC) plantation by ex-combatants. Located outside of Greenville in Sinoe County, the 600,000 acre Sinoe Rubber Company plantation came under occupation by fighters of the LURD and MODEL factions in 2003, at the end of the Liberian civil war.

Land grabbing and claims of ownership of plantation land by local communities could also have security implications. There are examples in Grand Bassa with LAC and there are similar undercurrents with Firestone in Guthrie, Sinoe and Cavalla. As noted above, the Agriculture Ministry appears to have decided to duck this issue, leaving the Land Reform Commission as the only remaining forum where these conflicts can be resolved peacefully.

The Liberian state lacks the wherewithal to remove the ex-fighters by force, so several attempts have been made since 2003 to set up an interim management committee to run the plantation, and to entice the ex-combatants to either leave or become part of the regular work force. When PAC visited the SRC plantation in March 2007, the latest attempt had just ended in failure.

According to Leon Worjlah, a.k.a. “White Flower” – the 21 year old ex-fighter who has taken command of the plantation – an interim management committee had been set up in January 2007 at the behest of the district commissioner of Sinoe County, and in co-operation with the then commander of the ex-combatants. The deal agreed upon by commissioner and combatants was that a team appointed by the commissioner would gradually take over management of the plantation. In the short term, the ex-combatants could continue to tap and sell rubber, but a tax of US\$65 per metric tonne would be put on all sales, in order to fund improvements to living conditions on the plantation.

Some 2000 tonnes of rubber were sold from the plantation during the six-week life of the agreement, according to ex-combatants interviewed by PAC on the plantation. Total revenue collected by the management committee

was thus on the order of US\$130,000. Despite this, no improvements of any kind were made to living conditions on the plantation: drinking water remained unsafe, health care and schools non-existent, roads barely passable. The deal quickly unravelled, and the combatants forced the management team to vacate the plantation.

In Monrovia, officials with UNMIL say the Sinoe District Commissioner did not in fact have the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture to enter into an agreement of any kind with the ex-combatants on the Sinoe Plantation. It appears the arrangement was simply a private initiative, done it would seem, largely for personal enrichment.

A few days after the management’s team, was driven out, a group of men led by the ex-combatants former leader re-entered the plantation and, according to White Flower, attempted to re-take the plantation by force. They were driven off without loss of life, though one of the pickup trucks they had driven was overturned and burned.

In the aftermath of this incident, the government in Monrovia declared a moratorium on the buying and selling of rubber in Sinoe County.³ The measure was a serious blow to the ex-combatants, and a potentially dangerous and de-stabilizing move for residents nearby, including those in the county seat of Greenville. Denied the ability to sell rubber, the Sinoe ex-combatants were left without the resources to buy even food. Some grew desperate, and angry. “When the leopard feels hunger,” one Sinoe ex-combatant put it, “the town feels fear.”

In this context, the government’s implementation of a rubber embargo in Sinoe county seemed counter-productive, putting the ex-combatants in a corner while offering them no incentive or assistance in returning to their former homes. Fortunately, the government reversed course before a siege mentality set in, and lifted the sales embargo.

“When the leopard feels hunger,” one Sinoe ex-combatant put it, “the town feels fear.”

The rubber embargo would have made sense if the ex-combatants occupying the SRC plantation had been using the proceeds of their rubber sales to fortify their position. However, on a field visit in March, 2007 to the main ex-

³ In fact, for several years Firestone and LAC purchased rubber from combatants based in Guthrie and Sinoe. This was how combatants financed their control and authority over those plantations.

combatant camp inside the SRC plantation, PAC saw no evidence that the ex-combatants were re-arming, or even very much interested in a return to fighting. On the contrary, their main demand, repeated vehemently and at length, was for an investor to come in and take over management of the plantation. The investor, in their view, would have to make adequate investments in clean water, schooling and health care for the plantation's workers. Once it was clear these investments were underway, the ex-combatants pledged that they would willingly give up control of the plantation and either return to their former homes or take up work as plantation employees.

An embargo on SRC rubber may well have to be put in place eventually, if only because allowing the ex-combatants to sell their rubber turns rubber itself into a type of conflict resource. However, such a ban should be implemented only when the Liberian government and UNMIL have programs in place to offer the ex-combatants incentives to exit the plantation peacefully, as well as sufficient forces on the ground ready to protect neighbouring civilians, should the ex-combatants opt to refuse the offer of peaceful resettlement. It was just such a carrot-and-stick approach that brought a peaceful resolution to the occupation of the Guthrie rubber plantation.

In Monrovia, the director of the UN's Reintegration Rehabilitation and Recovery program Andrea Tamagnini told PAC that his office has been ready and indeed eager to begin such a program for some time. The remaining problems are purely logistical. Supporting a large UN encampment in a remote location on the SRC plantation requires reasonable road access from Greenville. At the start of the 2007 rainy season, a UN engineering contingent tasked with repairing the road to the SRC plantation actually set out from Monrovia, but was forced to turn back after one of the main bridges on the road from Zwedru in Grand Gedeh county collapsed. The current plan is for work on the road to begin again in September, as soon as the current rainy season ends. In the meantime, UNMIL is monitoring the situation on the plantation via patrols.

Whatever the logistical challenges, the government and UNMIL should act as soon as possible. As a result of their experiences to date, the ex-combatants have become more suspicious of central authority, but remain open and eager for a genuine investor to come in and take over management of the plantation. The government in Monrovia should capitalize on this goodwill while it lasts.

Land Reform

"People are openly stating that 'if we fight again, we will fight about land'." These words appear in the opening paragraph of a position paper drafted by the Governance Reform Commission (GRC) which has been charged with establishing a land reform commission in Liberia.

The need for land reform is indeed dire. According to the GRC, 90% of the cases clogging the civil courts involve land. Officials at the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy say they are receiving 100 new complaints about land matters each and every day. According to the GRC, uncertainty regarding land tenure is delaying re-investment in the country, and a recovery of the Liberian economy.

However, settling conflicting claims to land in Liberia will be a particularly challenging task. At the heart of the problem lies a century-old conflict between the customary land tenure of Liberia's indigenous peoples, and the new system of statutory tenure brought to the country two centuries ago by settlers from the United States.

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The imported statutory system provided the legal basis for the rubber, timber and mining concessions that became the foundation of Liberia's resource economy. As these industries expanded and acquired more of what had been customary land, traditional users found themselves excluded from the land base and the economy, except as workers – often poorly paid – on plantations or mining concessions. Over time the lack of access grew acute, and was in fact one of the root causes of Liberia's civil war.

Post war, the issue continues to affect every aspect of natural resource exploitation including forestry, rubber and diamond mining. Under Liberian law, for example, subsurface mineral rights are vested solely in the national government. Surface land owners have no claims to what lies below. Customary and tribal laws view things differently however – which has, and will continue to generate con-

flict whenever gold, diamond or other minerals are found beneath traditional tribal lands.

In the rubber sector, concessions have often overlapped lands that traditional peoples view as tribal property. The government is currently trying to adjudicate two such disputes involving the LAC and Sinoe rubber plantations. Similar challenges face Liberia's Forest Development Authority, as it tries to allocate forest lands for commercial, conservation and community usage.

The war, in addition to exacerbating existing land conflicts, also created entirely new ones. As the war raged, hundreds of thousands of rural dwellers sought refuge in Monrovia, or fled to neighbouring countries as refugees. During their often prolonged absence, others came to occupy their lands, and now feel they have established claims to these "abandoned lands". Complicating matters, many of the archives where land title documents were stored were destroyed during the conflict, in many cases deliberately.

Current Reform

The governance Reform Commission, under the direction of former Liberian president Amos Sawyer, has been given the task of laying the groundwork for the establishment of a formal land reform commission, which will then carry on the delicate task of land reform.

To accomplish this task, the GRC has established a steering committee and several working groups,⁴ which are to research aspects of the land reform issue in Liberia. The majority of the members consist of civil servants from affected government ministries, augmented by volunteers from Liberian NGOs. The research performed by these working groups is to inform a series of workshops or presentations to ordinary citizens, local leaders, and civil society groups in some or all of Liberia's 15 counties. This outreach process is intended to inform Liberians about the land reform process, and to identify potential delegates for a national land reform congress, which will meet to hammer out a national vision for land reform, as well, possibly, as the terms of reference by which the land reform commission will operate.

The deadline for this entire process was set for Liberian Independence Day – July 26th, 2007.

Even in a country with top-notch transportation and communication networks, with well developed social institu-

tions and an engaged civil society, the timeline outlined by the GRC would be ambitious. In Liberia, heading into the rainy season when travel to the interior becomes arduous or impossible, the GRC's evident haste was ambitious to a fault.

Partly, the GRC's schedule reflected a political desire on the part of the new government to be seen to be addressing this pressing issue. However, concurrent government reform processes by other departments are also driving the schedule. Liberia's Forest Development Authority was working to classify forest land for community and commercial forestry and to begin the process of tendering logging contracts, with a view to resuming commercial logging in October 2007. The Ministry of Agriculture launched Country Agricultural Assessment Study (CAAS) to serve as a driver for a new agricultural policy. Diamond mining resumed soon after the lifting of the UN sanctions in May 2007. Once mining claims are allocated and forest contracts tendered, the process of land reform inevitably becomes more complicated.

However, while the need for speed is real and understandable, it also works against the GRC's other stated goal for land reform, namely that it be a participatory process, with broad representation, and input from Liberians of all walks of life. For the GRC to get the public participation it wants, in the deadline it has set up, it is going to have to put far greater resources into the public outreach process. This in turn will require far greater funding commitments, both from the Liberian government and from outside funders.

Care should be taken to ensure that the agendas of outside funders do not skew the process, but this caution should not stop the GRC from seeking the funding it needs to carry out the consultation process properly. At the time of writing, the GRC land reform process was running on a skeleton staff, consisting of Dr. Sawyer, one newly hired technical expert, and a few administrative staff. Even more disturbingly, the very existence of the GRC appears recently to have been put in doubt, as a result of the failure of the Liberian President and Legislature to pass legislation guaranteeing an independent and adequately funded Governance Reform Commission. Given the critical importance of land reform to the future peace and stability of Liberia, there can be few tasks more important than ensuring that the GRC and its Land Reform Commission have the necessary resources and freedom of action.

⁴ Among them legal issues, natural resources and the environment, land and local governance, historical context, technical and GIS, investment and public awareness.

Recommendations

Overall Recommendations

1. Many current reforms to the Liberian resource sector require Liberian civil society to play a critical oversight role. The Liberian Government, the UN, international donors, and the international NGO community should examine ways to **build capacity in Liberian civil society** – particularly outside Monrovia - in order to ensure Liberian NGOs are competent and prepared for this critical new role.
2. The Government of Liberia should convene **a national conference on the future role of Liberia's natural resources, land and on the definition of community property rights**. The conference should commence with county and regional meetings and culminate in a national conference, chaired by the President of Liberia.
3. The Government of Liberia should establish a mechanism for **conflict resolution**, mediation and consultation with local communities, as a way of resolving community claims associated with land tenure and property rights;
4. The Government of Liberia should accelerate the work of the **Land Tenure Reform and Land Use Commission**,⁵ at the same time ensuring that the Commission is provided with adequate resources.
5. Many of the diamond, forest and rubber-related problems discussed in this paper are equally problematic where **agricultural concessions** are concerned. The government should formulate a strategic planning process for agricultural concessions, taking into consideration the immediate, short, medium and long-term vision, and the desired end-state.

Diamonds

1. The Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy must begin to engage in meaningful dialogue with civil society stakeholders in the mining sector.
2. At least three representatives of civil society, including a representative of the Gold and Diamond Miners and Workers Union of Liberia (GODIMWUL), should be appointed to the Diamond Steering Committee, which coordinates implementation of the Kimberley Process in Liberia.

3. International NGOs and funding agencies should consider devoting resources to building capacity among diamond sector civil society organizations such as GODIMWUL.

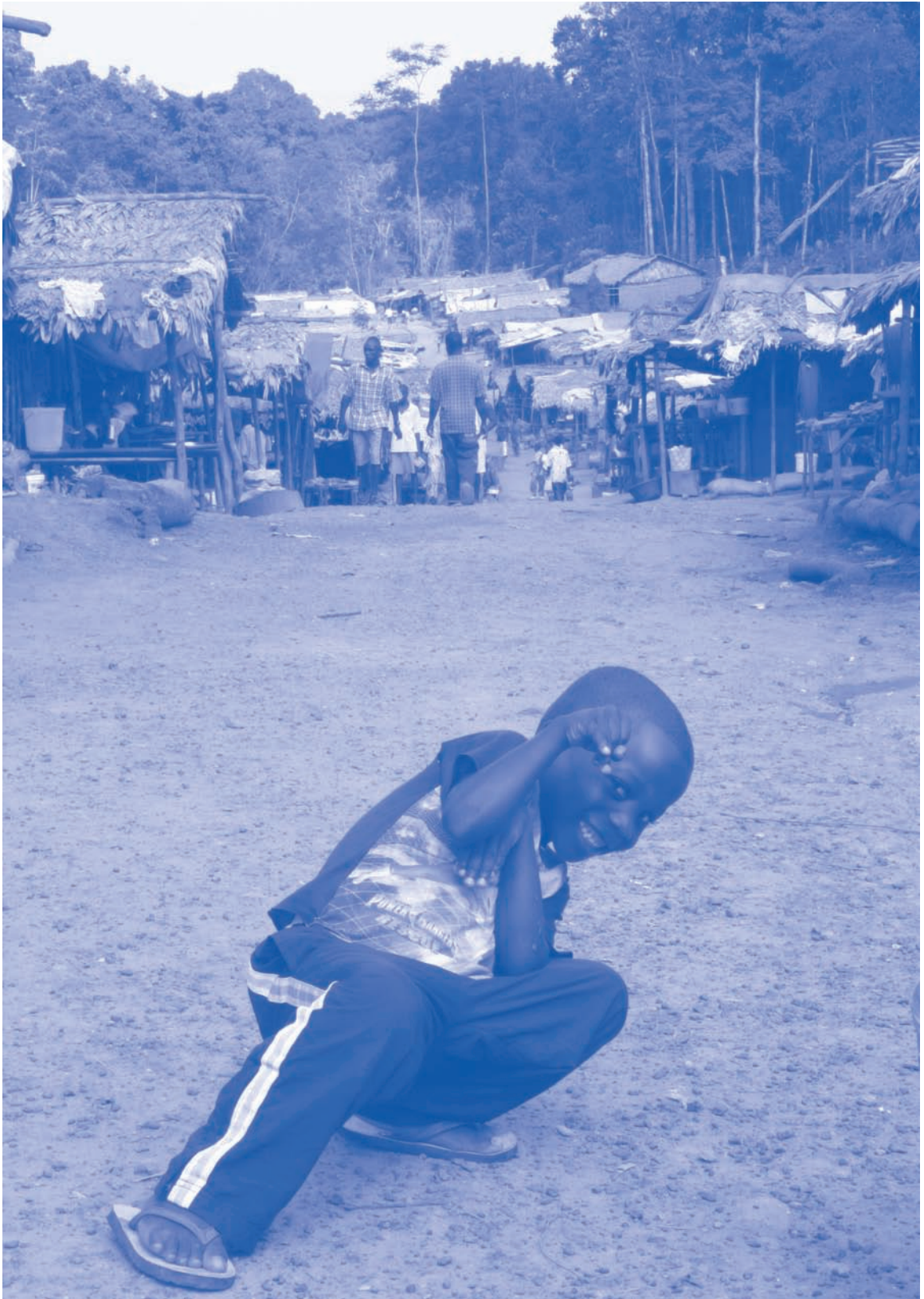
Forestry

1. There should be full implementation of the recommendations of the Forest Concession Review Committee's report.
2. The Forest Development Authority (FDA) and government of Liberia should consider delaying the issuing of commercial concessions and recommending commercial forestry until the new regulations and legislation on community rights and community land tenure are completed.
3. Local civil society capacity to understand and deal effectively with forestry issues must be significantly strengthened. Responsibility for this outreach work falls to all of the current players: the FDA and government of Liberia, local and international NGOs, and international funding agencies.

Rubber

1. UNMIL and the Liberian government should begin executing plans for demobilizing and reintegrating the ex-combatants on the Sinoe Rubber Corporation rubber plantation as soon as possible. Until such time as the government and UNMIL are ready to implement such a full-scale effort, no further effort should be made to enforce a sales embargo on rubber in Sinoe County.
2. The Agriculture Ministry, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, should develop a process to investigate and adjudicate local community claims to existing rubber concessions.
3. The Agriculture Ministry should develop a longer term strategy for transforming the rubber industry from a purely extractive industry to one involving secondary manufacturing in Liberia.

⁵ Regarding the name of the land commission, this is still a disagreement that explains the complexities of the issues. Land commission, land reform commission, land tenure reform commission, land and property rights commission are just few of the alternatives that have been suggested.



Liberian boy at Paris Diamond Mining Camp

Conclusion: The Price of Peace

Over the years, the United Nations Security Council has committed *billions* of dollars to peacekeeping in Liberia. UNMIL's current uniformed personnel number more than 15,000, and the UNMIL budget for the period July 1 2006 – June 30, 2007 was \$715 million. This far outstrips contributions made by donors for reconstruction and longer term development in Liberia.

donors, NGOs and friendly governments should remember that the needs of Liberia – and some of its neighbours – do not begin and end with peacekeeping

It is an odd commentary on the “international community” that more than 50 countries have been able to supply military personnel, police and the money to pay for their important work in Liberia, but very few are able to contribute seriously to the development efforts required to sustain the peace. On top of that, the new government of Liberia inherits a debt load of \$3.8 billion, one of the highest per capita in the entire world – much of it based on bad loans made by donor agencies to several bad Liberian governments. Negotiations to reduce this burden deal only with the tip of the iceberg.

The recommendations in this report deal with the specifics of the country's three most prominent natural resources. But donors, NGOs and friendly governments should remember that the needs of Liberia – and some of its neighbours – do not begin and end with peacekeeping. Nor can good governance be achieved or sustained without the help of good friends and their willingness to sustain meaningful support where it is needed and deserved.



Partnership Africa Canada

Land Grabbing and Land Reform :
Diamonds, Rubber and Forests in the New Liberia

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