

## THE LIBERIA FOREST INITIATIVE: THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

In 2003 the US State Department initiated collaboration with USAID and the USDA Forest Service, to address forest sector reform in Liberia. These USG Agencies then joined forces with the Government of Liberia, other donors, and NGOs to launch the Liberia Forest Initiative (LFI). The LFI is increasingly viewed as a model for forest reform efforts in Africa and elsewhere.

### Additional LFI Partners include:

The World Bank, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Conservation International, European Commission, the World Conservation Union, Fauna and Flora International, Environmental Law Institute, Center for International Forestry Research, World Agroforestry Center, United Nations Environment Program, International Monetary Fund, and the Liberian environmental organization Green Advocates

### The goals of the LFI are to:

- establish a commercial forest sector in Liberia that is profitable, transparent, and sustainable
- manage forests for the benefit of all Liberians
- generate employment and tax revenue for the Liberian economy
- increase community involvement in forest management decisions
- ensure security and the rule of law in forested regions of Liberia
- conserve strategic forested areas for future generations

For more information, go to: [www.fao.org/forestry/site/lfi/en](http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/lfi/en)



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A review of Liberian logging concessions, like this one from July 2002, found that they were all non-compliant with national laws. The Government of Liberia, under the leadership of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, shut down these concessions in 2006.



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Liberian and US Government collaborative efforts are helping restore Liberia's diverse and expansive forests for the benefit of its people.

The LFI and EPP are some of the most comprehensive and expansive forest and energy sector reform programs ever supported by US Government foreign assistance. By supporting Liberia to reform the management of its natural resources, the United States is helping promote peace and security, economic growth, and democratic governance for the people of Liberia.

### For additional information contact:

**United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**  
Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade  
Natural Resources Management Office, Biodiversity and Forestry  
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**USDA Forest Service — Office of International Programs**  
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**United States Department of State**  
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*COVER PHOTO: Millions of Liberians, like this boy, depend on the natural resources surrounding them for their livelihoods. US and Liberian cooperation is helping to restore those resources so that they benefit all Liberians.*

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**US Government Assistance in Natural  
Resources and Energy for the  
People and Government of Liberia**

## BACKGROUND

Since the restoration of peace in Liberia in 2003 following 14 years of conflict, the United States has been helping Liberia build a democratic, well-governed state that responds to the needs of its people. The 2005 election of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf ushered in a period of high expectations for rebuilding and reform. Nowhere is this more evident than in the forest and energy sectors, where the US and its partners are building Liberia's capacity to manage its natural resources and graduate from dependence on foreign aid.



The US Government is providing support and training to Liberia's Forest Development Authority

## ENERGY SECTOR

In the energy sector, the US Government is working closely with the Government of Liberia, the European Commission, Norway and the World Bank to bring modern electricity services back to the country. This assistance restored electricity services and streetlights to the Congotown and Krutown areas of the capital city of Monrovia under the Emergency Power Program (EPP). Work is continuing with the Government of Liberia and other donors to restore more electricity service within Monrovia, and to increase access to modern energy services that support health clinics, schools and community centers outside of the capital.

## ENERGY SUCCESSES

- July 2006 — Restoration of electricity services to Monrovia by Liberian Independence Day, meeting the President's goal under her 150-day program.
- January 2007 — The Liberia Electricity Company is now collecting sufficient billings to cover most fuel and operating expenses, thus moving towards self-sufficiency.



Sapo National Park is home to leopards, forest elephants, pygmy hippos, and chimpanzees. Sapo, previously threatened by conflict, has benefited from USG assistance supporting the elaboration of a management plan and training for park staff.



Liberia's forests constitute the largest remaining blocks of the Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem, a threatened global hotspot for biodiversity.

## FOREST SECTOR

Liberian forests have traditionally provided diverse benefits, including shelter, food, medicine, and livelihoods. As recently as 2002, Liberia's forests generated up to 60 percent of the nation's foreign exchange. But years of corruption siphoned off revenues from timber sales to fund armed conflict in the region, and as a result the UN imposed sanctions on timber from Liberia. After the fall of the Taylor regime in 2003, the US Congress committed \$4 million to help reform the Liberian forest sector. The US State Department, USAID, and the USDA Forest Service worked together to create the Liberia Forest Initiative (LFI), a partnership of government, multilateral, and nongovernmental organizations.

## FORESTRY SUCCESSES

- February 2006 — **President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf signed Executive Order Number One**, nullifying all existing timber concessions in Liberia, endorsing forest sector reforms, and establishing the Forestry Reform Monitoring Committee to pilot these reforms.
- June 2006 — **Provisional Lifting of UN Timber Sanctions.** The UN Security Council voted unanimously to lift timber sanctions against Liberia to help spur economic growth. This decision was based on progress achieved in reforming Liberia's forest sector to ensure that it is managed on a transparent and sustainable basis.
- June 2006 — **Completion of a Forest Use Suitability Map for Liberia.** Under the supervision of a Liberian Land Use Planning Commission, the LFI completed a forest use suitability map that defines how forests should be divided amongst the three major use opportunities: conservation, commercial forestry, and community management of forests.
- October 2006 — **Passage of the 2006 Forestry Reform Act.** The new law provides the foundation for increased transparency, accountability, and public participation in the forest sector, and it will allow forests and their products to play a key role in poverty alleviation, social development, and employment generation.
- Ongoing — **Strengthening Protected Areas and Community Involvement in Managing Forests.** The LFI and its partners, including the Liberian Forest Development Authority, Conservation International, and Flora and Fauna International, helped protect Sapo National Park by developing park management plans, training and capacity building, and removing illegal loggers, miners, and squatters. The LFI is developing a program to increase community involvement in managing forest resources, and identifying ways that communities can share in the economic benefits derived from well managed forests.