



Report of a Multi Stakeholder Dialogue on Forest, Agriculture & Investment Convened by IDH

Foya City - Lofa County
June 6th and 7th 2018

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1. Introduction

This report is a summary of the proceedings of a two-day multi stakeholder dialogue on forest, agriculture and investment in Lofa held on June 6 and 7, 2018. The Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) convened the event in Foya City, Lofa County. Stakeholders that participated in the dialogue included District officials, local chiefs, women leaders, farmer organizations and cooperatives, the Forestry Development Authority and conservation partners working in the region, civil society organizations working on conservation, agricultural and other land-based investments, private sector, and relevant non-profit associations based in the region. A total of 71 persons participated in the Day 1 sessions and 68 persons participated in the Day 2 sessions.

The purpose of the dialogue was to lay the foundation for coordination and collaboration on forest conservation, agricultural development, and related private sector investment in Lofa County, with a focus on Foya, Vahun, and Kolahun¹ Districts. During the dialogue, IDH presented a proposal for a collaborative land use planning process, bottom up greening activities and for attracting investments linked to forest conservation and agricultural development in the region.

At the end of the event stakeholders adopted a Declaration of Intent setting out a broad framework for collaboration and coordination among actors in the conservation, forestry, agriculture and land sectors in the landscape. Other outputs included validation of the assessment IDH conducted in the region, an approved Terms of Reference for a Contact Group to implement elements of the Indicative Action Plan at the local level, an approved Terms of Reference for a Technical Working Group to implement elements of the Indicative Action Plan at the national level. Participants also developed a provisional listing of stakeholders.

2. Background

IDH, with financial support from the Norwegian International Climate and Forest Initiative, began researching opportunities for investments in agribusinesses that will contribute to forest conservation and protection, and combat the expansion of savannah grassland in Foya District, Lofa County. This assessment built on earlier scoping in Lofa carried out by the Government of Liberia with support from Norway.

The assessment identified some opportunities including local interest and availability of land for agriculture investment that could contribute to improving local incomes and livelihoods; re-greening vast areas of previously forested land that is now heavily degraded and mostly covered by savannah grassland; and at the same time contribute to forest conservation. To explore these opportunities together with stakeholders, IDH convened the multi-stakeholder dialogue to together develop an action plan for the landscape.

¹ Kolahun is now sub-divided into Kolahun, Wanhassa and Lukambeh Districts.

3. Summary of the Proceedings

At the opening of the dialogue, IDH presented its mission and objectives, and the geographies and commodity supply chains it focuses on. IDH works with governments, private sector and communities to develop Green Growth Compacts to attract investment for agricultural production that supports livelihoods, income generation and forest conservation.

Findings of IDH assessments

A second IDH presentation highlighted the main findings of an assessment it carried out in the region in November 2017 and April 2018. The main findings included:

1. Strong local interest. Local government authorities, customary leaders and stakeholders agree on the importance of taking measures to halt the spread of the savannah;
2. Land available for agriculture development. There are considerable tracts of land for agricultural investments in different parts of the district;
3. Farmers in the region have experience in growing cocoa, coffee and oil palm. There is strong entrepreneurial spirit among Lofa population;
4. Active women involvement in the sector. Women are well represented in agricultural value chains in Lofa County; and
5. Forest and landscape conservation potential. There is potential for a conservation corridor area, linking the Gola National Forest to Wonogezi.

In response to the presentation, participants noted the following issues to consider, going forward:

- The growing population in the region, farming practices including slash and burn, and the expansion of farming activities into the last remnants of the forest.
- The Liberia Land Authority is responsible for managing all public land. Although the local people manage the land through customary practices, they do not have full authority over the land. Therefore, there is a need to involve the Land Authority, as well as the traditional landowners, and to find common ground.
- Rice farming is the main source of food for the population. Therefore any intervention should also consider how the lowland would be utilized for food production.
- Consider planting trees that will contribute to restoring tree cover to the area now covered by savannah. Trees of commercial and other values, including oil palm, rubber and fruit trees should be given priority.
- The fire outbreaks in the savannah areas threaten peoples' safety and property. Fire safety should be considered in developing the potential interventions.
- Stopping the savannah from expanding is not only beneficial for the forest, it is also very important for the communities.

IDH Proposal for preparatory activities

Following the presentation of the findings and the subsequent plenary discussion, IDH presented a summary proposal for preparatory activities that would lead towards the development of a comprehensive agreement (a 'compact') laying out a detailed framework for collaboration on forest, agriculture and investment in the region. The presentation provided an overview of the region, a summary of the problem and challenges, proposed next steps after the dialogue, and an indicative action plan. The proposal contained three broad elements including developing a multi-stakeholder and participatory Green Growth Land-Use Plan, identifying and pulling in green investors with solid track records from elsewhere, and launching a locally driven bottom-up re-greening program that would involve mobilizing the population, especially farmers to protect natural regeneration, increasing the number of on-farm trees, and other local actions that lower the risks of wild fires.

The proposal contained the Indicative Action Plan below:

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|---|----------------|
| 1. Declaration of Intent | June 2018 |
| 2. Establish a Contact Group | June 2018 |
| 3. Form a Technical Working Group | June 2018 |
| 4. Socio-economic baseline study | July 2018 |
| 5. Initiate dialogue with potential investors | July 2018 |
| 6. Develop high-level draft land use plan | August 2018 |
| 7. Draft a Multi Stakeholder Agreement | August 2018 |
| 8. Scope Bottom up re-greening initiatives | August 2018 |
| 9. Convene 2 nd Multi Stakeholder Dialogue | September 2018 |
| 10. Initiate consultation on draft agreement | September 2018 |
| 11. Agree on first re-greening initiatives | September 2018 |
| 12. Pre-feasibility studies and investor meeting | October 2018 |

Participants then went into breakout groups to discuss the draft proposal. They then returned to plenary and presented their reflections, with a focus on the Indicative Action Plan.

Overall, all the groups agreed that urgent actions are needed and the proposal provided a good basis on which to commence. However, the groups did have some questions and reflections. The presentations from the various are consolidated below.

1. The process for developing the plan and implementing - it should be based on the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of the people – at all levels.
2. Ensure that the interventions do not have negative impacts on the situation of the people;
3. Introduce sustainable livelihood activities that will have positive impacts on the people.
4. Remember to ‘do-no-harm’ with the interventions. Conduct Environmental and Social Impacts Assessments for projects as appropriate.
5. Consider gender and youth issues throughout.
6. How will we do this? For example, how will the land be identified? Who will own the plantations that will be established? How will individual farmers be assisted?
7. Consider allocating 50% of land to be developed as part of this initiative for oil palm and 50% for other tree crops.
8. Help in developing lowland for food or rice production.
9. Strengthen fire protection laws.
10. Ensure that each one plant one tree to start the process.
11. It is a good thing for companies to come into our district to invest in tree crops and agriculture. When this happens, it will create job opportunities and bring development into the district.
12. Support smallholder farmers and promote re-forestation.
13. Land to be allocated to investors must not be sold; it should be leased.

Presentation of draft Declaration of Intent

A draft Declaration of Intent, setting out a broad framework for collaboration and coordination among actors in the conservation, forestry, agriculture and land sectors was presented. The Declaration of Intent included an introductory section highlighting the problems and opportunities, and the Indicative Action Plan mentioned above. Copies of the draft Declaration of Intent were distributed to participants at the close of Day 1 of the event.

Reflections on the draft proposal

At the beginning of the Day 2, the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) represented by its Regional Forester was invited to share its reflections on the IDH proposal and Declaration of Intent. The Regional Forester expressed FDA’s overall support for the proposed interventions.

Following the FDA's remarks, participants were asked whether they felt that the Declaration of Intent, particularly the Indicative Action Plan, was a useful way to proceed. Participants unanimously agreed that it was a useful way to initiate the collaboration among stakeholders. The draft was then opened for review and revision. Following plenary deliberation on the draft, minimal revisions were made to the Declaration of Intent. The final Declaration of intent is attached to the report.

Other stakeholders attending the event were then invited to share their reflections as well.

Conservation actors

The REDD+ Implementation Unit within the FDA, expressed support for the IDH proposal and planned intervention, noting "it is a dream come true". He indicated that the FDA and partners have been talking about doing something to combat the savannah for a long-time but little action has been taken to date.

The Project Manager of a REDD+ pilot project in the Wonegizi Proposed Protected Area spoke on behalf of Fauna and Flora International, reminding participants that the overall goal of the proposed intervention was to conserve forest and stop the savannah from spreading. She therefore cautioned that while profits and money were good incentives, stakeholders should always aim to balance their desire for profit and money with their conservation agenda.

Participants from the private sector

The President of the Rubber Planters Association of Liberia noted that this was a good opportunity for the people to do something about the savannah while at the same time generating income. She pointed that many smallholders in the rubber sector are struggling because of low prices, therefore association is now encouraging planters to diversify in terms of the trees or cash crops they grow on their farms through intercropping. She concluded by urging the people of Foya to consider oil palm and other tree crops including rubber, so that if global prices of one commodity drop, they will still have viable income from the other crops.

A representative of Sime Darby Plantations Liberia stressed that it was good to be starting the intervention at the local level, i.e. starting with the community and moving up. He suggested that while working on the land-use plan proposed in the Declaration of Intent, stakeholders should identify the present types of land holdings in the area, including deeded land, public and customary land, and outline how investors can access land in the area. He stressed that land to be given to investors should be free of encumbrances, concluding that there was a need to research former companies that operated in the area to find out whether they still have rights to their old concession.

A representative of Twin Trader (UK) highlighted the benefits of close collaboration between private sector and farmers, drawing on the company's experience in Sierra Leone. He also pointed out that when producers or farmers take action to protect forest during their farming, they can expect positive reactions from the market, noting that consumers prefer such products because the farmers protect the forest when growing their crops.

Adoption of Declaration of Intent

Following the reflections from other actors, the Declaration of Intent was read one last time. At the end of the reading, cross-section of the participants confirmed that they were in agreement with the text, and there was no objection. The participants then adopted the Declaration of Intent by acclamation concluding with a standing ovation.

Review and approval of draft ToRs

The draft Terms of References for the Contact Group and the Technical Working Group were presented for review in plenary. The Terms of References were approved with modifications to the membership of the Technical Working Group, to include the Ministry of Agriculture. Once the modifications were made, the participants approved the Terms of References for the Technical Working Group and the Contact Group.

Stakeholder identification

The facilitator opened a plenary discussion to develop a list of stakeholders that should be involved in follow-up activities leading to the development of the land-use plan and Green Growth Compact, the consultation on the draft compact, and the implementation of the adopted compact. A stakeholder was defined as people or organizations that fit within one of these categories:

- a. Would individually or collectively have an interest in the project or program;
- b. Is likely to be impacted negatively or positively by the development and implementation of the Green Growth Compact in the region;
- c. Is likely to be involved in the design and implementation of the Green Growth Compact and related activities as part of its mandate or areas of work; and
- d. Statutory authorities, including line ministries and agencies that have mandates related to the development and implementation of the Green Growth Plan and related activities.

The preliminary list of stakeholder groups and summary description of the groups is found in annexes.

Closing remarks

Following the adoption of the Declaration, the facilitator invited three local officials to make closing remarks. All the officials thanked IDH for organizing the event and pledged their commitment to work for the successful implementation of the action plan contained in the Declaration of Intent. The workshop was formally closed following these remarks.

Annexes

Annex 1

Declaration of Intent

**Declaration of Intent towards the establishment of
a GREEN GROWTH COMPACT
to Enhance Agriculture Production,
Secure Livelihoods and Promote Forest Conservation
in Foya, Kolahun and Vahun Districts of Lofa County, Liberia.**

We, the below listed individuals from local government, traditional leadership, farmers cooperatives, women groups and NGOs, came together in Foya City on June 6 and 7, 2018 during a multi-stakeholder dialogue on forests, agriculture and investment in Lofa County.

Having discussed the significant threats posed by the advancement of the savannah in Lofa County, more specifically in the Foya districts and as related to the following:

- Deforestation and loss of natural forest to the advancing savannah grassland;
- Disappearing biodiversity and extinction of some wildlife animal and plant species;
- Unsustainable use of forest resources and poor farming practices;
- Constant fire outbreak;
- Loss of water and water resources;
- Exposure of local communities to devastating effects of heavy winds and storms;
- Threat to local livelihoods posed by the destruction of the local eco-system; and
- Absence of sufficient external investments to tackle the gradual advance of the savannah.

Having discussed the considerable opportunities offered by the agricultural sector to the districts of Foya, Kolahun and Vahun, such opportunities include:

- Availability of land in the region for agricultural investments;
- Existing knowledge among local communities in tree crop production;
- Suitable agro-ecological conditions; and
- Strong local interest in slowing the spread of the savannah.

We have decided to work toward establishing a Green Growth Compact, which is a multi-stakeholder agreement to enhance agricultural production, secure livelihoods and promote forest conservation, including re-greening of the Foya District and protecting of forests in Vahun and Kolahun Districts. This will be pursued through the following means:

1. Developing a *Green Growth Land Use Plan* through a participatory process and bottom to top approach;
2. Mobilize one or more companies for a tree crop plantation, outgrower scheme and agro-processing investment;
3. Massive bottom-up re-greening actions including mobilizing farmers and communities for protecting natural regeneration, increasing the number of on-farm trees, and lowering the risk of wild fires; and

4. Mobilizing stakeholders in the three districts, national and international NGOs and other stakeholders to jointly develop and implement the Green Growth Compact.

Our first target will be the setting up a **Contact Group** and a **Technical Working Group** that will lead work on the action plan below.

We commit to work together to pursue the following action points within the below mentioned timelines.

Timeline of Activities

1. Declaration of Intent	June 2018
2. Establish a Contact Group	June 2018
3. Form a Technical Working Group	June 2018
4. Socio-economic baseline study	July 2018
5. Initiate dialogue with potential investors	July 2018
6. Develop high-level draft land use plan	August 2018
7. Draft a Multi Stakeholder Agreement	August 2018
8. Scope Bottom up re-greening initiatives	August 2018
9. Convene 2 nd Multi Stakeholder Dialogue	September 2018
10. Initiate consultation on draft agreement	September 2018
11. Agree on first re-greening initiatives	September 2018
12. Invite potential investors to conduct pre-feasibility studies	October 2018

This Declaration of Intent is done under our hands and adopted by acclamation by the participants at this multi stakeholder dialogue on June 7, 2018.

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June 7, 2018

1. Background

IDH, with financial support from the Norwegian International Climate and Forest Initiative, began researching opportunities for investments in agribusinesses that will contribute to forest conservation in Lofa and combat the expansion of savannah grassland in Foya District, northern Liberia. On June 6 & 7, 2018 IDH convened a multi stakeholder dialogue to initiate discussions on how to mobilize large scale re-greening efforts including tree crop planting, and natural regeneration, that contributes to conserving forest in the region, restoring vegetation to savannah areas, and improving local livelihoods. During the dialogue, IDH presented a proposal outlining how stakeholders in the region could work with the government, conservation organizations, civil society and the private sector, to attract private sector investment in agribusinesses, mainly for tree crops that would contribute to forest conservation in Lofa, restore vegetation to savannah grasslands in Foya District, and promote new economic opportunities for the people.

Stakeholders agreed on a series of priority actions to lay the foundation for a Green Growth Compact, i.e. a multi stakeholder agreement to enhance agriculture production, secure livelihoods, and promote forest conservation in Lofa, commencing with early actions in Foya, Kolahun and Vahun Districts. The Compact would aim to create a strong link between the management of natural resources, sustainable agriculture production, and community livelihoods. It would be based on participatory land use planning and management, whereby land for production, livelihoods and protection is clearly identified, and their related uses are agreed upon by the stakeholders in the region and recognized by local and national governments. It will include time bound and quantified targets, a concrete plan of action, clear definition of roles and responsibilities, a budget for implementation, a governance system and a monitoring mechanism to track progress against targets.

At the end of the dialogue, stakeholders agreed to establish a Contact Group and a Technical Working Group to take forward the action points laid out in the Declaration of Intent. The Contact Group and Technical Working Group will work towards securing stakeholder support for a Green Growth Compact for the region. This Terms of Reference outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Technical Working Group.

Roles and responsibilities

The Technical Working Group will lead on the implementation of the technical components of the action plan and periodically share updates with the Contact Group. The specific roles and responsibilities of the Technical Working Group include:

1. Develop plan for outreach to stakeholders in Vahun and Kolahun districts;
2. Work with the LLA to develop a proposal for a land-use planning process in the region;
3. Work with LLA to develop a high-level draft land-use plan;
4. Develop a shortlist of companies to engage and invite to the region;
5. Develop ToR for a socio-economic baseline study;
6. Draft the Green Growth Compact;
7. Initiate dialogue with potential companies;
8. Convene 2nd multi stakeholder dialogue and present draft Compact;
9. Initiate consultation on draft Compact with stakeholders in the three districts;
10. Periodically brief the Contact Group on progress; and

11. Support companies to carry out pre-feasibility studies.

Membership & Leadership

The Technical Working Group will comprise of technicians that will work with IDH to implement the technical components of the Indicative Action Plan. The group will include:

1. Forestry Development Authority²
2. Liberia Land Authority
3. Ministry of Agriculture
4. World Resource Institute
5. One representative of conservation NGOs
6. One representative of social NGOs
7. IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative

IDH will coordinate the activities of the Technical Working Group.

Indicative schedule

The Technical Working will meet twice a month in Monrovia. The group will develop work plan using the Indicative Action Plan as the basis during its first meeting.

² The REDD+ Implementation Unit, Conservation and Community Forestry Department

Background

IDH, with financial support from the Norwegian International Climate and Forest Initiative, began researching opportunities for investments in agribusinesses that will contribute to forest conservation in Lofa and combat the expansion of savannah grassland in Foya District, northern Liberia. On June 6 & 7, 2018 IDH convened a multi stakeholder dialogue to initiate discussions on how to contribute to conserving forest in the region, restoring vegetation to savannah areas, and improving local livelihoods through investment in agriculture. During the dialogue, IDH presented a proposal outlining how stakeholders in the region, could work with the government, conservation organizations, civil society and the private sector, to attract private sector investment in agribusinesses that would contribute to forest conservation in Lofa, restore vegetation to savannah grasslands in Foya District, and promote new economic opportunities for the people.

Stakeholder agreed on series of priority actions to lay the foundation for a *“Multi Stakeholder Agreement to Enhance Agriculture Production, Secure Livelihoods, and Promote Forest Conservation”* in Lofa, commencing with early actions Foya, Kolahun and Vahun Districts. The agreement would aim to create a strong link between the management of natural resources, sustainable agriculture production, and community livelihoods. It would be based on participatory land use planning and management, whereby land for production, livelihoods and protection is clearly identified, and their related uses are agreed upon by the stakeholders in the region and recognized by local and national governments. It will include time bound and quantified targets, a concrete plan of action, clear definition of roles and responsibilities, a budget for implementation, a governance system and a monitoring mechanism to track progress against targets.

At the end of the dialogue, stakeholders agreed to establish a Contact Group to take forward the action points laid out in the Declaration of Intent and work towards securing stakeholder support for a Multi Stakeholder Agreement for the region. Through the members, IDH will share periodic updates with stakeholders and invite guidance on or inputs to planned activities.

Roles and responsibilities

The Contact Group will serve as a forum for information sharing and updates on the agreed action points coming of the multi stakeholder dialogue, providing guidance to IDH on issues that emerge during the implementation of the action plan, and participating in high-level engagements with relevant government agencies as the need arises.

The specific roles and responsibilities of the members of the Contact Group include:

1. Participate in monthly meetings to receive updates on the implementation of the Action Plan from the dialogue;
2. Provide specific guidance to IDH and the Technical Working Group established to implement the Action Plan;
3. Report back to stakeholder groups that they represent periodically and keep them informed of progress;
4. Attend meetings or briefing sessions with potential investors visiting the region in response to invitation from IDH and the Technical Working Group;
5. Support the implementation of activities under the action plan by participation in events organized by consultants and NGOs visiting the region as part of this effort;

6. Monitor activities, for example, large land allocation/ acquisition within the region, that may have implication for this initiative and share information about the actors and activities;
7. Prepare minutes of every meeting and file for future references; and
8. Carry out other activities not detailed in this ToR but arise out of the implementation of the action plan.

Membership & Leadership

The Contact Group should be inclusive, i.e. made up of individuals from different stakeholder groups. The members are:

8. Assistant Superintendent for Development
9. District Superintendent (Foya)
10. District Commissioner (Foya)
11. Paramount Chief (Foya)
12. Conservation NGOs working in the region (2)
13. Local NGOs working on relevant issues (2)
14. IDH Sustainable Trade Initiative
15. Forestry Development Authority
16. County Land Commissioner
17. County Agriculture Officer
18. District Agriculture Officer
19. Local private sector/ Cooperatives (2)
20. Women Representatives (5)

The County Assistant Superintendent for Development will chair the Contact Group. The members will elect the other corps of officers during their first sitting.

Indicative schedule

The working group will meet once every month. The group will develop an indicative schedule during its first meeting.

Annex 4

Provisional stakeholder groups

1. District authorities or local government officials. This group included individuals that are included in the Ministry of Internal Affairs structure and are formally recognized in regulations issued by the ministry. They included the:
 - a. Mayor of the City of Foya;
 - b. District Superintendent of Foya District;
 - c. District Commissioner of Foya District;
 - d. Paramount Chief of Foya Chiefdom;
 - e. Assistant Superintendent for Development of Foya District;
 - f. Seven (7) Chiefs of the Clan that make up Foya District; and
 - g. Sixteen (16) General Town Chiefs that head each of the sections in the 7 Clans.
2. Other government ministries and agencies that are either present in the region or are required to be present in the region, and involved in one of the sectors that would be impacted by the intervention. They included the ministries of:
 - a. Agriculture
 - b. Health
 - c. Education
 - d. Forestry Development Authority
 - e. Environmental Protection Agency
 - f. Liberia Land Authority
3. Women leaders that have emerged as a result of efforts to involve women in local decision making processes in a consistent manner. Although these women in leadership positions are based on informal community structures, local government authorities and other stakeholders nevertheless recognize them as women leaders. The key women leaders include the:
 - a. District Chairlady
 - b. Seven (7) Clan Chairladies
 - c. Sixteen (16) Sectional Chairladies
 - d. Forty-eight (48) Zonal Chairladies
 - e. Ninety-six (96) Town Chairladies
4. Women organizations or groups that are widely recognized in the district and active in local decision-making processes, but do not have statutory mandates as well:
 - a. Rural Women (*spread in different parts of the district*);
 - b. Market Women; and
 - c. Liberia Cross Border Women.
5. Youths across the district have leadership structures that are based on statutory leadership structures. Although these youth leaders do not have formal status, the local government official or statutory authorities duly recognized them as representatives of youths at the various levels. They include
 - a. District Youth Leader
 - b. Clan Youth Leader (7)
 - c. Section Youth Leader (16)
 - d. Zonal Youth Leader (48)
 - e. Town Youth Leaders

6. Farmer's Cooperatives and farmer's organizations are common in the region. They are involved in both food and cash crop production. Some are more active than others but those that were listed include:
 - a. Intofowar;
 - b. Maliando; and
 - c. Meinah Farmer's Cooperative (Konabeh).
7. Liberia Marketing Association
8. Physically-challenged peoples (*not organized into a formal structure*)
9. Local non-profit organizations or associations that are considered relevant, i.e. currently working on one of the areas of focus including forestry, land and agriculture. The NGOs at the county and district levels that are tentatively considered include:
 - a. District Security Council (DSC);
 - b. Mitigating Local Disputes in Liberia, works with the DSC; and
 - c. Social Empowerment through Learning in Liberia (SELL, based in Foya).
10. International NGOs and national NGO platforms
 - a. Fauna & Flora International
 - b. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
 - c. Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia
 - d. Civil Society Working Group on Palm Oil
 - e. NGO Coalition of Liberia
11. Private sector

Annex 5

Workshop photo's



