Annex 3. Basic assessment of community needs in Korninga Chiefdom, Sallouyou Community, and Zaye Town community

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1. Background

In 2010, the Liberia Forestry Development Authority (FDA) started allocating a new type of logging permit called the private use permit (PUP), to allow for logging on private land. The PUP had been introduced in the National Forestry Reform Law (NFRL) of 2006 to address a question that had long been ignored in Liberian forest policy and law: what to do with high value commercial timber species on private land. The question had become unavoidable because the two main categories of logging permits, i.e. forest management contract (FMC) and timber sale contract (TSC), could not be granted on private land.

For an FMC to be valid, the contract area must not include private land.[1] The minimum size of an FMC is 50,000 hectares and the maximum is 400,000 ha. Similarly, for a TSC to be valid, the contract area must not include private land,[2] and it must cover no more than 5,000 ha. Given that both permits specifically exclude private land, a key debate that emerged during the drafting of the legislation was how then would logging take place on private land? The decision was to introduce a third category of logging permits called PUP.

The NFRL required the FDA to establish standard qualifications for persons wishing to conduct logging under PUPs by Regulation.[3] When the FDA started issuing PUPs in 2010, it had not yet developed the regulation itself. By 2012, the forestry authorities had allocated PUPs covering about 25 per cent of Liberia's land area. Civil society challenged the legality of these PUPs and requested an independent investigation; President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf constituted the Special Independent Investigation Body (SIIB) to investigate the scandal.

In December 2012, the SIIB issued its report[4] and recommended cancellation of all PUPs, citing widespread illegalities and fraud in the allocation process for PUPs. The report concluded that:

> *The level of abuse of power and public trust that characterized the transactional relationship that evolved amongst various actors in the forestry sector was led and sanctioned by FDA. The legal framework, including the National Forestry Reform Law (NFRL), Community Rights Law (CRL), Public Procurement and Concessions Act (PPCA), FDA regulations, and other laws have been wilfully violated to such an extent that the effective governance and management of the forestry sector has been undermined and its viability threatened.*

All the PUPs have since been cancelled and several senior officials of the FDA found guilty of various crimes linked to the allocation and operation of PUPs.

2. Global Witness complaint against DLH

The Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), Save My Future Foundation, and Global Witness worked together to expose the fraud and illegalities that characterized the allocation of the majority of the PUPs. Following the SIIB investigation and cancellation of the PUPs, Global Witness brought a complaint against DLH[5] to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) for buying timber from two companies – Global Logging Company (GLC) and Liberia Hardwood Company (LHC). GLC had extracted timber under PUP 3 in the Zaye Town community and PUP 9 in the Sallouyou community. DLH had also purchased timber from PUP 17 operated by LHC in Korninga Chiefdom. The complaint alleged that DLH had

[1] Section 5.3(ii) of the National Forestry Reform Law of 2006.
[2] Section 5.4(ii).
[3] Section 5.2a(iii).
[4] SIIB Report available at: http://www.cental.org/SIIB%20Report%20on%20PUPs.pdf
[5] Global Witness complaint available at: https://www.globalwitness.org/sites/default/files/library/formal%20complaint%20to%20fsc%20regarding%20dlh_final.pdf

purchased 1,281.305 m^3 of timber extracted from the three communities; the timber was valued at USD304,870.

On 15 February 2015, FSC issued a statement disassociating itself from DLH and suspending the company's FSC licences.[6] According to the statement, the decision was made after "in-depth research, by an impartial complaints panel, concluded that DLH had been involved in unacceptable activities in Liberia, specifically the trade of illegal timber". FSC put forward some conditions for restoring its relationship with DLH including that:

- *An action plan has been developed and implemented based on the free, prior and informed consent of the affected communities in Liberia, and monitored by a renowned NGO, to compensate the communities in Liberia affected by the Private Use Permits DLH was sourcing from, for the losses and lost income they incurred, and to restore potentially converted natural forest or destroyed high conservation values. The action plan shall be approved by the FSC Board prior to its implementation.*

- *Thorough third party verification confirms that DLH due diligence systems are meeting relevant best practice standards, both on paper and in practice, across a range of different operating high risk locations, to make sure that events like the ones in Liberia are not repeated.*

- *Costs incurred by FSC for the establishment and work of the complaints panel are covered.*

3. DLH action to comply with the FSC decision

To fulfil the FSC requirement to present and implement an action plan to compensate the communities in Liberia affected by the timber trade, which led to the FSC disassociation from DLH, and to develop the due diligence system requested to avoid future illegal timber trade, DLH turned to NEPCon for support. NEPCon provides certification services and FSC-related audits to DLH and is also assisting DLH to develop a due diligence system to ensure that the risk of trading illegal timber is reduced.

NEPCon is a Danish NGO that implements projects and supports sustainable natural resource management and livelihood improvements through development projects. At the same time, NEPCon is a certification body for FSC, elaborates risk assessments for FSC International, and provides client services related to FSC certification.[7] NEPCon is also a monitoring organization for the EU Timber Regulation.

NEPCon requested SDI to conduct a community needs assessment to inform the development of the action plan. According to NEPCon, DLH indicated that it was willing to spend up to EUR100,000 over a two-year period to fund agreed projects in the affected communities. Possible activities to be considered included:

[6] FSC press statement available at: https://ic.fsc.org/dlh-liberia.739.htm
[7] See http://www.nepcon.net

1. Improved natural resource utilization,
2. Sustainable development,
3. Restoration of converted natural forests,
4. Awareness building of community rights to natural resources,
5. General support to communities.

4. The needs assessment

Following a series of exchanges with NEPCon and a meeting in Oslo in early 2015, SDI accepted to conduct the needs assessment free-of-charge for NEPCon. During the discussions and exchanges with NEPCon, SDI made it clear that it would not accept payment from DLH – directly or indirectly – and that it was supporting the process because it felt that it had a moral responsibility to deliver the information to the communities, because of the organization's engagement with these communities.

From 13 to 15 August 2015, SDI conducted community needs assessments comprising three town-level meetings and one general meeting in Korninga Chiefdom,[8] Gbarpolu County in north-western Liberia. In District No.1 of Grand Bassa County similar meetings were conducted in Zaye Town community and Sallouyou community[9] from 15 to 19 September 2015. The aim of these assessments was to identify project activities that would contribute to addressing the damage done to communities from the illegal logging and sale of timber from PUP.

5. Methodology

The assessment involved two-day trips to each region preceded by community mobilization in each location. This involved contacting the community forestry development committees (CFDCs) in the region or a member of the community forest management body (CFMB) that was constituted for the PUP in the area. The contact was then requested to share very basic information about the planned assessment and agree on a date for the actual meeting.

In both regions, SDI used a combination of participatory rural appraisal techniques to conduct the needs assessment. These included focus-group discussions, community assemblies, and participatory priority-ranking exercises. The focus-group discussions were used to facilitate smaller units of stakeholder meetings, i.e. women only, youths only, and elders only. The community assemblies brought those that participated in the focus groups together to report and further deliberate on the outcomes of each focus group. Based on the report from the groups, a consolidated list of needs was developed. Each participant was then asked to rank the needs using the consolidated list of needs. The results were tabulated and the top two priorities adopted as the needs to be communicated to NEPCon.

[8] Joseph Higgins (Civil Society Independent Forest Monitors) and Daniel Krakue (Social Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development) conducted the assessment in Korninga Chiefdom.
[9] Silas Kpanan Ayoung Siakor conducted the assessment along with William Page in Zaye Town and Sallouyou.

A total of 42 persons (22 men and 20 women) participated in the town-level meetings in Gbelleta, Gainkpa, and Tawalata.[10] A total of 40 persons (24 men and 16 women) participated in the general meeting in Henry Town (Korninga Chiefdom).[11] Participants at the town-level meetings selected 30 of their peers to attend the general meeting.

In District No. 1, Grand Bassa County, a total of 56 persons (30 men and 26 women) participated in the community meeting in Sallayou.[12] In Zaye Town, 33 persons (19 men and 14 women) participated in the meeting.[13]

6. Findings

The affected communities visited in the two regions comprise of a cluster of villages. In Sallouyou community (comprising three villages: Gboewein, New Town, and Sallouyou) and Zaye Town community (comprising four villages), each village is made up of between 10 and 20 houses. There were no population data, but on average each village is estimated to have no more than 100 inhabitants.

In both regions, these villages lack or have limited access to basic services such as safe drinking water, a functioning primary school for children, a clinic or facility that provides maternal care for women. The roads to these communities are also poor and travel for most of the year is difficult, making vehicular travel during emergencies very costly.

The tables below present the lists of critical needs generated during each of the community meetings. From the list of critical needs, the key priorities were identified. The rankings of the priorities are also presented in the tables below. A brief explanation regarding the priorities in each table is presented below the respective table.

Sallouyou community

Type of project	**List of priorities from FGDs**	**Individual prioritization**	**Rank**
Hand pump – will make clean water available and thereby prevents numerous illnesses	3	11	2nd
Guesthouse – to host strangers instead of having to inconvenience families to host guests coming into the community	1	2	4th
School – will ensure education of children and adults (this activity	3	4	3rd

[10] See Annex A for participants at the three town-level meetings in Korninga Chiefdom.
[11] See Annex B for participants at the general meeting in Henry Town, Korninga Chiefdom.
[12] See Annex C for participants at the meeting in Sallouyou.
[13] See Annex D for participants at the meeting in Zaye Town.

includes an honorarium for teachers)			
Latrine – will ensure a clean local environment and thereby prevent many diseases	1	2	4th
Zinc – metal sheets for roofing to secure a dry environment in the houses	4	37	1st
Total no. of participants		56	

Although the majority of the participants prioritized zinc, managing the distribution will be difficult for the reasons explained above. The provision of safe drinking water should be prioritized for this community.

Zaye Town community

Type of project	**List of priorities from FGDs**	**Individual prioritization**	**Rank**
School	3	21	1st
Clinic – a basic construction with some basic equipment and furniture for local first aid	2	2	3rd
Midwifery house – a basic construction with some equipment and furniture for giving birth and support for midwifes	2	10	2nd
Total no. of participants		33	

As explained earlier, the absence of a dedicated space for women in childbirth impacts on privacy for the mother and the health of the child. Supporting the construction of a midwifery house will be of immense benefit to members of the community, especially women.

Korninga Chiefdom

Type of project	**List of priorities from FGDs**	**Individual prioritization**	**Rank**
Training and awareness on community rights with respect to natural resources	1	3	3rd
Guesthouse	1	1	5th
Midwifery house	3	17	1st
Hand pumps	4	13	2nd
Toilet / latrines	2	2	4th

Rice mill – for processing locally produced rice	1	1	5th
Community radio station – improve community access to news and other community interest information	1	3	3rd
Total no. of participants		40	

For the same reasons explained above, the construction of the midwifery centre should be supported as a priority. The midwifery house will be used by traditional birth attendants (TBAs) to attend to women in labour. At the moment, the TBAs attend to women in labour in their private homes, which are not conducive for health and privacy reasons.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

Given the level of deprivation in these communities, their priorities were therefore focused on meeting some of their most basic needs, including safe drinking water, maternal care for women, and primary school for infants and teenagers. In one community participants prioritized zinc for roofing even though there is no safe drinking water in the community.

The top two priorities for the cluster of communities in Korninga Chiefdom were constructing a house to provide facility for attending to women during labour, and constructing hand pumps to provide safe drinking water. The top two priorities for people of Zaye Town was constructing the primary school that Global Logging promised them when it came to log in the area and a house to provide facility for attending to women during labour. In Sallouyou Town, residents prioritized purchasing zinc and distributing it across the three towns that make up the Section and constructing hand pumps for safe drinking water.

Based on personal observation during the assessment, the prioritization in each community aimed to fulfil major needs that are immediately obvious even to an outsider. However, the prioritization of zinc roofing in Sallouyou, though needed as almost all the houses there have thatch roofs, will be difficult to implement as it will require additional and careful planning to avoid conflict within the community. For example, some houses at the moment house more than one household. When distributing the zinc, the challenge would be whether to distribute based on existing houses (which could exclude some households) or based on households (in which case everyone might describe themselves as a household). On the other hand, there is no hand pump in the Section and investing in the provision of safe drinking water should be carefully considered given that it was the second priority in the area.

The recommendations below are based on an assessment of the needs and priorities identified by the participants at the various meetings, and on the personal observation of the teams.

1. The projects ranked first and second in the list of priorities, where there are more than two projects, should be given priority. This should involve delivering the project and setting aside the remainder of the funds for recurrent or routine maintenance costs.

2. The compensation from DLH should be evenly distributed among the three communities. Given the lack of data on the volume of logs harvested from each community, and considering that all these communities would have received lower royalty amounts based on their memorandum of understanding or social agreement with the companies that logged in their forest, the compensation should be distributed regardless of volume of timber DLH purchased from each community. There is no publicly available data on population; therefore population is not considered a factor in this recommendation.

3. The construction and furnishing of a house to serve as temporary shelter for women in labour should be given top priority in all three communities, even though only two communities prioritized a midwifery house. All of these communities are remote and extremely difficult to reach during most of the year. In the communities where this need was expressed, the women explained the difficulties they face handling women in labour.

4. The provision of safe drinking water through the construction of hand pumps should be given priority. In Sallayou and Zaye Town communities, this need is most apparent as there is no hand-dug well, bore hole, or hand pump in any of the towns. This will be the least costly development project, but the positive health impacts will be significant; several hand pumps could be constructed in various towns within each community. In Korninga Chiefdom, Henry Town has two hand pumps but the other towns do not.

5. In Zaye Town, the community should be supported to construct a primary school for the dozens of teenagers in the towns that have no access to formal education. There are no schools in the community and children of school age are idle throughout the year. The facility could also be used for adult literacy programmes, thereby creating a multiplier effect. To ensure value for money, the community should be requested to provide local materials such as bricks, sand, and rocks, and labour, while the money allocated to them should go towards buying cement, zinc, and other imported materials. The leftover funds should then be spent on instructional materials and honorarium, equal to or slightly less than the amount paid to teachers in other rural areas, to volunteer teachers.[14]

[14] Primary school teachers in Liberia earn as little as USD50.00, therefore stipends to the volunteers could be within the same range.