

Conflict-Sensitive Conservation in Gola Rainforest National Park

Workshop Report

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Kenema, Sierra Leone, August 2, 2011



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Introduction

A workshop on conflict-sensitive conservation (CSC) was held in Kenema, Sierra Leone, on August 2, 2011. The workshop was facilitated by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), and was hosted by the Gola Forest Programme (GFP). The objectives of the workshop were: a) to introduce GFP staff and stakeholders to the CSC methodology; b) to identify existing and potential conflicts affecting the conservation of the Gola Rainforest National Park and the surrounding communities, and prioritize those conflicts which require action; c) to analyse the prioritized conflicts; and d) to identify potential solutions through which the GFP can address these conflicts.

For a full list of participants and the workshop agenda, please see Annex 1 and 2.

Conservation context **Presentation by Alusine Fofanah, Protected Area Manager, GFP**

Gola Rainforest National Park

The Gola rainforest covers 71,070 hectares, making it the largest remaining tract of closed canopy rainforest in Sierra Leone. The forest is located in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone on the border with Liberia, and was first gazetted as a forest reserve between 1926 and 1930. The reserve was expanded in 1956 and again in 1963. The forest is an important remnant of the Upper Guinea Rainforest Ecoregion which once spread from Guinea to Togo, of which more than 70 per cent has disappeared since 1900. For a map of the park, please see Annex 3.

Gola rainforest is situated in one of the world's 34 global biodiversity hotspots; as such, it has been prioritized for conservation investment. Six per cent of the species recorded in the park are of global conservation concern, including the pygmy hippopotamus, picathartes, bongo, chimpanzee and zebra duiker. In addition, the park provides critical ecosystem services to the communities which surround it: watershed protection, climate stabilization, soil conservation, pollination, pest control, fisheries and non-timber forest products.

The Gola Forest Programme

The Gola Forest Programme (GFP) was established in the 1990s as a partnership between the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) and the Department of Forestry of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Food Security (MAFFS) of the Government of Sierra Leone. This establishment of the GFP led to increased engagement and benefit-sharing with the surrounding communities and the development of a management plan for the reserve in 2006–2007. In 2009, the governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone agreed to the creation of a transboundary peace park across their shared border, between Gola and the contiguous

Lofa and Foya forest reserves in Liberia (which, once plans are fully implemented, would protect a forested landscape of approximately 300,000 hectares). In 2010, with strong support from the office of the President, Gola Forest Reserve was declared Sierra Leone's second national park.

The GFP was established to “protect and manage the biodiversity and ecological processes of the Gola Forest in partnership with local communities and other stakeholders, for the benefit of the Gola communities and the nation of Sierra Leone, and through sound protected area management and sustained financing and benefit sharing.” The Programme's main sources of funding are the European Union (€3.0 million), the French Fund for the Global Environment (€1.1 million), and a number of other funders, including the RSPB, the Global Conservation Fund, the Darwin Initiative and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund.

Park operations are focused on protecting the integrity of the national park, brushing and demarcating boundaries, and providing the necessary infrastructure, access and security to enable effective park management. Fifty forest guards patrol the park, employed mainly from local communities; through their efforts, 21 shotguns and 2,273 snares have been confiscated and removed since 2007. Construction is currently underway on a new park headquarters and staff village, to be situated in Lalehun on the edge of the park.

To ensure community engagement and support of the park, over US\$500,000 in development benefits have been distributed through Forest Management Committees to the park's seven chiefdoms since 2007. Seventy nature clubs have also been established in the area, and radio programming and road shows, as well as community and stakeholder meetings, promote continued community education, outreach and engagement. Tourism remains low (176 foreigners and 119 nationals have visited the park since September 2008), but with investment in infrastructure and services could hold strong potential for increasing the park's profile and revenues.

Conflict-sensitive conservation

Presentation by Alec Crawford, Project Manager, IISD

The management of natural resources is often conflictual (Hammill et al., 2009). The decision to gazette a protected area is often a decision about who can access natural resources and for what purpose. These decisions can often create grievances that can escalate towards conflict. Conservation management is, as a result, often about trying to reconcile competing—and occasionally incompatible—interests in the same natural resources (for example, the use of land for biodiversity protection vs. agriculture vs. mining).

There are three principal ways in which conservation can lead to conflict (Hammill et al., 2009):

1. **Conservation can restrict peoples' access to key livelihood resources.** This can be particularly problematic in areas of high population growth, high levels of poverty and where livelihoods are strongly tied to natural resources.
2. **Conservation can introduce new or additional economic burdens or risks,** such as through crop loss and property damage, or the opportunity costs associated with guarding against wildlife damage.
3. **Conservation can result in the unequal distribution of benefits** if conservation-related revenues and benefits are inequitably distributed, captured by elites or particular identity groups, or reinforce power asymmetries.

Conservation is, of course, not always conflictual. In fact, if designed carefully and implemented in the right context, conservation may contribute to broader peacebuilding efforts. It can do so by addressing the root causes of conflict (such as environmental grievances), addressing the impacts of conflict (such as the environmental degradation associated with war), and supporting an enabling environment for peacebuilding by establishing dialogue and building trust and confidence.

Conflict-sensitive conservation (CSC) is conservation programming and implementation that takes into account the causes, actors and impacts of conflict in order to minimize conflict risks and maximize peace-building opportunities.

The CSC process is divided into two main steps:

The first step is to **analyze the conflict:** to identify the conflict(s) affecting the protected area, prioritize these identified conflicts according to the severity of their impacts, select which conflict(s) to address through conservation interventions, and then analyze the selected conflicts using a set of CSC tools. The GFP workshop focused on this first step. Using the analysis, the second step of the CSC process is to **design, implement and monitor CSC solutions.**

Conflict identification

Plenary discussion

The first exercise of the workshop, conducted in a plenary discussion with all participants, was to identify all current (and potential) conservation-related conflicts affecting Gola Rainforest National Park and the activities of the Gola Forest Programme. A variety of conflicts were identified, and they can be broadly placed in six categories: wildlife–human conflicts, resource access conflicts, benefit-sharing conflicts, policy-related conflicts, park–people conflicts and transboundary conflicts. The full list of conflicts, along with short descriptions, can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Current and potential conflicts identified for the Gola Rainforest National Park

Conflict	Short description	Conflict type
Wildlife–human conflicts	Conflicts between local communities and animals resulting from damage incurred to crops and communities, particularly relating to chimpanzees and monkeys. No funding mechanism in place to compensate for community losses.	Wildlife–human conflicts
Iron ore/minerals	Conflicts from pressures to open the park up to mineral exploration and extraction as opposed to conservation. Tensions between the immediate use of natural resources for revenue and the conservation of those natural resources for ecosystem services, biodiversity and future generations.	Resource access conflicts
Logging pressures	Conflicts from pressures to open the park up to logging as opposed to conservation. Tensions between the immediate use of natural resources for revenue and the conservation of those natural resources for ecosystem services, biodiversity and future generations.	Resource access conflicts
Hunters vs. rangers	Some hunters, trying to access community forests in which they have the right to hunt, must pass through the national park, and are mistaken for poachers and stopped by rangers.	Resource access conflicts
Boundary demarcation	Lack of clarity, community understanding or respect for park boundaries, leading to encroachment and a fear of resettlement. ¹ Current efforts to brush and demarcate the boundary (as gazetted in the 1920s) using GPS technology have led to occasional conflicts between communities and the park as communities (or their farms) are found to be inside the park boundaries.	Resource access conflicts
Unequal benefit sharing	Perceptions of unequal benefit sharing between communities (chiefdoms initially agreed to receive the same benefits, regardless of size or population), as well as within the communities (with benefits not flowing equally among community members).	Benefit-sharing

¹ Evictions or forced resettlements do not take place. Those who have encroached upon the park for agriculture are allowed to harvest current crops, before ceasing farming activities. Long-standing plantations on or inside the park boundary are being left alone for the time being, with resettlement to be negotiated once a compensatory fund has been established.

Carbon credits	Potential conflicts arising from the infusion and distribution of cash from carbon-related initiatives such as REDD+ (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, including conservation).	Benefit-sharing
Unclear land ownership	Conflicts arising over land tenure rights.	Policy-related conflicts
By-laws	Lack of participation among households in the development of community bylaws relating to natural resource use, and a lack of understanding in those bylaws.	Policy-related conflicts
Trust in conservation management	Mistrust of the conservation authority, which is not viewed as including the communities in park management and whose conservation actions are at times seen as land and forest grabs.	Park-people conflicts
Park access for tourism	Less community-based tourism in the surrounding villages as a result of the increased focus on and investment in Gola tourism.	Park-people conflicts
Transboundary poaching	Poachers from Liberia killing wildlife in the park, with limited scope for coordinated responses due to weak capacity on the Liberian side of the border.	Transboundary conflicts
Migrating animals	Animals leaving the park for community forests, exposing them to hunting (as communities have hunting rights in community forests).	Transboundary conflicts

Conflict prioritization

Identified conflicts were then prioritized according to the severity of their human impacts (i.e., the damage inflicted on peoples' livelihoods) and conservation impacts (i.e., the direct and indirect effects of the conflict on conservation activities). Each conflict was discussed in plenary, and ranked on a scale of high impacts to no impacts; ranked conflicts were then situated on the matrix presented in Figure 1 below, with those conflicts with the highest human and conservation impacts (i.e., the conflicts of highest priority) placed in the top-left square.

Figure 1: The human and conservation impacts of identified conflicts

		Human Impacts			
		High	Medium	Low	None
Conservation Impacts	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Iron ore/minerals – Wildlife–human conflicts – Boundary demarcation – Logging pressures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bylaws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Transboundary poaching /hunting 	
	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Unequal benefit sharing 			
	Low		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Hunters vs. Rangers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Migrating animals 	
	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Unclear land ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trust in conservation management 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Park access for tourism – Distribution of REDD benefits

Conflict selection

Based on the prioritization exercise and as a result of further discussion, four conservation-related conflicts were selected by the participants for group analysis:

- A. Resource access disputes (as a proxy for conflicts over minerals and logging)
- B. Wildlife–human conflicts
- C. Unequal benefit sharing
- D. Boundary demarcation

Group A: Resource-access disputes

Isolated conflicts have arisen over pressures to open the park up to mineral exploration and extraction (particularly with relation to the Bagra Hills iron ore deposits in Tunkia, and some artisanal mining) and logging² as opposed to conservation. The tensions are between the immediate use of natural resources for revenue and the conservation of those natural resources for ecosystem services, biodiversity and future generations.

Root causes of the conflict:

- Poverty
- Greed
- Limited resource availability
- Lack of alternative livelihoods
- Lack of knowledge on conservation
- Low collaboration among various line ministries

Effects of the conflict:

- Deforestation
- Unemployment
- Pollution
- Water depletion
- Loss of community benefits
- Loss of biodiversity
- Global warming

Identified stakeholders:

Provincial Secretaries, landowners, District Councils, Members of Parliament, Paramount Chiefs, GFP, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), Ministry of Mineral Resources, the Environmental Protection Agency, miners and loggers, Forest Management Committees (FMC)

Key relationships: conflictual relationship between GFP and the communities

² A moratorium on logging has recently been enacted, reducing commercial logging pressures.

Suggested solutions:

1. Increase in sensitization, information and education programmes
2. More support for community livelihoods

Group B: Wildlife–human conflicts

Conflicts between local communities and animals resulting from damage incurred to crops and communities, particularly relating to crops raids by chimpanzees and monkeys. No funding mechanism is currently in place to compensate for community losses.

Root causes of the conflict:

- Competition for food
- Type of crop cultivated
- Traditional dependence on bushmeat
- Population pressure
- Ignorance of animal rights
- Local of crop protection methods
- Socioeconomic and cultural reasons

Effects of the conflict:

- Loss of crops
- Loss of endangered species
- Loss of protected area revenue
- Resettlement of forest-edge communities and possible loss of human lives
- Financial burden on the programme
- Animosity towards the animals and the GFP
- Donor fatigue
- Negative impact on research
- Tension between community people and GFP

Identified stakeholders:

Local authorities, CSSL, GFP, Across the River Transboundary Programme, local communities, police, FMC, Parliament, central government

Key relationships: A strong relationship between CSSL and GFP; conflictual relationship between GFP and the local communities, and between the local communities and police

Discussion points:

- There is a need to address the relationship between communities and animals; awareness of animal rights must be built, and respect for those rights must be shown.
- In the extreme case, the potential loss of human life from these conflicts could lead to the resettlement of communities.
- If crops are being destroyed by park animals, then a scheme should be developed to compensate farmers and communities for their losses. This will require a review of the laws governing the park and its management.
- This conflict is multidimensional; there are many interlinking issues, and the effects outnumber the causes.

Suggested solutions:

1. Change the types of crops planted in areas bordering the park
2. Brushing of farms
3. Planting barriers (of thorns , pepper plants, other possibilities) around farms
4. Scaring monkeys
5. Provision of livestock
6. Training of forest guards
7. Frequent community meetings
8. Community awareness-raising
9. Adequate economic empowerment of communities

Group C: Unequal benefit-sharing

There are perceptions of unequal benefit-sharing between communities (chiefdoms initially agreed to the same benefits, regardless of size or population), as well as within the communities (with benefits not flowing equally among community members).

Root causes of the conflict:

- Equal benefit-sharing between chiefdoms of unequal size and population
- Problems with the identification of the real landowners
- Poverty, greed and dishonesty

- Marginalisation of grassroots family members
- Traditional beliefs, roles and responsibilities of beneficiaries
- Lack of proper community representation in the procurement of identified needs

Effects of the conflict:

- Low adoption of program policies
- Unequal participation of community members in programme activities
- Family disputes
- Lack of cooperation between management and community members
- Tensions among different groups and communities
- Low development and underdevelopment
- Lawlessness among grassroots family members
- Disobedience and corruption
- Loss of traditional values and beliefs

Identified stakeholders:

GFP, central government, local government, District Councils, Paramount Chiefs, Section Chiefs, FMC

Key relationships: Good relationships between landowners and the local government, and between landowners and the GFP; bad relationships between landowners and the District Councils

Discussion points:

- Chiefdoms vary in size and population, yet receive equal benefits. This policy needs to be revisited and potentially revised.
- Tensions and conflicts between and within communities will inevitably lead to neglect and the degradation of the environment.
- Traditionally, the elder member of the family (beneficiaries) makes household decisions, and funding disbursements are not always equitable (they are often captured by the head of the household).
- There is a need to identify legitimate landowners and beneficiaries.
- FMCs manage the disbursement of funding, under the supervision of the Gola Forest Team.
- The use of the community development funds is decided by management committees, though this decision-making process is vague and unclear to many. This often results in communities not receiving what they need.

- Land tenure and control problems persist, as registered landowners come forward to claim benefits and find themselves in dispute with those who have been living and working on the land.
- Unequal benefit-sharing with Gola Forest: more benefits currently going to Gola and its management than to the communities. Many think that the forest and its revenues should be equally shared.
- Land boundaries are often not well demarcated, with boundary markers lost or moved. As a result, the exact size of the Gola Forest in each chiefdom is not known. Moving forward, surveys could focus not on size but on the amount of carbon in each area (under a REDD-funding scenario).
- Communities are not being paid to protect the forest, and as a result poachers often enter unhindered.

Suggested solutions:

1. Need to revisit benefit-sharing agreements
2. A massive sensitization program for community members about benefit-sharing procedures is needed

Group D: Boundary demarcation

In some areas there is a lack of clarity, community understanding or respect for the park boundaries, leading to encroachment and a fear of resettlement or—wrongly—eviction. Current efforts to clarify the boundary using GPS to brush and demarcate the boundary (gazetted in the 1920s) have led to occasional conflicts between communities and the park as communities are made aware that they (or their farms) are inside the park boundaries.

Root causes of the conflict:

- No permanent infrastructure to mark the park boundary
- Lack of maintenance
- Population growth
- Lack of awareness of boundary before settlement
- Improved surveying techniques (such as the use of Global Positioning Systems, GPS) are not understood by the community

Effects of the conflict:

- Tension between the GFP and the community
- Encroachment
- Distrust about the intentions and purpose of conservation
- Loss of revenues
- Increase in poverty
- Hostility among community members

Identified stakeholders:

Central government, MAFFS, GFP, local authorities, FMC, community

Key relationships: Good relationship among the GFP, the forest management committees, and the local authorities; bad relationships between GFP and the communities, and the FMC and the community

Discussion point:

The 1926–1930 demarcation established the park boundary using stone cairns. These boundary piles were not maintained, and had been overrun by the forest or moved over time. Recent efforts to use GPS coordinates to re-establish the park boundary have resulted in some conflict, as individuals and communities discover that, often contrary to their own understanding (or declared understanding), they are farming or living inside the park and will have to move. Boundary disputes are most pronounced in Malema chiefdom.

Suggested solutions:

1. Capacity building of all stakeholders on boundary issues and GFP operations
2. Involvement of community people in boundary demarcation

Next steps

The one-day workshop was brought to a close following the conflict analysis. The next step for the GFP will be to use the findings of this analysis to **design, implement and monitor** conflict-sensitive conservation strategies which address conflict risks and enhance peacebuilding opportunities. When (re-)designing these conservation activities, the GFP should consider consulting with relevant stakeholder groups, supporting dialogue among these group, negotiating with conflict parties, and acting as a third party mediator between groups when one is required. More information on how to design, implement and monitor CSC activities can be found in the

IISD Conflict-Sensitive Conservation manual, which can be downloaded at:

http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2009/csc_manual.pdf.

Annex 1: List of Participants

Name	Organization
Hon. Lansana Kemokai	Member of Parliament, Government of Sierra Leone
Hon. Alhaji Jobson Momoh	Member of Parliament, Government of Sierra Leone
Hon. Solomon Feika	Member of Parliament, Government of Sierra Leone
Hon. Sam-May Macarthy	Member of Parliament, Government of Sierra Leone
Hon. Mareneb Kallon	Member of Parliament, Government of Sierra Leone
Alhaji Karmoh	Paramount Chief
Prince Kanneh	Paramount Chief
Alameen Kanneh	Paramount Chief
Vandi Magono	Representative of Paramount Chief
Saudi Koroma	Representative of Paramount Chief
Koroma Tyah	Representative of Paramount Chief
G.G. Banya	Provincial Secretary
Morrison Koroma	District Forestry Officer
Mannah Swarray	Gola Forest Programme
Alusine Fofanah	Gola Forest Programme
Daniel Sama	Gola Forest Programme
Francis Massaquoi	Gola Forest Programme
Fomba Kanneh	Gola Forest Programme
Finando Palmer	Gola Forest Programme
Sullay Mohamed	Gola Forest Programme
Mohamed Massaquoi	Gola Forest Programme
Edward Sheriff	Gola Forest Programme
Senesie Samai	Gola Forest Programme
Michael Moigua	Gola Forest Programme
Joseph Kenneh	Gola Forest Programme
Tamba Vandi	Gola Forest Programme
Charles Conteh	Gola Forest Programme
Mohamed Sheriff	Gola Forest Programme
Theresa Gbonda	Gola Forest Programme
Saffa Moriba	Across the River Transboundary Programme
Alfred Roberts	Across the River Transboundary Programme
Philip Allieu	Across the River Transboundary Programme
Saffa Ansumana	Across the River Transboundary Programme
Patrick Kallon	Across the River Transboundary Programme
Sallay Kokoer	Across the River Transboundary Programme

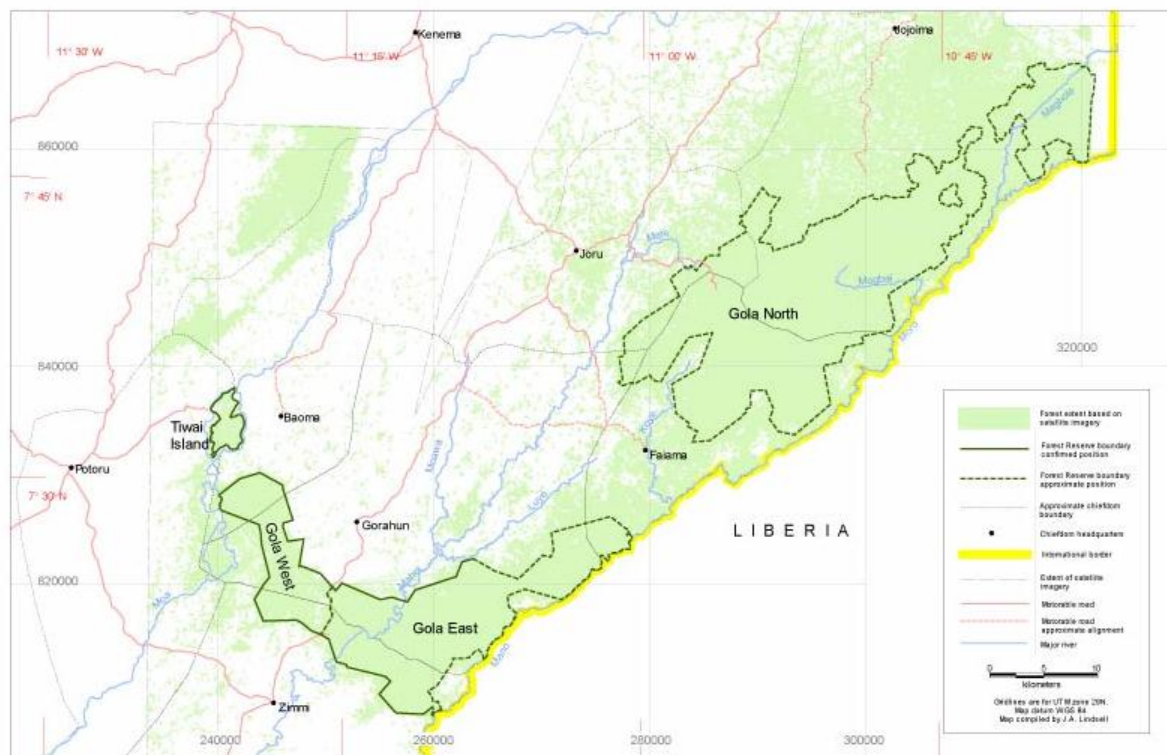
Annex 2: Workshop Agenda

Conflict-Sensitive Conservation in Gola National Park

August 2, 2011, in Kenema, Sierra Leone

9:00	Chair's introduction	Oli Brown
9:15	Opening address	Paramount chief Provincial Secretaries Member of Parliament District Council chairman
10:00	Introductory address on GFP	Alusine Fofanah
10:30	<i>Coffee break</i>	
10:45	Identification of conflicts	Plenary (Lead: Alec Crawford)
11:30	Prioritization of conflicts	Plenary (Lead: Alec Crawford)
12:00	<i>Lunch break</i>	
13:00	Conflict tree: introduction	Alec Crawford
13:15	Conflict tree	Groups of 10 (mix of stakeholders)
14h00	Report back	Plenary
14:45	<i>Coffee</i>	
15h00	Conflict map: introduction	Alec Crawford
15:15	Conflict map	Groups of 10 (mix of stakeholders)
16:15	Report back	
17:00	Conflict-sensitive conservation	Alec Crawford
17:30	Close	

Annex 3: Map of Gola Rainforest National Park



References

Hammill, A., Crawford, A., Craig, R., Malpas, R. & Matthew R. (2009) *Conflict-Sensitive Conservation: Practitioners' Manual*. Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development.