

## ITTO-IUFRO-FORNESSA PROJECT

# Reducing Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Enhancing Environmental Services from Forests (REDDES)

### Pilot Site in Liberia



#### *“Collaborative participation to fight forest degradation in the Yorma National Forest”*

- Area: 2 696 ha
- Altitude: 115 m
- Slope: 2 %
- Average annual rainfall: 4 300 mm
- Average annual temperature: 18 °C
- Climate: Tropical climate (wet & dry) FDA, 2008

### Context

With support from the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), IUFRO-SPDC (International Union of Forest Research Organizations - Special Programme for Development of Capacities) and FORNESSA (Forestry Research Network of Sub-Saharan Africa) have embarked on a new project on REDDES (Reducing deforestation and forest degradation and enhancing environmental services from forests) addressing the challenges of deforestation and forest rehabilitation in Africa. The project aims at generating scientific information on specific pilot areas in Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria, and disseminating this

information to policy makers and forest practitioners at the national and regional level.

To this end, national expert groups composed of scientists from various fields have been in the process of conducting comprehensive scientific assessments in the pilot areas. The whole range of aspects such as natural resource related, socio-economic situation and institutional environment impacting, has been covered.

Based on these independent assessments and analyses, specific strategies and actions have been formulated for each pilot area.

### Pilot Site

The pilot site in Liberia is located in the Gola Yorma National Forest (GNF) Yorma National Forest (YNF) and has an area of 2,696 ha. The vegetation is characteristic of lowland per-humid rainforest with swamp areas, dry lands and riparian forest. The high relative humidity of the forest is

attributed to the presence of the Harmattan wind. The forest area can be flooded during the rainy season for a brief period of time. The YNF GNF serves as a sanctuary for many endangered, threatened and endemic wildlife species.

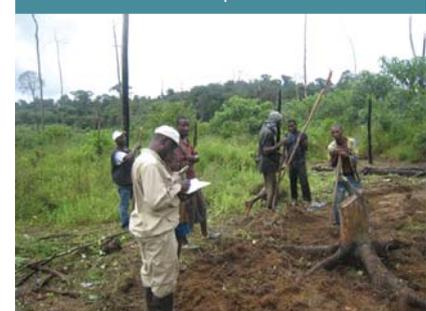
Slash-and-burn agriculture and shifting cultivation



Participants discussing the main causes of forest degradation



Field inspection



# REDDES



The Gola, Mandingo, Kpelleh, and Belleh are the main inhabitants residing in the villages and towns within the pilot area. Most of the people residing near the forest area are farmers who mainly practice shifting cultivation. The collection of NTFPs is very important for the

population as a source of food, local construction materials and medicines for healing many diseases. Other livelihood activities are fuel wood collection, charcoal burning, hunting, alluvial gold and diamond mining, fishing, etc.

Degraded sites in the Yorma National Forest



## State of Landscape Degradation

In the Yorma National Forest, the main drivers of deforestation and landscape degradation are attributed to:

- unsustainable farming practices through shifting cultivation;
- illegal logging and chain sawing;
- population growth/pressure;
- Forest abandonment by Forest Rangers of the FDA staff of Liberia
- mining;
- heavy charcoal burning;
- Fuel wood extraction;
- Unsustainable hunting and fishing; and
- Cash crop production

## REDDES Strategies

While similar problems can be identified among the pilot sites, solutions have to be developed site-by-site in order to be effective.

In Liberia, the strategies proposed and agreed upon by all stakeholders are the following:

1. Promote and encourage more lowland farming;
2. Land allocation to fringe communities for implementing enhanced agroforestry practices;
3. Create awareness among local inhabitants on the need for REDDES and sustainable forest management;
4. Enhance FDA governance and participatory management at the Yorma National Forest
5. FDA and the local communities to work together to do enrichment planting within the YNF
6. Allocate land for the establishment of woodlots for charcoal and fuelwood production

Charcoal burned in YNF



## Conclusion

The success of this project is largely due to the strategy of integrating forest stakeholders and policy makers at a common forum. Indeed, the lack of involvement of forest communities has been identified as a strong factor of forest degradation. Local policy makers would need to further promote the recommenda-

tions of the project and initiate their implementation. One way forward might be to assist the communities, by practically implementing a few priority REDDES activities, such as **awareness raising among all stakeholders; expansion of agroforestry; and establishment of woodlots.**

*« Involving local communities in forest management processes. »*

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