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MOVING BEYOND SANCTIONS: EVOLVING INTEGRATED STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS POST-CONFLICT NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED CHALLENGES IN LIBERIA

ERIN McCANDLESS AND W. TYLER CHRISTIE

Abstract

Liberia is emerging from 14 years of war where it served as the epicentre in West Africa of conflict fuelled by disputes over natural resources. Almost three years after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement there remain resource-rich, poorly managed areas where ex-combatants wield considerable power due to lack of law-and-order capacity and alternative livelihood opportunities. Gaining government control of such areas and prohibiting the use of timber and diamonds to fuel conflict are central to the lifting of sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council in May 2003. This article examines the efforts of the Liberian government, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and other international partners to evacuate Sapo National Park as a case study for establishing control of natural resources – an important post-conflict challenge that can undermine the building of peace.¹ Critical components of what worked are examined in an effort to design and implement an integrated strategy, as are ongoing operational, coordination and other challenges. The case study illustrates the complexity of issues raised by, and the need to move beyond, sanctions for peace to be sustainable in resource-rich countries emerging from war.

Introduction

In 2003, during the last episode of conflict in Liberia's 14-year crisis, gold miners and hunters began settling in large numbers in Sapo National Park, Liberia's only national park, in the southeast. By early 2005, the population inside the park had expanded to an estimated 8,000 with large settlements named Iraq, Afghanistan, New York, New Creation and Baghdad within a 5-8 hour walk from the park border. Women, children and mostly men lived in crowded mud huts. Economic benefits from mining were sporadic. 'Bushmeat', including rare and globally endangered species, was the only local food source while other supplies were brought in on the heads of porters from communities surrounding the park. The majority of miners were from other parts of Liberia, but they were joined by miners from as far away as Togo and Nigeria. As the population grew, so did economic opportunities for local community members to sell and transport supplies, and for local community leaders to profit by charging illegal 'taxes' for letting miners pass through their land. Settlements grew and generator-electrified 'entertainment centres' with restaurants, cook shops and other public establishments sprang up. Destructive environmental practices became common, such as using water pumps to uproot giant trees to mine gold, the diverting of rivers and inadequate waste disposal, degrading the habitat of Liberia's globally significant biodiversity.

Turning back in time, Liberia's history is marked by the return of freed slaves from the United States in the early 19th century who founded the modern state, the Republic of Liberia. The next two centuries saw the evolution of political and economic systems that empowered the Americo-Liberian elite as they marginalised much of the indigenous majority population. These systems entrenched poor governance and resource management practices that severely undermined Liberia's development. The Charles Taylor-led civil war starting in 1989 institutionalised the plundering of the country's most valuable resources such as timber, diamonds, iron ore and gold. Many of the country's vast resources were destructively extracted and looted to pay for wars which benefited only a few. Liberia was left in shambles and became a failed state (UN 2006; Humphreys & Richards 2005).

In late 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won Liberia's presidential election to become the first woman head of state in Africa. While donors are cautiously eager to contribute to the most promising peace in Liberia's recent history, the challenges that remain are many and profound: 85% unemployment and a general dearth of employment opportunities; widespread poverty with about half the population living on less than half a dollar per day (UNDP 2004); literacy of less than 40% (UN 2006); vast parts of the country virtually unreachable by road; and in some cases, ex-fighters and youths who are still easy to mobilise and desperate to meet their and their families' livelihood needs. At the same time, an abundance of natural resources and a history of selling them readily for profit generate a logic which demands that resources be exploited, through whatever means, for survival.

Sinoe County in the southeast, where Sapo Park is located, became a microcosm for these national problems. Not only was the national park occupied, but illegal diamond mining attracted thousands of people and was threatening to create a humanitarian crisis, and ex-

As actors came together with different agendas, the Sapo case presented a common post-war resource challenge: how to address poverty, support the development of good governance and natural resource management practices and promote conservation in a context where war survival strategies remain attractive given a lack of alternative livelihood opportunities.

combatants were occupying a major rubber plantation, absorbing the time and energy of local officials while providing little economic benefit. Achieving a peaceful resolution to this combination of problems presented a stark challenge to the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) and to UNMIL, which is mandated to re-establish rule of law and control of natural resources. As actors came together with different agendas, the Sapo case presented a common post-war resource challenge:

how to address poverty, support the development of good governance and natural resource management practices and promote conservation in a context where war survival strategies remain attractive given a lack of alternative livelihood opportunities.

Taking these objectives as measures for what international actors working in similar contexts might consider 'good practice' if achieved, this article examines the strategies, outcomes and lessons learned in the Sapo National Park evacuation and rehabilitation process. It considers components of what worked, including: collaboration among a wide network of actors, especially local communities; employment of an integrated approach involving a diverse array of strategies; advocacy by a national and global conservation constituency; empowerment of Liberia's park protection authority; and the security guarantee of the UNMIL military forces. In the face of a vacuum of security, resource management and other necessary public institutions in a post-conflict setting, this set of strategic responses arguably ensured a peaceful evacuation of the park – the primary objective of the exercise. The sustainability of the exercise, however, and its overall

contribution to lasting peace, remain primarily dependent upon donors fulfilling their pledges to generate support for the development of alternative livelihood opportunities.

The Sapu story supports policy-oriented arguments that holistic and comprehensive approaches are needed to address the structural factors that generate and sustain war, and incorporate the complex realities of contemporary conflict (Cater 2003; Ballentine &

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Nitzschke 2003). To be effective, sanctions must be combined with strategies that address on-the-ground security, governance and livelihood issues in resource-rich areas in partnership with the surrounding communities and local leadership. This approach inherently challenges the dichotomous framework (Collier & Hoeffler

2001) of *greed* (that wars are more about 'loot-seeking' or opportunism) and *grievance* (that they are primarily about 'justice-seeking' motives), in an effort to both understand and account for the highly complex systems of social interactions that are responsible for motivating people to go to war (Ballentine & Nitzschke 2003), and which must be factored into any sustainable peacebuilding and recovery process.

Resources for Conflict: The Role of Natural Resources in Liberia's Wars

Flying over Liberia, one is struck by the expanse of contiguous tropical forest that appears to stretch to all corners of this small country. Indeed, Liberia contains 4.5 million hectares of forest covering 50% of the country's landmass and nearly 45% of the remaining Upper Guinean forests of West Africa extending from Guinea to Ghana. Liberia's forests have long played an important role in the evolution of the country's culture and society. During Liberia's 14 years of crisis, however, forest resources became a ready source of income to fuel warfare within Liberia and in the region. After war erupted in 1989, Charles Taylor's rebels, the National Patriotic Forces of Liberia, captured control of much of the country's forest resources. With the connivance of logging companies, forests were used to generate revenue to support rebel activities. Taylor persevered and in 1997 finally won an election deemed by international observers to be Liberia's first free and fair election.

Liberia became a classic example of a resource-dependent country where peace and economic development became the casualties of poor natural resource management. 'Resource dependence' is usually characterised by relatively poor economic growth, low standards of living, high levels of inequality and corruption, and they have greater likelihood of conflict (Le Billon 2003). Furthermore, such countries emerging from conflict are more likely to return to conflict than those with more diversified economies (Collier & Hoeffler 2001). Indeed, facing insurgencies from Guinea and Sierra Leone, Taylor in 2000 resumed the extraction of resources to fuel conflict. By 2001 timber harvests had topped 1 million cubic meters, generating at least \$20 million in tax revenue and providing a significant portion of foreign exchange (Global Witness 2002; Blundell *et al* 2003).

In 2003 the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1478² imposing sanctions on Liberia's timber exports, adding to existing sanctions on diamonds, in an attempt to reduce access to natural resource-derived revenue. Resolution 1478 clearly stated the criteria for lifting sanctions – that the Liberian government must: establish control and security over its territory; ensure that revenue from these sanctioned resources does not fuel further conflict; and ensure that these resources are appropriately managed for the benefit of all Liberians.

The Liberian conflict ended in August 2003 with the removal of Taylor to exile in Nigeria and the establishment of a mission of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) called ECOMIL. Two months later, the warring factions and civil society representatives agreed to the Comprehensive Peace Accord outlining the distribution of government control among the three parties, and elected Gyude Bryant to lead the two-year National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL). The Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) – the rebel group that controlled the forest-rich southeast during the war – was mandated to manage the Forestry Development Authority (FDA).

In October 2003, the UN established UNMIL – at the time the largest deployed peacekeeping mission in the world with up to 15,000 soldiers. It was the first mission to include natural resource advisors and the second to have a clear mandate to assist the government in restoring proper administration and management of its natural resources. In December 2003, the Security Council passed Resolution 1521 calling on the international community to support the Liberian government in establishing control of its resources. Leadership under the NTGL exhibited little will or capacity for reform and good governance necessary to lift sanctions. Nevertheless, impetus for reforms of this nature was generated by sanctions at the policy level and the persistence of international partners to put them into practice. Overall, sanctions were effective in reducing transnational trade of the resource and therefore the flow of financial resources to re-ignite conflict (Resolution 1609, 2005). Sanctions did not, however, ensure reform. The case of Sapo National Park illustrates an intervention that sought to address deeper structural factors presenting ongoing sources of localised conflict – an intervention ultimately necessary to remove obstacles to Liberia’s wider peacebuilding and recovery efforts.

Moving Beyond Sanctions: The Case of Sapo National Park

In late February 2005, UNMIL and the FDA conducted a security assessment of the camp in the park known as Afghanistan. The team held a town hall meeting with miners, who emphasised their reasons for being there, arguing that they were internally displaced people (IDPs) because they had fled into the park due to the war, they lacked viable economic alternatives and they desired financial and employment-related ‘packages’ to return home. Team members explained their concerns that the miners’ presence in Sapo, while offering short-term economic benefit, was hindering progress towards local and national peace and reconstruction. They told the miners that an evacuation was likely. Critically, this meeting established that the miners were not hostile, and that considerable environmental damage was occurring alongside a severe threat to wildlife population. It raised awareness for all involved that the situation could not continue.

By the middle of 2005, the stakes for evacuation were high. Sanctions on the timber industry, which in previous years had contributed up to 20% of government revenue, 50% of foreign exchange and was a potential economic engine for reconstruction and development, were not likely to be lifted until the miners were evacuated and Liberia could demonstrate its control of the park. And while the miners were not openly hostile, there remained concerns that they were armed with more than the shotguns they used for hunting.

The Sapo Working Group and start-up challenges

Shortly after the security assessment in February, several actors led by civilian sections of UNMIL (Environment and Civil Affairs) and the international NGO, Conservation International, formed the Sapo Working Group. This brought together various sectors of UNMIL and other UN agencies such as the UN Environment Programme and UN Office

for Project Services, the FDA, ministries including Internal Affairs and Lands and Mines, and other international and national civil society organisations. Many of these groups had made repeated trips around the park to consult communities and understand their needs and concerns. UNMIL also had civilian and military staff based full-time in Sinoe County who regularly met with local communities.

The Sapo Working Group developed a multi-levelled and multi-sector strategy designed to engage local communities and build their ownership over and participation in the park's non-violent evacuation, rehabilitation and ongoing support for its protection and conservation, and to develop alternative livelihood opportunities for these communities. Though planning and negotiations took several months, the Sapo Working Group finally established the 'Sapo National Park Plan of Action for Evacuation and Rehabilitation' (Plan of Action)³ which outlined the following five phases:

SAPO NATIONAL PARK ACTION PLAN: EVACUATION AND REHABILITATION	
Phases and Activities	Initiate/Completion Date
PHASE I: Process Design and Preparation	February 1/June 15
PHASE II: Engagement, Mobilisation and Capacity Building	April 1/July 2
PHASE III: Evacuation	August 1/September 1
PHASE IV: Development of Alternative Livelihoods	August 1/Ongoing
PHASE V: Park Restoration and Management	August 25/September 15

While there were different interests within the group – conservation, community development, peacebuilding, natural resource governance and law enforcement – all the members agreed that a lasting solution would require an integrated approach. Achieving consensus around strategy and garnering commitment from all partners, laying the groundwork operationally for the exercise and, notably, mobilising the required financial resources, however, presented significant challenges for the Sapo Working Group. The uniqueness and cross-cutting nature of the exercise presented challenges in achieving consensus. While the FDA was clearly responsible for park management, evacuation involved security measures, and the role of local leaders and communities related to Ministry of Internal Affairs. Similarly, within UNMIL, the issue did not fall neatly into one section's area of responsibility. On the military side, UNMIL's non-executive peacekeeping mandate meant that it could only assist the national government in re-establishing national authority, in particular around the administration of natural resources (Resolution 1509, 2003). Many organisations viewed the protection of the park strictly as an environmental concern, and it therefore took time for the Sapo Working Group as a whole to adopt a view of natural resource management that included security concerns.

Laying the operational groundwork for the evacuation was constrained by limited human and resource capacity and inaccessibility. Sinoe County had only 18 police officers and no

vehicles to patrol the perimeters of the park regularly. Entering the park presented a serious challenge, exemplified by the death due to exhaustion of a peacekeeping soldier during a security assessment. UNMIL required helicopter landing sites to be built within the park to allow easy security access. Dense forest and long distances from road access presented difficult coordination and management challenges, and drew out the timeline for action. The imminent start of Liberia's lengthy rainy season, bound to compound operational challenges, was also a serious concern.

Ambiguous categorisation of the illegal settlers made fundraising for the evacuation exercise problematic. The UN High Commission for Refugees would not classify them as refugees or internally displaced persons, thus denying them the benefits that come with IDP status. Similarly, because they were not registered in the World Food Programme feeding logs or

Ambiguous categorisation of the illegal settlers made fundraising for the evacuation exercise problematic.

considered refugees, they could not receive food assistance. While some of the miners claimed they were ex-combatants who had not gone through the demilitarisation, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) exercise and still wanted to, the programme had officially

closed its doors with over three times the anticipated numbers. Conservation-oriented donors were planning major projects related to park rehabilitation and management, but they did not want to support the evacuation component which they considered a security operation – and thus outside their mandate.

Overall, the challenges encountered in planning the exercise illustrate the gap that exists between the identification of resource-based sources of conflict requiring action in a post-conflict setting, and the lack of capacity and/or commitment to address them with sufficient donor support. The Working Group persisted, however, and eventually succeeded in gaining sufficient funding for the evacuation and commitments for the remaining aspects of the Plan of Action – once the evacuation was completed. The U.S. government donated funds for the evacuation to Conservation International to provide supplies and logistical support while Fauna & Flora International provided livelihood assistance to the park rangers, including stipends, since they had not received their salaries in over a year. UNMIL provided key components such as civilian and military staff to support the exercise and logistics, in particular transportation for the miners.

The evacuation

By July 2005, a number of critical pre-evacuation activities had laid the foundations for the exercise. In addition to developing coordination mechanisms, implementing strategy and mobilising resources, the Working Group undertook extensive awareness raising in communities adjoining the park and advocacy at the national level. Efforts were also significantly advanced when the Working Group successfully lobbied the chairman of the NTGL, Gyude Bryant, and the Special Representative of the Secretary General in UNMIL, Jacques Paul Klein, to make a joint statement about the need to evacuate the park. The statement declared the mining and hunting in Sapo Park illegal and called on all involved actors to cease such activities. It noted:

As the country is returning to normalcy, so too should the management of the country's natural resources. As we move from relief to development, good governance of natural resources is a critical element to a prosperous and stable future for Liberia. The evacuation and rehabilitation of Sapo

National Park is a first step in this direction and we will take all means necessary to ensure successful implementation (Joint Statement, 2005).

This statement clarified the position of NTGL and UNMIL making Sapo a national priority and backing the Plan of Action as the means through which the project would be achieved (the 'carrot'), while adding a threat of forced removal if necessary (the 'stick').

On 1 and 2 July, the Sapo Working Group partners conducted a workshop with chiefs, local officials and community leaders from communities around the park with the aim of building greater local ownership over the evacuation process. Many of the leaders and communities were participating fully in illegal mining and hunting activities, or more subtly, promoting or controlling access to the park and charging the entrants illegal 'taxes'. And yet, no resulting community benefits (i.e. schools, clinics and water and sanitation facilities) could be identified, raising questions about the real beneficiaries. Additionally,

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tensions had arisen between different communities living on the park's borders over 'taxation' systems in the park, which at times took on an ethnic dimension, reviving historical tensions which had played out in different factions through Liberia's wars. The meeting provided a forum to address these issues openly while providing information about the links between community security

and rule of law for reconstruction and development, and the role of sanctions. Through the process, community leaders who were complicit in the illegal activities were publicly 'shamed' by other community leaders and then reconciled.

At the end of the two-day conference all leaders signed a 'Local Leaders' Resolution on Sapo National Park' acknowledging:

...as we view it, the problems stem from the fact that many within our communities, even some of our leaders, have been participating in and/or facilitating illegal activities concerning the park. (The communities surrounding Sapo National Park) have come to agreement concerning the problems facing the park and committed ourselves and our communities to a common way forward to protect the park and our communities and to manage our resources for the benefit of all Liberians.

In the following weeks the Working Group debated strategies, taking into account constraints and the varied interests of the actors, and outlined the strategy for the actual evacuation. Community reception centres would be established around the park with a security presence involving UNMIL military, Liberian National Police (LNP) and the FDA. Then Community Watch Teams (CWTs) trained by UNMIL and comprising community leaders, including chiefs, FDA and NGO representatives and other community members, would inform communities of the forthcoming exercise. They would walk into the illegal mining camps a day or two before the five-day 'window of opportunity' (18-22 July) to encourage voluntary evacuation and assist the community members in carrying their belongings out. During the five-day evacuation, those received at reception centres would get medical treatment and transport to the main city of their choosing with a further US\$5 to cover remaining transport costs.

The Sapo Working Group debated at length whether and what kind of 'package' to give the settlers upon their arrival. A strong consensus evolved to disallow financial compensation, as it would send the wrong message of rewarding illegal behaviour. This

was particularly important given the nearby diamond mining activities and the occupation of Sinoe’s rubber plantation by ex-combatants – all of whom were in communication and evidently jointly strategising: rewarding some would set an unsustainable precedent and conceivably lead to more occupations.

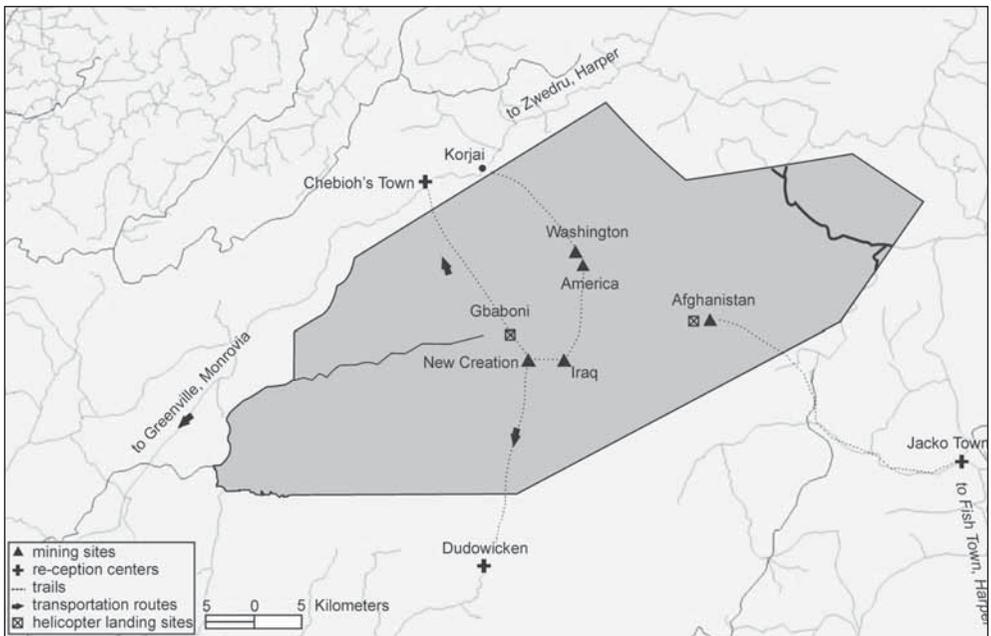
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The decline in number of miners – from 8,000 when the plan was designed, to 1,000 during a humanitarian census commissioned in the park in June – presented another key

question for the Sapo Working Group: was it still necessary to evacuate formally? The group concluded that the decline was due to a number of issues: persistent awareness-raising efforts by members of the Sapo Working Group in communities around the park; the role of local leaders in supporting the exercise following the workshop; the arrival of the rainy season; and newly discovered diamond mines in nearby Butaw Oil Palm Company. Ongoing engagement with the remaining 1,000 miners and with communities around the park, however, revealed that those remaining inside were the ‘stronghold’ – the ones unwilling to go voluntarily and who were threatening to create problems.

The evacuation proceeded more or less as planned. Timing of entry was not entirely consistent at all entry points due to operational complications and coordination challenges. While evacuation at the southern entrance proceeded smoothly, only 21 persons emerged, in part because road transport was unavailable from this remote location. The western side of the park received 162 evacuees, and it experienced the most tension given the strong ties of the local communities with the miners and hunters. Tensions between the settlers and the evacuation teams began on the western border at Chebioh’s Town reception point when some settlers came out of the Iraq camp several days early, before facilities were fully set up. They demanded greater benefits and refused to participate in – and

Figure 1: The Sapo National Park evacuation strategy



moreover threatened to disrupt – the evacuation process for all. They had come out early due to an FDA miscommunication on dates for the official commencement of the exercise. While this mistake illustrated the challenges and importance of keeping multiple actors ‘on message’, the demand for greater benefits was expected, exhibiting a common practice of groups across Liberia, in particular IDPs, ex-combatants, communities and others occupying resource-rich areas. Several days of negotiations followed, but the settlers were intransigent. A timely intervention by a top-level FDA official, known as a former MODEL commander, catalysed movement in the process. He dramatically and somewhat forcefully insisted that settlers, community leaders and residents comply with the process on all fronts or face the consequences – suspension for local leaders. The miners complied, and from then on the evacuation proceeded smoothly on the western side.

Those in Afghanistan camp resisted voluntary evacuation through the Jacko Town side, though many left without going through the reception points, reportedly because they were afraid of arrest. Three days after the window of opportunity, FDA rangers entered Afghanistan camp and arrested some settlers, which prompted the movement of the remaining 300.

From 20 to 25 August, UNMIL transported evacuees to their final destinations. Moving those who were not from Sinoe out of the county was deemed a priority given the two other neighbouring resource-related problems. Reception centres closed on 25 August as all evacuees departed. In total, during the official evacuation and during the following week, approximately 500 miners were evacuated.

Alternative Livelihood Development and Park Rehabilitation

Consistent with the Plan of Action, the post-evacuation strategy included two phases – alternative livelihood development, and park restoration and management – both of which are intimately tied to ensuring the sustainability of the evacuation and its contribution to lasting peace. Unfortunately, much of the

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community development component has, to date, greatly suffered through donor delays, threatening to undermine the value of the entire exercise. In early July the U.S. Agency for International Development publicly committed to fund activities around the park designed to support community development activities, with emphasis on income generation and employment. While a proposal based on the Plan of Action was submitted to USAID in the same month, more than a year later USAID’s promised funds

have still not been contracted. While USAID continues to state its commitment to funding community development activities, lack of final agreement and project commencement delays have weakened confidence among communities and strengthened the position that they were better off engaging in illegal activities.

In terms of park rehabilitation, the FDA entered the park after the evacuation and demolished the settlements – an important deterrent and a requirement for regenerating the natural environment. Some cleared areas and disturbed streams will, however, take many years to recover. FDA staff conducted an initial environmental assessment and decided to monitor natural recovery at the sites before planning any specific restoration activities. The FDA and partners continue to monitor key species in the park, such as forest elephants, chimpanzees and hornbills, whose populations have been considerably depleted by illegal hunting.

Sapo's Lessons for Policy

Evaluating outcomes

At the most basic level, the evacuation exercise met its objective – evacuating the park. It was never envisaged that all the miners would come out voluntary in a first evacuation attempt, particularly without the application of military ‘force’ – that is, without UNMIL security landing in the park to physically escort them out. Given the porousness of the park borders and the general lack of law-and-order enforcement capacity in most of rural Liberia, continuous efforts would need to be made.

The most important outcome of the operation was that it bolstered the sense of law-and-order capacity and contributed to the restoration of state authority in Sinoe in terms of natural resource management – central components in achieving peace in Liberia. Before the evacuation a number of FDA officials had had their lives threatened by those in the park. Follow-up evaluations, FDA public statements and more general discussions with

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FDA officials strengthened their morale following the evacuation. In subsequent meetings between Sapo Working Group members and communities around the park, many community members openly expressed pride at having participated in the process. Many Sinoe citizens and county leaders interviewed informally by Sapo Working Group members expressed relief that the miners had left the park in view of

the tarnished image and other problems this had brought to their county. The publicity given to the exercise on local radio, increasingly accessible in many parts of the country, made many Liberians aware of the exercise. *National Geographic* magazine and the BBC reported the positive outcomes of the evacuation. The UN Security Council's Panel of Experts noted that the outcomes of the evacuation represent best practices for UNMIL and for conservation organisations in restoring control over natural resources and especially protected areas (UNSC 2005).

Other constructive outcomes and impacts relate to raised awareness and new forms of collaboration which will contribute not only to the sustainability of the exercise, but also to addressing other similar challenges. Between the FDA (responsible for the park) and LNP (responsible to patrol the outskirts), for example, communication and collaboration processes developed that support overall security sector reform efforts. New forms of collaboration and greater clarity of roles between the military and these actors developed. Consciousness of the issues and related accountability mechanisms around governance of natural resources were advanced in Sinoe County, widely amongst citizens and specifically among local officials. The CWTs provided a mechanism for community and local leaders' involvement in protecting the park. The public nature of the evacuation process and the wide-ranging nature of participation from so many actors brought people together in a united cause, creating a context in which one stood out if one did not become part of the ‘solution’.

Given the linkage of natural resources to Liberia's history of wars, this case presents an important precedent from which lessons can be drawn. Factors in the success include:

- *Collaboration among a network of actors and the use of integrated strategies:* The Sapo Working Group provided a forum in which a diverse and multi-level set of

stakeholders (from policy makers to grassroots community) together addressed a complex cross-cutting issue, developed a strategy that met different but mutually reinforcing interests and generated the required support and involvement to carry it through. Various tools were used over time and space and across levels, including awareness raising, advocacy in policy and the media, mediation and community mobilisation, and consensus building at national and local levels. A combination of carrot-and-stick measures contributed. The incentives offered included immunity from arrest and at least six months' warning allowing the miners and hunters to continue their illegal activities before the official evacuation. The 'stick' was twofold: the *threat* of force that government and UNMIL would evict them after the official dates on the one hand, and, at the micro-level, the strict approach that the FDA official in Chebioh's Town adopted with community members, leaders, miners and hunters, which critically catalysed the breaking of the impasse during the evacuation;

- *Strong conservation constituency:* National and international conservation organisations emphasised the importance of the park by publishing reports linking the situation in the park to broader governance problems facing Liberia. While the usual tensions arose over putting the needs of local people before the conservation of flora and fauna, they were managed by adopting a comprehensive and balanced strategy. UNMIL's environmental advisors – a first for UN peacekeeping missions – added value to the exercise in their ability to influence UN engagement;
- *Empowerment of Liberia's park protection authority:* The FDA served as an important counterpart to UNMIL, being able to implement activities beyond UNMIL's mandate. Increased institutional capacity in the FDA allowed it to assert its authority over the park and convince local communities and miners that the government was in control;
- *Security guarantee by UNMIL military presence:* The presence of an overwhelming military capacity was also critical. UNMIL both provided security to implement the plan of action effectively and confidently and presented a credible enforcement capacity unmatched by potentially volatile groups such as former combatants. UNMIL military also provided necessary logistical assistance and back-up to the FDA and LNP, giving them greater confidence to carry out their mandate.

Total expenditure on the Sapo evacuation process amounted to \$100,000, although this does not account for substantial preparation activities, such as meetings, site visits, aerial reconnaissance and other security procedures, and preparation of helicopter landing sites. Security in post-conflict countries comes at a hefty price, but the evacuation and linked efforts to empower FDA officials pale in comparison to the exorbitant costs in time and money entailed in building effective military security sector capacity. This cost benefit is reinforced by consideration of the key role of natural resources in fuelling Liberia's wars and the developmental returns for securing their proper management.

Consideration of what did not work centres most profoundly on the threats to the sustainability of the exercise (and the larger peacebuilding and alternative livelihood and community development objectives that this relates to). While exhaustive efforts over many months went into design and laying the groundwork for these aspects of the exercise, extreme delays in donor follow-through have severely jeopardised the potential success of the overall effort. With more experience and greater understanding of such post-conflict natural resource-based challenges, donors will be more forthcoming as they realise the critical need to contribute to the resolution of such issues before any sustained peace and development can take root.

There is certainly room for critique and further analysis about coordination – greater commitment is needed for developing and enhancing integration and coordination mechanisms that can address complex challenges of this nature. Such mechanisms need to consider national/field, civilian/military, and peacekeeping mission/UN agency relationships and roles. At the operational level, effective communications systems between the actors can greatly improve coordination for smooth implementation while strengthening security. While the UN is committed to achieving a higher level of coordination in the form of integrated strategies within the UN family present in its mission areas and is developing the tools to do this more effectively, it takes time to gain experience, document practices and derive lessons. While the UN recently made a stronger commitment to link its provision of security with control of natural resources (Resolution 1667, 2006), it will require considered attention to operationalise such commitments and develop better coordination mechanisms involving civilian sectors of the UN to ensure that the governance and development linkages take root.

A key related challenge is the weak link on the ground between security and development: while UNMIL and other missions have a mandate for peacekeeping, their capacity to move into areas of peacebuilding and development is restricted by mandate. Collaboration backed by financial support from humanitarian and development actors when security issues are involved is also limited by humanitarian principles and organisational mandates as well as by a simple lack of practice. Overcoming the operational, mandate and principle-related obstacles to the effective implementation of integrated strategies will require considerable commitment from the international community.

Policy and theoretical linkages

Linking this case to relevant debates in the literature, three interlocking areas are worth exploring:

Beyond 'greed and grievance'

The Sapo case illustrates that there is a thin line between 'greed' and efforts to sustain livelihood when a post-war, survival-of-the-fittest mentality is matched with a dearth of other livelihood options. This directly points to why more comprehensive analyses and strategic responses are required to respond to such challenges. The Sapo case, much like other post-war situations involving 'illegal' resource extraction and confusion over norms and laws, illustrates the need to problematise the notion of 'lootable' resources. In Liberia,

The Sapo case illustrates that there is a thin line between 'greed' and efforts to sustain livelihood when a post-war, survival-of-the-fittest mentality is matched with a dearth of other livelihood options.

confusion at various levels remains around concessionary agreements, taxation systems, land and resource ownership and community benefit laws and systems. Ministry representatives visiting Sinoe County have shown a considerable lack of clarity over the issues. More problematically, local communities believe that the resources

belong to them since they have lived through decades of all-out grabbing of resources to sustain war – or livelihoods. Thus the perception that they are 'looting' must be put in context. Officially clarifying these laws and systems will need to be buttressed by extensive awareness raising and education with leaders and within communities and by the development of livelihood alternatives. Given the post-conflict challenges in rebuilding state authority and rolling out development to remote areas across the country, it is vital that laws are developed to provide a lifeline for communities.

Building national ownership of ‘problem and solution’

Much of the attention paid to war economies and related political economy in conflict literature focuses on the international side of the equation, especially the role of international companies in illegal resource exploitation and international criminal networks. Less emphasis has been given to local communities participating in and perpetuating the problem as well as their essential role in developing alternative livelihoods and sustaining peace. Jackson (2005:153) provides a useful framework for analysis that facilitates a deeper understanding of the actors in such settings – a useful tool for identifying peacebuilding strategies:

- *Conflict entrepreneurs*: organised criminals, military managers and political entrepreneurs;
- *Conflict opportunists*: the middlemen who occupy an exploitative niche within economic violence;
- *Conflict dependents*: those whose fragile livelihoods have become bound up in economic violence.

All three are evident and interrelated in the Sapo case and therefore contribute to the apparent intractability of the problem. The mining camp leaders were the *conflict entrepreneurs*, local leaders the *conflict opportunists* charging illegal ‘taxes’, and many community members were the *conflict dependents* who lacked sufficient alternative livelihood opportunities. Interestingly, these groups of actors formed new, over-arching communities in supporting and protecting each other to maintain the status quo. These relationships were exhibited at the Chebioh’s Town park exit when miners pursued strong-arm negotiations with the evacuation team. They slept in community members’ homes and clearly shared strong inter-personal ties with the Chebioh’s Town community and their paramount chief (a conflict opportunist), although most of them were not from the area, or even the county. Part of the FDA official’s ‘stick’ approach in catalysing an end to the standoff in the evacuation in Chebioh’s Town was his effort to break these social relations; following his warnings that miners had to stay in reception centres until transport arrived, a collective, though not voluntary, responsibility on the part of the community evolved finally to support the evacuation process.

Whereas sanctions generally target conflict entrepreneurs, the evaluation of Sapo and related activities of the Plan of Action targeted conflict dependents and conflict opportunists. Rather than take a punitive approach, the strategy sought to understand and respond to the context – the complexities of why communities and even local leaders engage in illegal activities in post-conflict situations. The approach generally succeeded in ensuring that communities and the leaders went from being part of the problem to being integral to the solution. This is vital if the aim is to ensure a societally owned – and thus sustainable – recovery and development process.

Holistic approaches to post-conflict natural resource-based challenges

Several studies commissioned by the Programme on Economic Agendas in Civil Wars of the International Peace Academy (IPA) summarise key findings from three years of case studies of the political economy of armed intra-state conflicts. UN interventions, they find, have largely been guided by assumptions based on the ‘greed’ paradigm. These have led to the use of strategies intended to curtail the flow of natural resources and to influence the decision-making calculus of elites, rather than to the adoption of more comprehensive approaches that address the structural factors of war. Instead, holistic analytical approaches

are needed that can serve as a reliable basis for conflict prevention and resolution efforts that 'more accurately reflect the complex realities of contemporary conflicts in Africa and beyond' (Ballentine & Nitzschke 2003:4).

Where illegal exploitation or inequitable or unaccountable management of natural resources has been central to conflict dynamics, improved resource governance needs to be a central

Where illegal exploitation or inequitable or unaccountable management of natural resources has been central to conflict dynamics, improved resource governance needs to be a central element of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction strategies.

element of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction strategies. The Sapo evacuation and rehabilitation exercise centrally involved local officials and created a foundation for new thinking and practices around natural resource governance in communities surrounding the park, with arguably wider impacts across Sinoe County and Liberia as a whole. There remain challenges in building the capacity of relevant ministries and in turning sanctions-related reforms into on-the-ground reality. The

Sapo Working Group, chaired first by internationals and now by the FDA, is working to coordinate inter-ministerial action to ensure the full implementation of the Plan of Action, and to ensure effective donor support in the area.

The IPA findings also emphasise the need for donor agencies to review their post-conflict macro-economic strategies to account adequately for the social functions of shadow economies (Ballentine & Nitzschke 2003:2). More effort is also required in exploring on-the-ground alternatives for natural resource extraction and management – especially during times of sanctions. Eliminating structural incentives for illegal activities, quite critical for Liberia's peace, cannot be done without the development and funding of alternative livelihoods – a reality which brings us back to the need to understand grievance, rather than greed, as a motivating factor for communities coming out of war.

Conclusion

The Sapo National Park evacuation and rehabilitation design and process represent an evolving good practice that provides lessons for other attempts to restore control of natural resources while contributing to sustained peace in post-conflict situations. Analytical and policy responses associated with sanctions do not go far enough. The Sapo case illustrates how and why a reform mandate and the pressure provided by sanctions need to be buttressed by measures on the ground; such measures must address the resource-based challenges that were sources and drivers of conflict in the first place and if not properly addressed, can sow seeds of conflict again. Effective responses must address the complex and inter-related sources and dynamics of the conflict and the range of actors involved. In particular, the will of local communities to establish control of resources that can be found geographically within their communities, or their complicity in illegal activities, is of principal importance. In the case of Sapo, effective strategies to address these complex objectives and outcomes were holistic, multi-layered, sectoral, participatory, and, not surprisingly, took time.

In late May 2006, nine months after the evacuation, 300 miners re-entered Sapo National Park and resumed illegal mining. The FDA responded immediately, calling on other ministries to react in line with their mandate. The Ministry of Lands, Mines & Energy authorised the seizure of any mining materials, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered the county superintendent responsible for the area to give the problem his utmost

attention. The FDA, with protection from UNMIL military, moved quickly to remove the miners from the park, threatening them with arrest.

This quick response illustrated that local systems are in place to deal with future encroachments, that capacity has been built within government to respond, and that this new administration is taking the issue very seriously. While Sapu illustrates many good practices that can be learned from, developed and shared, the very source of the problem remains a central challenge: the lack of livelihood alternatives has not yet been adequately addressed. Lack of donor follow-through has frustrated the realisation of key aspects of the Plan of Action which need immediate attention to ensure the survival of the exercise as a good practice. The building of sustained peace requires

In Liberia, sustained peace must be built most centrally on the development of proper resource management practices that will ensure that the country's wealth facilitates human development for local communities, and Liberians as a whole.

addressing root causes of conflict – past and potential. In Liberia, sustained peace must be built most centrally on the development of proper resource management practices that will ensure that the country's wealth facilitates human development for local communities, and Liberians as a whole.

ERIN MCCANDLESS, PhD, currently works as the Evaluation and Strategic Coordination Head of Unit, United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). She is also an Executive Editor of the *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*.

TYLER CHRISTIE is the former Technical Director, Conservation International, Liberia.

Endnotes

¹ The views expressed in the article are those of the authors, and not of UNMIL.

² Details of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1478 and 1521 of 2003, Resolution 1609 of 2005 and Resolution 1667 of 2006 can be accessed at www.un.org/docs/sc/

³ The complete Sapu National Park Plan of Action is available on the Liberia Forest Initiative website: www.fao.org/forestry/foris/webview/LFI/index.jsp?siteId=6784&sitetreeId=29022&langId=1&geoId=0

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