

**Challenges to Implementing the UNFCCC Paris Agreement through REDD+ in Liberia:
A Critical Analysis**

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Thesis Summary

This study examines the challenges poor countries face in implementing global climate change mitigation policies. It draws on Article 5 of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement 2015 as the entry point. This Article introduces a market-based concept, the REDD+, which seeks to reduce CO₂ emissions by providing payments for the carbon stored in tropical forests. The implementation challenges the REDD+ faces in Liberia are explored within the context of a dominant global capitalist economy. The Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' Project is the case study.

The study highlights the impediments countries like Liberia confronts to keep the forest standing amid difficult national circumstances, especially taking into account the country's colonial legacy that makes it dependent on the global economy. In this dominant global capitalist economy, profit maximization is the priority for businesses. Thus, while the REDD+ seeks to keep the trees standing, the businesses seek to make profit from trade in timbers from the forest. This exemplifies the contradiction within the dominant global neoliberal economic policy environment that underpins the capitalist economy - market-based solutions attempting to solve market-created problems. It shows the dilemma the world faces in tackling the global climate crisis.

The study contends that the REDD+ problem-solving approach to the climate crisis is apolitical and technical. It largely ignores the link between deforestation in Liberia and the global economy. In contrast, I adopt a critical approach that situates the challenges to REDD+ in Liberia within a broader international context while historicizing the challenges. I bring into sharp focus Liberia's colonial legacy through the political, economic, social and structural challenges to REDD+. I argue that the problem of deforestation in places like Liberia is underpinned by the country's colonial legacy, and imbedded into the dominant global capitalist economy. Therefore, any solution to address the climate crisis has to take into consideration the global context and Liberia's colonial past.

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With this, I wish to state that whatever error or limitation this work has is all mine, and mine only.

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List of Acronyms

ACS	-	American Colonization Society
AFOLU	-	Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use
AfT	-	Agenda for Transformation, Republic of Liberia
CBL	-	Central Bank of Liberia
CDC	-	Congress for Democratic Change
CDF	-	County Development Fund
CDI	-	Community Development Initiative
CDM	-	Clean Development Mechanism
CEO	-	Chief Executive Officer
CER	-	Certificate of Emission Reduction
CFMA	-	Community Forest Management Assembly
CFMB	-	Community Forest Management Board
CfRN	-	Coalition for Rain Forest Nations
CGS	-	Global Comparative Study on REDD+
CI	-	Conservation International
CLDMC	-	Community Land Development and Management Committee
CMP	-	The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol
COP	-	Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC
DOEs	-	Designated Operational Entities
EPA	-	Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia
ER	-	Expert Respondent
EU	-	European Union
FCPF	-	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FDA	-	Forestry Development Authority of Liberia
FDI	-	Foreign Direct Investment
FFI	-	Fauna and Flora International
FLEGT	-	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Programme
FMC	-	Forest Management Contract
FPIC	-	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
FREL	-	Forest Reference Emission Level

FRL	-	Forest Reference Level
GAC	-	General Auditing Commission
GCF	-	Green Climate Fund
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	-	Global Environment Fund
GHG	-	Greenhouse Gas
GOL	-	Government of Liberia
GVL	-	Golden Veroleum Liberia, Ltd
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
INGO	-	International Non-Governmental Organization
IPCC	-	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IR	-	International Relations
LFSP	-	Liberia Forest Sector Project
LLA	-	Liberia Land Authority
LIGIS	-	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Services
LTG	-	Limit to Growth
LULUCF	-	Land Use, and Land-use Change from Forest
MFDP	-	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MNC	-	Multinational Corporation
MRV	-	Measurement, Reporting and Verification
NFMS	-	National Forest Monitoring System
NFI	-	National Forest Inventory
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	-	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PES	-	Payment of Ecosystem Services
PIS	-	Project Implementing Entities
PMSD	-	Participatory Market System Development
PRS	-	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PROSPER	-	People, Rules and Organizations Supporting Protection of Ecosystem Resources
PSIP	-	Public Sector Investment Project
PUP	-	Private Use Permit

REDD	-	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries (The Original connotation of REDD)
REDD+	-	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest degradation, and the role of Conservation, Sustainable Management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks
RIU	-	REDD+ Implementation Unit
RPF	-	Request for Proposal
RTWG	-	REDD+ Technical Working Group
SBSTA	-	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technology Advise
SDF	-	Social Development Fund
SESA	-	Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment
SDI	-	Sustainable Development Institute of Liberia
SIIB	-	Special Independent Investigation Body
SIS	-	Safeguard Information System
SOI	-	Summary of Information
SR	-	Student Respondent
The Convention	-	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1992
The Protocol	-	The UNFCCC Kyoto Protocol 1997
TSC	-	Timber Sale Contract
UN	-	United Nations
UNCED	-	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992
UNCHE	-	United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 1972
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRIP	-	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, 2007
UNEP	-	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	-	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
US	-	United States of America
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development

- UN-REDD Emissions - United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
- VPA - Voluntary Partnership Agreement
- VR - Village Respondent

Chapter 1: The Research Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The year 2016 represents a significant date in the world's efforts to tackle the global climate crisis under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that was established in 1992 (UNFCCC 1992), which hereinafter is referred to as the Convention in this study (UN 1992). On the 4th of November 2016, the Paris Agreement, adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP 21) in December 2015, entered into force (United Nations, 2016). This follows the Paris Agreement meeting the entry into force requirement when 'at least 55 Parties to the Convention accounting in total for at least an estimated 55 per cent of the total global greenhouse gas emissions have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession' (Article 21, paragraph 1; UNFCCC Paris Agreement 2015). This is exactly eleven months from adoption December 2015 to November 2016, a record time for such a complex multilateral agreement. This underscores the urgency the world attaches, at least at the time, to the global climate crisis. It appears as though the world has just awakened to the danger facing the planet. The presence of the world's most powerful nations, including the US and China – the two top emitters of CO₂ globally at the Paris Summit lends more weight to the urgency with which the world seemed to be acting in 2015 (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2021). The Paris Agreement could be a 'beacon of hope' for the world to finally address the climate change problem (Salawitch et al, 2017).

Despite the speed and enthusiasm Parties showed in ratifying the Paris Agreement, the implementation would not be that fast. The implementation faces numerous challenges. For example, Liberia ratified the Agreement in 2018 only after being convinced of the financial and technological benefits to accrue to the country, and promises of support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In this regard, Senator H. Dan Morias, Head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Liberian Senate stated "Liberia stands to benefit from the financial and technological support in maintaining low-carbon climate-resilient development through effective adaptation to climate change and greenhouse-gas emission reduction" (Reliefweb, 2018). The signatories to the Paris Agreement also recognizing its implementation would face challenges inscribed in the Agreement the *Paris Agreement Implementation and Compliance Committee* (PAICC through which parties are urged to 'pay particular attention to the respective national capabilities and circumstances of parties' (Article 15.b, UNFCCC Paris Agreement 2015). This recognition is important, especially the need to appreciate the national circumstances of parties, because this illuminates how daunting the challenges are to the Paris Agreement.

The economic challenges seem the most difficult to overcome of the myriads of challenges confronting the Paris Agreement. Economic issues are at the core of the climate crisis. It is how nations source and use natural resources to meet their economic needs that is driving the climate crisis (Wright and Nyberg, 2015; Newell and Paterson, 2010). Therefore, it is how the Paris Agreement impacts the economies of parties that is often the likely reason why most parties may be reluctant or find it difficult to fulfil their obligations under the Agreement. This is the background against which I investigate the challenges to the implementation of the Paris Agreement by poor countries. Taking the country of Liberia as my case study, the thesis examines the challenges Liberia experiences in the implementation of policies designed to mitigate global climate change in the context of the Paris agreement.

The entry point for the investigation is Article 5 of the Paris Agreement. This Article codifies the use of the forest in a treaty to combat climate change through a novel concept, the reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+). This is particularly significant because, for the first time, the REDD+ was incorporated in a specific treaty after years of consideration by meetings of the COP to the Convention. The implementation of the REDD+ provides an opportunity to understand the challenges the Paris Agreement faces in developing countries in relation to tropical forests because it brings into sharp focus the numerous internal impediments in the country. Further, Article 5 gives more practical effect to Article 15(b) of the Paris Agreement in terms of understanding the respective 'national circumstances and capabilities of parties.'

As stated earlier, Liberia is the developing country chosen for the case study. The challenging economic, political, social and structural conditions in the country present a good opportunity to investigate the impediments to the Paris Agreement generally, and test the chances of the REDD+ succeeding in particular (Government of Liberia 2008). Further, Liberia is blessed with abundant natural resources, including 43% of the remaining Upper Guinea Forest of West and Central Africa (Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia, 2018). These conditions together make Liberia an ideal case. The context of the investigation is the broader dominant global capitalist economy in which Liberia trades, in particular the timber trade.

The research draws on Liberia's colonial legacy to analyse the political, economic, social and structural challenges to the Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' project. This is critical to knowing if the REDD+ scheme in Liberia would pass the 'Readiness' phase amid challenges from the dominant global capitalist economy (Chomsky, 1999; Moyo, 2012). In other words, the

research aims to know what challenges poor countries like Liberia face in implementing global climate change mitigation policies such as the REDD+.

1.20 REDD+

The main objective of the REDD+ is to reduce CO₂ emissions through 'moving the carbon sequestration capacity of the forest into the market economy' (DeShazo, Pandey and Smith, 2016, p. 3). It rests on the premise that sharing the income from the trade in sequestered carbon with the host forest communities would incentivise the communities to leave the forests standing (Collins, 2017; Astuti, 2016; Schroeder and Mcdermott, 2014). This would in turn stop the deforestation and degradation of the environment, and by extension, stop the emission of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere while providing income to the forest community.

The REDD+ implementation is in three main phases - the 'Readiness' Phase; 'Demonstration' Phase and 'Implementation' Phase. The 'Readiness' Phase is the planning and preparation phase at which countries craft the requisite policies and build the needed technical, and institutional capacities to undertake the REDD+ activities. The 'Demonstration' Phase is the pilot phase where a portion of forest is used to test the REDD+ policies in a real setting. At this phase, a pilot project is undertaken. The 'Implementation' Phase is the actual phase during which the forest is left standing, and carbon captured. The community leaves the forest standing and receive payment for verified carbon captured from a donors' carbon funds (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility 2017). However, there is a fourth and final phase, the 'Investment' Phase. This appears to be the primary objective of the entire REDD+ scheme during which carbon is traded on a voluntary carbon market involving private investors (Munden Project 2011).

The World Bank managed *Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF)*, and the *United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD)* are responsible for the implementation of the REDD+ in partner countries. The FCPF is a global partnership that brings together governments, businesses, civil society and indigenous people to combat deforestation through the REDD+ scheme (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, 2017). The UN-REDD is the United Nations knowledge and advisory platform that draws on the technical expertise of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to avoid carbon emissions and foster carbon sequestration (UN-REDD 2016). Liberia is one of the sixty-five partner countries of the UN-REDD and FCPF.

Liberia's engagement with the REDD+ started in 2007 with the establishment of the National REDD+ Technical Working Group (RTWG). The RTWG is the institutional platform created to prepare Liberia 'Readiness' Plan Idea Note (R-Plan) (LTI International and NARAS, 2016). It is the main platform through which key stakeholders engage with the REDD+ in the Country (Goslee et al, 2016). The formation of the RTWG led to Liberia's development and submission of its '*Readiness*' Plan Idea Note in 2008 to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. Liberia, as of this research, received a total sum of \$8.5 million to undertake the readiness activities. Liberia has completed the '*Readiness*' project goals as per the funds provided. The country submitted its REDD+ '*Readiness*' Package to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility in 2017 (Liberia REDD+ '*Readiness*' Completion Report, 2020; Forest Carbon Partnership Facility 2020).

The Forestry Development Authority (FDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Liberia co-chair the implementation of the Liberia REDD+ '*Readiness*' Project. A dedicated REDD+ implementation Unit (RIU) at the Offices of the FDA has direct oversight responsibility for the implementation of the '*Readiness*' activities in the country. The RIU is a donor funded unit that is independent of the FDA. The RIU has four dedicated staff including the National REDD+ Coordinator. The staff of the RIU are recruited and paid by donors through the World Bank (Interview, ER7, 19/08/2019 Appendix 1).

To date, Liberia has developed a number of policy documents including the National REDD+ Strategy. Liberia, through Fauna & Flora International (FFI), is engaged in a REDD+ Pilot Project in Wonegizi, Lofa County, Northern Liberia. Liberia continues to conduct REDD+ awareness activities in various forest communities across the country. Additionally, some NGOs are also undertaking various projects to support livelihood activities in forest communities (Liberia REDD+ '*Readiness*' Project Completion Report, 2020).

1.30 Research Framework

The research conducts a case study of the Liberia REDD+ '*Readiness*' Project. The initial frame of enquiry at the start of the fieldwork was to investigate the decision-making around the Liberia REDD+ '*Readiness*' project. The focus was the level of participation of stakeholders, in particular forest communities, in the decision-making of the REDD+ Project. The aim was to determine which stakeholder wields the most influence over the REDD+ implementation in Liberia: is it the donors that provide the funds; the Government of Liberia (GOL) that receives the funds, or the communities that own the forest. The main objective was to explore ways to address the challenges to the effective implementation of the REDD+ in Liberia. This was informed by the thought that, at the international level where the REDD+

scheme was crafted, certain narratives were dominant, and determined the form and shape of the final outcome of the REDD+ negotiations. In other words, the negotiations that brought forth the Paris Agreement in general, and the REDD+ in particular, is a product of powerful influences, especially bearing in mind that such 'negotiations are guided very much by economic considerations and feasibilities' of parties to the Agreement (Kutting, 2000, p. 38). Further, the investigation took into account that 'environmental discourse [like the REDD+] is an astonishing collection of claims and concerns brought together by a great variety of actors' (Hajer, 1995, p. 1). However, the views of the powerful actors often prevail at such international forums. Therefore, it is important to understand how similar influences play out at the national level during the REDD+ implementation. In this regard, an investigation of the challenges the REDD+ implementation faces in countries like Liberia is necessary to determine the chances of the Paris Agreement succeeding in general, and the REDD+ in particular.

The research initially began with a 'problem-solving' approach. This approach views challenges to the REDD+ implementation through a technocratic and politically neutral lens (Ferguson, 1994; Mitchell, 2002). It focuses on issues like institutional and technical weaknesses within the implementing country. It avoids the contentious political, economic, social and structural challenges facing the country. Thus, issues like exclusionary political decision-making, economic and social marginalisation of rural communities, and structural barriers are treated as part of the general weaknesses of state institutions or bad governance within the country. Additionally, the theoretical lens informing problem-solving approaches is based on Africanist narratives (Wai, 2012; Pitcher, Moran and Johnston, 2009; Gruffydd Jones, 2008). It sees challenges like institutional weakness in Africa as a product of bad leadership and governance (Utas, 2008; Thomson, 2016; Sungbeh, 2019; Reno, 1998). Thus, the building of capacity and crafting various policies would address the challenges. In this context, the impediments to the REDD+ implementation are treated technically and require technical solutions.

In sum, the initial research was on how schemes like the REDD+ could surmount the institutional weaknesses that plague countries like Liberia. It aimed to explore how countries like Liberia could complete the REDD+ 'Readiness' phase to contribute to the Paris Agreement temperature reduction goals amid challenges like corruption, patronage, cronyism, weak institutions, lack of technical and financial capacity, and poverty. This was the initial research framework from which I started the fieldwork.

1.40 Research Method and Ethics

The primary research method is a case study of the Liberia REDD+ “Readiness” Project. Semi-structure interviews of institutional experts, focus groups and communities were conducted. The semi-structure interview allows for an in-depth investigation of the challenges to implementing global climate change policies in poor countries like Liberia where local expert knowledge, especially for forest communities, is key to REDD+ success (Senanayake, 2006). It privileges the participant as knower (McIntosh and Morse, 2015). It also provides flexibility both to the interviewee and the interviewer. Further, as a mode of enquiry, the semi-structure interview grants the researcher freedom to use a list of questions while giving the interviewee a great deal of leeway in how to reply (Bryman, 2012; Kumar, 2014).

The experts interviewed were drawn from institutions or project implementing entities (PIEs) that are directly involved in the ‘*Readiness*’ Project through the RTWG. The RTWG comprises the major stakeholders that monitor the progress of the project in Liberia. Fourteen experts from the Forestry Development Authority (FDA), Environmental Protection (EPA), Liberia Land Authority (LLA), National Climate Change Secretariat, the REDD+ Implementation Unit (RIU), Liberia Petroleum Regulatory Authority (LPRA), Forestry Department of the University of Liberia, the World Bank Country Office, Conservation International (CI), Fauna and Flora International (FFI); Community Development Initiative (CDI) and the Liberia Climate Change Secretariat were interviewed (Appendix 1). The experts have been engaged with the project since its inception in 2008. The experts average eight years’ experience in terms of engagement with the REDD+ project. They have greater insight into the challenges confronting the project. Additionally, two types of focus groups were also interviewed. The village focus groups and the students focus group (Appendix 1).

The village focus groups comprises five villages from two of the country’s five protected areas. These two protected areas were the ones accessible during the period of the research (i.e. the raining season when the laterites roads are undrivable). Moreover, the villages visited have participated in the REDD+ awareness activities. They are experiencing first-hand the difficulties to implementing global climate change policies such as the REDD+. The challenges they face are similar to those being experienced by other forest communities across the country. Six senior students of the Department of Forestry, University of Liberia constituted the second focus group. They were recruited through the head of the department based on their counties of origin, course of study and vacation jobs in conservation related activities. They are all majors of general forestry and minors in general agriculture. They come from communities in the heavily forested counties of Bong, Nimba, and Grand Gedeh in Central,

Northern and South Eastern Liberia (Appendix 1; see also the map of Liberia in Figure 5). Further, four of the students have engaged in conservation activities in one form or the other either as an intern or a vacation job. Additionally, students of the University of Liberia generally are reputed to be fiercely independent minded on national issues, especially where they consider officials of government, including the authorities of the University of Liberia, as agents of the Government of Liberia, in particular, the President of the Republic who happens to be the Visitor to the University, and has the power to appoint the University's President (Marmon, 2019; University of Liberia Relations 2019). As a result, they often express their views on national socio-political issues as they see them in the country without fear (African Star, 2022; Kloh, 2022). Thus, they provide the counter-balance between the experts and community focus groups on the challenges to the REDD+ project in Liberia.

On reflection of the number of interviews to answer the research question, I was guided by, firstly, who I thought would provide me the best information, and secondly the similarity in challenges confronting forest communities across the country (Kumar, 2014). In this regard, the experts interviewed were unanimous in their views that the REDD+ could contribute to the reduction of CO₂ in the earth's atmosphere, and generally concurred that the lack of national budgetary support for environmental issues in Liberia; political instability or the constant change of REDD+-related personnel due to change of government; the lack of alternative livelihood in forest communities, and poverty were amongst key barriers to the Liberia REDD+ Readiness Project. Thus, an increased number of experts was not likely to provide much additional information or any new information gathered may have negligible effect on the findings. As for the focus groups or forest communities, while the diverse groups of people provided an opportunity for greater number, and more nuance information, it was not possible to access the three other protected areas in the country, particularly in the South East due to the rainy season which made the roads to the rural forest communities undrivable. Notwithstanding this limitation, the fact cannot be discounted that the situations faced by the communities visited, including the lack of health centres, clean drinking water; schools; motorable roads and alternative livelihoods are similar in other forest communities across the country. The uniqueness of the Liberia REDD+ context, especially the situations in forest communities allows for transferability of the challenges to REDD+ in the country (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, in my judgement, the participant groups identified and interviewed were the ones that could provide me with the greatest information and insight on the REDD+ phenomenon investigated in Liberia (Kumar, 2014, p. 248).

The use of photographic evidence captures better the historical challenges faced by forest communities in rural Liberia, especially as it relates to exclusion and neglect of the

communities by the central government. It helps me to accentuate the context of historical deprivation of rural Liberia using visual data (Kuronen, 2015; Hall, 2009; Roush, Munroe and Fagre, 2007). To borrow the words of Hall (2015, p. 329), 'the camera can record details that might otherwise be considered unimportant or overlooked.' This outweighs the limitation of a photo being interpreted differently than the researcher aimed to convey, especially considering the large number of photos (Borchert, 1982). In addition, the communities see it, at least culturally, as a powerful tool to bring the hardships being endured to the attention of the world, especially NGOs. In this context, and wanting the researcher to see the level of neglect and abandonment the villagers were experiencing from the central government, one of the Chiefs in the villages visited said: "if you wish, we can take you to the delapidated and unfinished school building in the village for you to see things for yourself" (V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; Appendix 1).

Research ethics was central to the research, in particular the fieldwork (Madushani, 2016), and careful evaluation began before going into the field (Knapp, 2014). Issues such as data protection, privacy and confidentiality, voluntary participation, risk to participant and researcher, and consent of participants were taken into consideration. As a result, the required ethics application was submitted to the School of Law and Politics Research Ethics Committee (SREC), Cardiff University prior to going into the field. The application contained, amongst others, how I intended to deal with any ethical issues relating to obtaining participants consent, and how to secure the personal data of participants. After a careful consideration of the application and having satisfied that it met the required standards of the School's Ethical Guidelines, the SREC granted me ethical approval on 22/07/2019 with Internal Reference: SREC/160419/03.

The interviewees were contacted via email and/or phone calls in which I described the purpose of the research and requested their participation. For village participants, the request was channelled through the chief who assembled his people on the day of the interview. Upon acceptance, a date and time was agreed. Before the start of the interview on the agreed date, the interviewees were provided the information sheet and consent form that were prepared and approved as part of the Cardiff University ethics application process (Appendices 2 and 3). The consent form described to interviewees how their data would be secured and used. The consent form, amongst others, also clearly states that participation is voluntary and that the participant is free to withdraw at any time during the interview and without explanation. Further, it assures the interviewees about their identity being kept anonymous. Notwithstanding, the consent form also made it clear that some interviewees may be difficult to anonymize because of the position a person holds in the community or institution. Despite

this, the interviewees consent form provided the choice to remain anonymous or not. However, the risks factors to participants in terms of their jobs, livelihood and safety guided my decision to identify a person in the report (Brooks, 2014). To this extent, I anonymized comments by the village focus groups that I considered may have personal consequences for the participant. In such instances, all villages visited in the area are cited. Nonetheless, the named persons in the study granted the needed approval in the consent forms and there is no risk to their jobs, livelihoods or persons that I am aware of. I was also granted consent to video/audio record the interview, and to take pictures for use in the report. For the villagers, 'seeing was believing', and therefore pictorial/video evidence better conveys their situation to the government and NGOs for timely intervention. A Vai ethnic speaker (interpreter) was used in the Lake Piso Multipurpose Use Reserve Protected Area while a Mano ethnic speaker was used in the East Nimba Nature Reserve Protected Area for participants who could not speak the Official English Language of Liberia (See Appendix 4 for the Translator Confidentiality Agreement which was approved as part of the Cardiff University ethics application process).

Considering that there are always suspicion over any research, a researcher has to be clear on where he or she stands with respect to the issue. Therefore, I had to address the issue of positionality for the study bearing in mind the study was not taking place in a social vacuum. A value-neutral and wholly objective social research is a challenge (Bryman, 2012, p.149). My position as an official of the Government of Liberia granted me easy access to institutional participants and documents. I was seen as a high-level policy official conducting independent research that could help to bring to light the challenges participants face, especially on inter-agency rivalry and collaboration. They thought my findings could be a good opportunity to grab the attention of the highest decision-makers in the central government, especially on the prioritization of the environment through national budgetary appropriation and policy formulation. This was more so since I was researching an issue not directly related to the maritime sector from which I originated. For the villagers, I was seen as someone who would bring their struggles to the attention of the central government since the FDA could not be trusted to advocate on their behalf (Interviews, V1, V2, and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/2/2020; Appendix 1). Additionally, as a Liberian and a person from the Greboe tribe in the forest region of South-Eastern Liberia, I could relate to the challenges the villagers face, and understood the cultural sensitivities of the people (Godbole, 2014). Therefore, the villagers could talk to me freely on culturally sensitive issues like the Sande or Poro Society (traditional 'Bush' schools) without suspicion as they might a foreigner. Despite this positionality, I assured participants of my objectivity and my desire to see the climate crisis addressed. My position is that the climate change problem is real, and that scientific knowledge has established that cutting forest contributes to CO₂ emissions; and that the REDD+ is one strategy for reducing

the increase in global temperature rise in our earth's atmosphere (IPCC, 2021; IPCC 2004). Thus, it is only through close study that we would be able to know what is working and what issues we will need to address if the REDD+ scheme is to pass the 'Readiness' phase in Liberia. In short, my position enabled me to build the situated knowledge necessary to understand the challenges to REDD+ in Liberia from the perspective of the forest communities or the subjugated (Haraway, 1988). In this regard, I share Haraway's view that "partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims" (Haraway, 1998, p. 589). I left no doubt that my only interest is to investigate a problem that is transnational and impacting everyone, especially the poor countries. As such, it requires collective action to address no matter who you are or where you are from.

1.50 Stakeholders Engagement

The fieldwork comprises engagement with key stakeholders to the Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' project during three separate trips to Liberia in August 2019, November 2019 and February 2020. This is the period when the dirt-track motor roads are drivable to undertake fieldwork, especially to access the remote rural towns and villages. During the raining season in Liberia (April to October annually), the country's largely laterite roads are very bad and vehicular traffic becomes literally impossible (Menkor, 2019). Therefore, it is practically difficult for such fieldwork to take place during this period when remote forest regions are cut off from the rest of the country. Pictures 15-20 and 21-27 in Chapter Six of this research show how bad the roads are during the raining season. This is why I visited only villages in two of the country's five protected areas for the field study. The towns visited were relatively accessible during the rainy season, even though the road conditions were still challenging.

As already indicated, the fieldwork involves semi-structured interviews. The interviews are divided into two broad categories, experts and focus group interviews. The experts were drawn mainly from the Liberia REDD+ Technical Working Group. The Group comprises key stakeholders from government institutions, especially the PIEs for REDD+, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that are directly involved in the implementation of the REDD+ project (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, 2020; Front Page Africa, 2018). The village focus group interviews include five villages. The villages visited are Kpalan, Falie, Latia, Zortapa and Geipa. They are located within two of the country's five protected areas, the *Lake Piso Multipurpose Reserve Use Area*, and *East Nimba Nature Reserve Protected Area* in the South West, and North East of the country respectively. The other three Protected Areas not visited because of bad roads are the *Sapo National Park* in the South East, the *Gola National Forest Park* in the North West, and the *Grebo-Krahn Forest Park* in the South East (Fauna and Flora, 2018). The towns visited are direct beneficiaries of REDD+ awareness outreach

and activities in one form or the other. Additionally, as already stated, senior students of the Forestry Department, University of Liberia serve as a cross-reference group between the experts and the villagers.

In addition, there was a comprehensive review of academic, and institutional documents on the UNFCCC, UN-REDD and FCPF in general, and the REDD+ in particular over the duration of the research. In addition, documents on Liberia, including the Liberia Forest Sector Project, the Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' Project, National Policy and Response Strategy on Climate Change, the country's political economy and social order, Forest Laws, and Land and Community rights Laws were also reviewed.

The field engagements brought out some interesting initial findings.

1.60 Initial Findings from the field

The findings from the first fieldwork reveal a general acceptance of the REDD+ concept. The stakeholders think the REDD+ scheme could be a means to protect the country's forest, and a source of revenue to the Government and forest communities. Generally, all experts are of the view that the country's large forest reserve, which is estimated at 43% of the remaining Upper Guinea Forest of West and Central Africa, makes it a good candidate for the REDD+ scheme (Interviews ER1, ER2 and ER3, 13/08/2019; ER4, 14/08/2019; ER5, 15/08/2019; ER7, 19/08/2019; ER13, 8/11/2019; Appendix 1). The village and students focus groups also think the REDD+ is a good idea since it could protect the forest while providing some form of income to the host communities (Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/2/2020; S1-6, 14/08/2019; Appendix 1). Notwithstanding the positive reception to the REDD+ idea, the stakeholders are generally of the view that its success depends on addressing certain challenges.

The main barrier in the view of the experts is the lack of ownership of the project by the Government of Liberia (GOL). They think the project is largely donor-driven and too reliant on donors' funds (Interviews ER1, 12/08/2019; ER3, 13/08/2019; ER4, 14/08/2019; ER12, 8/11/2019; Appendix 1). As a result, the government shows little commitment in terms of funding the project. For them, the project is overly dependent on donors' support (Interview, ER6, 16/08/2019; Appendix 1). Also, the constant change in personnel at institutions of government, especially after a change of administration following elections is seen as another challenge (GOL) (Interviews, ER6; 16/08/2019; ER12, 8/11/2019; Appendix 1). In the views of the respondents, this often leads to change in staff across all institutions of government, including those implementing the REDD+ project. Thus, the loss of time as the new staff needs

time to settle into the job before cooperating on the project. Similarly, the PIEs would also need some time to engage with one another because of the appointment of new heads. Further, the experts think the lack of coordination amongst various institutions and limited understanding of the REDD+ issue at the higher policy level are also challenges (Interviews ER1, 12/08/2019; ER3, 13/08/2019; ER6; 16/08/2019; ER13, 8/11/2019; Appendix 1). The lack of appropriation in the national budget for environmental issues in general, and REDD+ in particular, is attributed to these challenges. In addition, the experts are of the view that the lack of alternative livelihoods in forest communities is a major barrier. This is one of the primary concerns that the experts think the REDD+ 'Readiness' phase fails to take into consideration (Interviews E5, 15/08/2019; ER7, 19/08/2019; ER10, 20/08/2019; Appendix 1).

The villagers also consider the issue of alternative livelihood a primary concern. For them, while they welcome the idea of REDD+, the REDD+ must firstly address how their daily survival would be provided for prior to reaching the implementation phase of the project (Interviews V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/2/2020; S1-6, 14/08/2019; Appendix 1). Thus, for the forest communities, their livelihood should be the first order of business for the REDD+ project. Secondly, the forest communities generally consider the Government of Liberia, in particular the FDA, as untrustworthy (Interviews V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/2/2020; S1-6, 14/08/2019; Appendix 1). They said the FDA has not fulfilled promises made to them after putting in place regulations that require them not to cut the trees. They point to their dire living conditions as proof of the abandonment and neglect by the Government of Liberia. They specifically referenced the lack of healthcare centres, schools, public toilets and good roads as evidence of the Government's insensitivity to their plights.

The students focus group shares similar views to that expressed by the experts, and village focus groups. They think environmental issues in general, and the REDD+ in particular, lacks national budgetary appropriation (Interview, S4, 14/08/2019; Appendix 1). The students also think the rural communities are largely neglected by the government. Therefore, they contend that the success of the REDD+ depends on the government funding of environmental issues; providing jobs for the youths, especially university graduates; and supporting alternative livelihoods in forest communities (Interviews, S1-6, 14/08/2019; Appendix 1).

While the concerns expressed by the interviewees could serve as impediments to the REDD+ implementation, the way these problems are characterized was problematic for the initial framework of the project. The mainstream Africanist approach would conclude that these core challenges to REDD+ in Liberia are rooted in the country's weak institutions and poor governance (Bayart, 2009; Bøås, 2001; Boas and Jennings 2007; Clapham, 1982; Bratton

and van de Walle, 1997; Callaghy, 1987; Ergas, 1987; Kamola, 2012; Kasfir, 1987; Marenin, 1987; Sindzingre, 2012)). Following the field visit however, I realized that the problems confronting the country, as expressed by the interviewees, could not be effectively analysed without historicising the problems. The basis of the core arguments in this research is therefore to provide an alternative critical account of these 'internal' challenges to the implementation of REDD+ in Liberia.

1.70 Core Arguments and Theoretical Tools of Analysis

Much of the mainstream literature about Africa's contemporary condition often characterise these economic and political problems as typical features of the postcolonial African state (Bratton and van de Walle, 1998; Gazibo, 2012; Thompson, 2016; Medard, 1982; Bayart, 2009). This is also consistent with the mainstream or 'problem solving' approach to REDD+ which focuses on impediments to REDD+ internal to the implementing country, and its institutional arrangements and capacities (Korhonen-Kurki et al, 2018, Angelsen, et al, 2010; Arhin, 2017; Bosetti and Lubowski, 2010; Astuti and McGregor, 2015). This approach 'fixes limits to the problem area' for examination (Cox, 1996; p. 88). This research initially adopted a similar approach. However, after the field visit when I heard from the villagers first-hand on the problems, and saw the magnitude of the neglect by the national government, I realized the problems have deeper roots than they appear on the surface. Thus, the decision to historize the problems.

This approach takes into account the broader context of the problem (Cox, 1996, p. 89). It brought the colonial legacy of the country into focus. This enables me to see the weak institutions of government as a product of the country's colonial legacy. Additionally, this approach examines how this legacy contributes to the contemporary impediments to REDD+ in the country. It helps me to overcome the shortcomings of the 'problem-solving' approach that I started the fieldwork with (Cox, 1996). Further, this critical approach takes into account the neo-colonial environment of the problems. It brings the role of external factors and influences on the REDD+ implementation in Liberia into the analysis. It specifically explores the link between the demand for Liberia timber abroad, and deforestation in Liberia. This marks a major point of departure for this research, especially given the neoliberal features of the REDD+ (Astuti, 2016; Schroeder; Mcdermott, 2014; Fiske and Paladino 2017).

This new approach effectively situated REDD+ within the broader dominant global capitalist economic environment, and brought to the fore private property rights as the foundation upon which [neo] liberalism, and by extension, REDD+ rests (von Mises, 1985). With this approach, the opportunity for 'strategic action to bring about an alternative order' instead of maintaining

the status quo as would the 'problem-solving' approach became possible for this study (Cox, 1996, p.90).

I have drawn on a range of critical perspectives to develop an argument about the contradictions and challenges to the REDD+ in Liberia. Firstly, I historicised the defining features of Liberia's present condition which are identified as challenges to the REDD+ implementation in the country. These conditions are shown to be enduring legacies of Liberia's colonial past, and modes of incorporation of the country into the global political economy. Secondly, I have situated Liberia's contemporary condition within a theoretically informed analysis of colonialism, neo-colonialism and neoliberalism. This differs from the discourse analysis (Hajer, 1995), and Foucault's governmentality of power (Foucault, 1984) that I started with. This new approach is more appropriate for me to look at the problems through the country's past, and the global economic environment in which Liberia trades. The adopted approach and analytical tools appear to better capture the challenges REDD+ faces in Liberia, especially within the context of a dominant global capitalist economy.

I draw on thinkers like Sartre, Mamdani and Ferguson for my critical tools of analysis to examine Liberia's colonial legacy. For these thinkers, colonialism is subtle and is more than the physical presence of the colonizer (Sartre, 1964; Mamdani, 1996; Ferguson, 2009). Also, I draw on scholars such as Harvey, and Dumenil and Levy to characterise neoliberalism as the latest stage of capitalism (Dumenil, and Levy, 2005; Harvey, 2005). In particular, I employ a theoretical conception of neoliberalism that helps me to understand how communities are being co-opted into objects of the market (Davies, 2017; Foucault, 2008; Ferguson, 2009). In this respect, neoliberalism is seen as a continuation of the colonial enterprise, albeit in another form. Additionally, I draw on thinkers like Nkrumah and Sartre for my neo-colonial analysis. For such thinkers, colonialism now operates on the economic frontier (Nkrumah, 1965; Sartre, 1964). These theoretical tools of analysis together help to inform this research contribution.

1.80 Thesis Contribution

This research contributes to the critical literature on REDD+ by examining the case of Liberia in-depth. It particularly focuses on the postcolonial specificity of the social, political, economic and structural context within which REDD+ is implemented. It demonstrates that the problems confronting REDD+ implementation in Liberia are rooted in the country's colonial legacy and sustained by the country's neo-colonial environment now. Thus, it addresses one major criticism against solutions to the global ecological crisis that they fail to take into consideration the colonial linkages to the crisis (Ferdinand, 2022). Further, it reveals that the implementation of the REDD+ within a 'country-specific' context on techno-managerial ground ignores how

dependent the economy of Liberia is on the dominant global capitalist economy. This apolitical and technical approach misses the main source of deforestation in places like Liberia.

In addition, the research shows there are wider implications for REDD+ and climate governance in the Global South beyond carbon sequestration. It brings into sharp focus the issue of race and indigeneity, in particular, where the REDD+ appears to perpetuate Liberia's colonial legacy taking into account the REDD+ reliance on private property rights, the foundation of the dominant global capitalist economy (von Messes, 2002). Firstly, the REDD+ privileges private property rights over indigenous communal land practice ownership. It requires a land to be surveyed, the meets and bounds established, a deed prepared, probated and registered as proof of ownership (Republic of Liberia Land Rights Act 2018). Thus, tribal communal land practices that rely on oral testaments, long occupation and natural features as proof of ownership must go through a confirmatory survey process to establish ownership or else are considered public land that is free for use by the government as deemed necessary, including awarding the land for commercial logging purposes (Article 11.4, Republic of Liberia Land Rights Act 2018). The deed requirement, which is also the basis upon which a forest set aside for REDD+ projects is based, and that is, the forest set aside for REDD+ must be surveyed and gazetted (ER3, 13/8/2019; ER14, 10/2/2020; Appendix 1), satisfies private property rights. The deed issued gives the holder the right to use the land in whatever way one chooses, including sale of the land. As a result, the REDD+ unwittingly leads to land grab for private investments, in particular commercial logging while disciplining indigenous communities into farming practices that are new and alienating (Leach, Fairhead and Fraser, 2012; Foucault, 1997; Mitchell, 1988). For example, as at the field visit of this study in 2020, 1.7million ha of forest land was contracted out to logging companies in Liberia through community forestry as communities assert their rights over the land in line with private property rights granted by the Community Rights Law of 2009 (See Table 2 of this research). It is therefore no surprise when this study found community forestry is the backdoor to commercial logging, and thereby further alienating conservation.

This research also calls into question the generally held notion, especially amongst Liberians that, the country was never colonized (Gunther, 1953). The findings of this study shows that not to be the case. On the contrary, Liberia has a quite specific variant of colonialism. Given this specific variant of Liberia colonialism, a wider contribution to understanding the role of coloniality and race/indigeneity in the politics of REDD+ in Africa and the Global South is required. This is especially important if one is to understand the particular ways in which race and indigeneity play out in land ownership in Liberia (Pailey, 2016; Articles 27a and 22, Constitution of the Republic of Liberia 1986). The unique colonialism in Liberia has generally

conditioned Liberians mentally into thinking that western values, especially Christian values and private property rights espoused by the United States in trade and economics are superior to the values of the tribal people that inhabited Liberia prior the arrival of the freed slaves in 1822 (Boley, 1993; Kieh, 2012; Sawyer, 1992). Today, the western values dominate Liberia in the affairs of the state and business (Cement, 2013; Korlison, 2012). Therefore, the wider political dynamics, and the general theoretical arguments around international relations/order need to be understood with regard to Liberia specific variant of colonialism. For example, the dependence of the economy of Liberia on the dominant global capitalist economy makes the country and its political elites less independent (Sartre, 1964; Nkrumah, 1965). This calls into question international relations theories based on the Westphalian principles of 'national sovereignty' and 'non-interference' in the internal affairs of other nations, especially where nations continue to pursue their own interests in a world of realism or anarchy underpinned by irrepressible greed despite the advancement in international relations and cooperation (Mingst, McKibben and Arreguin-Toft, 2019; Kissinger, 2014; Varoufakis, 2015; Moyo, 2012).

Finally, the REDD+ or the forest could be re-imagined in terms of the sacredness of the forest and land to the forest communities for greater buy-in into the scheme. This would align with the belief of the tribal people who consider land a sacred bond between the past, present and future generations (Sawyer, 1992). The natural environment, including land, trees, rivers and mountains are more than mere objects to the tribal people. They have a spiritual, social and cultural relationships with them. In this regard, Birrell, Godden and Tehan (2012, p. 207) argue in favour of a conservation [REDD+] that adopts "a stewardship model of property" which represents a more diverse and holistic rights, interests and obligations to preserve cultural property irrespective of title [private property rights understanding]". Along similar lines, Villhauer calls for legal commitments to recognise and respect the robustness of indigenous environmental knowledge and cultural conservation practices in national REDD+ strategies (Villhauer, 2021, p. 1221). This may require rethinking or a radical re-imagination of the REDD+ as currently conceived (Lyons, Westoby and Nel, 2017; Ngendakumana et al, 2013). This should provide an opportunity to further explore if such a re-imagination would not also perpetuate the same neoliberal practices as the REDD+.

1.90 Structure of the thesis and summary of chapters

The thesis is divided into three broad parts, excluding the introductory and concluding chapters, for logical discussion. Part I is on '*REDD+ in global environmental Politics*'. Part II looks at the '*Challenges to REDD+ in Liberia*'. Part III considers '*Private property: the foundation of capitalism*'.

There are two chapters in Part I: Chapter Two, *'The Origin of REDD+'* and Chapter Three, *'How REDD+ is studied in global environmental politics?'*. Chapter Two discusses the origin and codification of the REDD+ in the Paris Agreement. Chapter Three considers the two broad perspectives that are generally employed to discuss the REDD+ in the literature on global environmental politics. It explores how the 'problem-solving' approach, and the critical approach discuss the REDD+ issue. This chapter concludes with how neoliberalism is understood in this research.

Part II comprises three chapters: Chapter Four, *'Political challenges to REDD+ in Liberia'*; Chapter Five, *'Economic Challenges to REDD+ in Liberia'*, and Chapter Six, *'Social and Structural Challenges to REDD+ in Liberia'*. Chapter Four argues that Liberia's political institutions are rooted in its colonial legacy. Thus, the political challenges, especially the too powerful executive branch of government, could not be seen in isolation of the country's colonial past. This chapter draws out the colonial legacy of the 'Liberian social' order, and how the country remains under the influence of external actors, especially the United States. Chapter Five explores the link between the country's *'plantation'* economy and the dominant global capitalist economy. It shows how dependent the Liberian economy is on the global capitalist economy, and how this limits Liberia's capacity to stop deforestation. Chapter Six investigates the dire social and structural conditions in Liberia forest communities. It contends that these conditions are a product of the country's exclusionary colonial legacy which marginalizes the rural communities.

Part III has one chapter: Chapter Seven, *'Contrasting philosophies of landed property rights in Liberia'*. This final chapter demonstrates how the introduction of private property rights in Liberia laid the basis for the constant land grab and land conflicts in the country. Through my analysis, I reveal that one of the profound contradictions of the question of forest management and sustainable use in Liberia is the role of private property rights in land and resources. The dual land ownership regimes practice by the country explains this contradiction. To understand this contradiction, I foregrounded first the neoliberal character of REDD+, and second, conducted a historical and global analysis of the 'internal' institutional impediments to REDD+ in Liberia. The discussion of REDD+ in global environmental politics is critical to this analysis. The first place to start this analysis is the origin and aims of REDD+.

Part I: REDD+ in Global Environmental Politics

Chapter 2: Origin and Aims of REDD+: From Kyoto to Paris

2.0 Introduction

REDD+, the scheme for developed countries to offset their carbon emissions and to support developing countries in maintaining their tropical forests while reducing deforestation, emerged in the context of global negotiations to agree measures to combat climate change (Collins, 2017; Backstrand, and Lovbrand, 2016; Boyd, 2010; Carbon Market Watch 2019). The scheme was codified in 2015 in the Paris Agreement but was first proposed several years prior to that (COP 21, UNFCCC Paris Agreement 2015).

The perception that reduction of CO₂ emission through the REDD+ scheme could play a critical role in combatting the global climate crisis is based on scientific expert knowledge, which established that the fight against CO₂ emission into the earth's atmosphere would be difficult without efforts to curtail emissions from the forest sector (Butt, Lyster and Stephens, 2015; IPCC 2000; Gutierrez, 2017). The Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use sector (AFOLU) comprises about 24% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally. The uniqueness of the sector is recognized in that the AFOLU activities can act as both sources and sinks of emissions (La Vina and de Leon, 2017; IPCC, 2014; IPCC Technical Paper 1, 1996; Boyd, 2010). The availability of these scientific facts about the forest capabilities both as a source of emission and storage spurred politicians, at least for now, into action as was witnessed at the Paris Summit.

To appreciate the significance of REDD+ codification in the Paris Agreement and its chances of being an important contributor to the emissions reduction goals of the Convention, it is necessary to understand how REDD+ started, including how the issues of leakage, additionality, permanence and measurement that delayed its adoption after Kyoto were addressed. Further, it is important to know how REDD+ is designed to function, and what it aims to achieve. In other words, to critically scrutinize where REDD+ sits within the broader Paris Agreement implementation agenda (Corbera and Schroeder, 2017), it is imperative to understand how it started, and what it sets out to achieve. This chapter provides an account of the processes which led to the proposal, and details of the REDD+ scheme.

2.10 International Efforts to Address the Climate Crisis

The concerns about the rapid degradation of the natural environment appears to have started in the late 1960s. During this period, environmentalists and organizations like the *Committee for Atlantic Economic Cooperation* [currently the *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development -OECD*] began expressing concerns about the industrial world's inability to

address the environmental challenges that were threatening the existence of mankind (Hajer, 1995, p.81; Death, 2009, p. 33). However, it was the Club of Rome '*Limit to Growth*' (LTG) Report in the early 1970s that particularly brought the issue of environmental doom to global attention. It 'argued the issue forcefully' and "for the first time, portrayed the environmental issue as a global crisis" (Sachs, 2015, p. 4; Hajer, 1995, p. 83; Bernstein, 2001, p. 33). The influence of the members of the Club of Rome as experts in business, policy-making and science, couple with the considerable power they wielded in the world of finance, trade and industry, lend credence to the LTG Report. Thus, the widespread attention and respectability enjoyed by the LTG Report (Hajer, 1995). However, it is important to note that three studies together: *LTG*, *Blue Print for Survival* and *Small is Beautiful*, "created the widespread credibility for the claim that the environmental crisis was serious and needed to be addressed" (Hajer 1995, p. 79; Schumacher, 1973; Meadows et al, 1972; Ecologist, 1972). Thus, in general, the release of these three reports in the early 1970s marks the start of the global attention to issues of the environment.

The *LTG* investigated the interconnectedness of five trends which the Club of Rome thought to be of global concern as it relates to accelerating industrialization, rapid population growth, widespread malnutrition, depletion of non-renewable resources, and deteriorating environment (Baker, 2016; Connelly et al, 2012; Meadows, Randers and Meadows, 2004). Hajer argued that the global attention to the issues of concern was not because of the *Limit to Growth's* apocalyptic message, which was not new, but because of the ethos of the report and the general ideological climate of the early 1970s. The ethos stemmed from the authors prominence, and therefore could not easily be discredited (Hajer 1995; Connelly et al, 2012; Meadows et al 2004). As a result, the framing of the environmental problematique in apocalyptic terms had an impact on elite opinions. The *LTG*, in general, argued for a global solution to environmental problems based on hierarchies consisting of the social elites in business, science and governments. On the other hand, the *Blue Print for Survival* argued for decentralization, self-sufficiency and self-government. For '*Small is Beautiful*', it called for "small scale working units based on intermediate technology that were designed on the basis of an understanding of the laws of ecology" (Hajer, 1995, p. 85). While the solutions proposed by these studies were either technocratic as in *LTG* or radical as that of *Blue Print for Survival*, they framed the environmental problem as a matter of survival. This study thinks these three studies together placed the environmental issue on the front burner of global attention and gave science and economics preeminent roles in solutions that were being advanced. This is the backdrop against which the first major international conference on the environment was organized by the UN in 1972.

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in 1972 in Stockholm is the first major global conference to discuss the dangers pose to the environment (Baker 2016; Bernstein 2001; Stevis, 2014; O'Neil, 2009). The UNCHE was held around the beliefs that poverty was the cause of environmental degradation, and that environmental problems could be solved by the application of scientific and technological knowledge underpinned by market measures (Baker, 2016, p.141). However, Southern countries saw such narrative as a Northern interpretation. For them, poverty reduction and economic growth were paramount over the conservationist and environmental protection concerns of the North (Bernstein 2001, p. 28; Hajer, 1995, p.100). Despite the South's concerns, the dominant narrative by the North prevailed with some concession. This led to Principle 20 in the Stockholm Declaration (United Nations, 1972).

Principle 20 called for the free flow of up-to-date scientific information and transfer of experience that should be supported and assistance rendered, to facilitate the solution of environmental problems, especially in developing countries (Sohn, 1973). This was seen as a compromise between the opposing positions – the Industrialized North Vs. Developing South at the Stockholm conference because it gave developing countries the 'assurances that environmental concerns would in no way impede their development goals (Bernstein, 2001, p. 35). The Northern countries were primarily concerned with conservation and environmental protection while Southern countries were preoccupied with economic growth and poverty reduction (Bernstein 2001, p. 29). This requires new way of framing the environmental problem to bridge the divide. The Brundtland Report 1987 entitled '*Our Common Future*' provided the new way of framing the environmental problem. This helped to bridge the divide between the North and the South on how to address the environmental problem without sacrificing development goals of developing countries (Death, 2009, p. 39; Baker, 2016, p.7; Sachs, 2015, p. 5).

The Brundtland Report frame the narrative between the environment and development in a language of sustainable development (Hajer, 1995; UN Brundtland Report 1987). It considers the environment and development under the same rubric, and sees them as interlinked and not in competition to one another. It defines sustainable development as the ability to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Bernstein, 2001, p.50). The UN Earth Summit 1992 in Rio Brazil built on this report (Sachs, 2015; Baker, 2016).

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) 1992, tag the '*Rio Earth Summit*', was a watershed year in climate change treaty (Axelrod and VanDeveer,

2015). The summit adopted a global international treaty, the UNFCCC 1992. This summit firmly addressed the relationship between development, environment and society. It was seen as a compromise between the pursuit of economic development and the protection of the environment (Bernstein, 2001; Connelly et al, 2012). Thus, its adoption of the UNFCCC at the '*RIO Earth Summit*' in 1992. Since that time, the Conference of Parties (COP) to the Convention continue to meet annually to take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention. The first COP was held in 1995 in Berlin, Germany. The COP meets in Bonn, Germany, the seat of the UNFCCC Secretariat, unless a Party offers to host the session (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1995).

With issue of the environment firmly on the global political agenda post Rio 1992 Earth Summit, the discourse on climate change gained the kind of global attention that environmentalists and policy experts had hoped for. Post Rio, sustainable development emerged as the dominant governance model to take forward the Convention goals without sacrificing the economic development needs of Southern Countries while addressing the environmental concerns of Northern Countries. Despite the dominance of the sustainable development discourse, the solutions to the climate problem are largely driven by market-based measures (Gareau, 2013, p. 4; Harrison and Mikler, 2014; Levy and Rothenberg, 2014). This is especially the case because the *RIO Earth Summit*, in addition to highlighting the link between 'economic development and environmental protection generally, specifically links trade and the environment' (Esty, 2015, p. 331). This is where the issue of deforestation and forest degradation comes into play because the forest is vital to the protection of the environment but is threatened by trade in timber and forest products (UN ITTA 1994; DeShazo, Pandey and Smith, 2016; Smith et al, 2014).

The Convention did not expressly mention deforestation. However, Article 4.1(c) and (d) recognize sinks and reservoirs including forests, as one of the pathways to promoting the goals of the Convention (UN 1992). In this regard, negotiations and debates at COP meetings are always intense (Bietta, 2010; Angelsen et al, 2012, Connelly et al, 2012; Death, 2009). The intensity of the disagreement over the question of land use, and land-use change from forest (LULUCF) to combat the climate crisis led to the exclusion of the use of the forest, specifically addressing deforestation at COP7 in 2001 despite Article 4.1(c) and (d) of the Convention and Article 3.3 of the Kyoto Protocol calling on parties to take into account net changes in GHG emissions by sources and removals by sinks, including deforestation (Bietta, 2010). Section 2.20 below discusses this in detail. Nonetheless, the exclusion of the use of deforestation by COP7 should come as a surprise since 'the history of global environmental governance involves the gradual move from precautionary, "command and control" state

regulatory solutions to private, market-based solutions' (Gareau 2013, P. 43). Deforestation, as a market-based measure, had not yet been demonstrated and therefore its exclusion at the time. With the market utility of the measure as the main driver for proposed solutions to the environmental problems, the COP appear more interested in pursuing their respective national interest than the collective interest of the world (Kutting, 2004; Middleton and O'Keefe, 2003). Notwithstanding the differences over the use of the forest to combat the climate problem, the CDM mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol was a step forward in this regard.

2.20 Kyoto Protocol Clean Development Mechanism

Article 4.1(d) of the Convention calls on parties to promote the use the forest as sinks and reservoir for all greenhouse gases. However, it was not specific on how this should be done. Article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol addressed this shortcoming by being more specific. This Article introduced the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) for this purpose. The CDM allows industrialized countries to receive emission credits for financing GHG emission reduction projects in developing countries. The credits received may apply towards meeting the developed country GHG emissions commitments under the Convention (Article 4.1(d), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1992; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Kyoto Protocol, 1997; Lovera-Bilderbeek, 2019, p. 269). This marks the beginning of the market for 'the formal emissions trading systems permitting the trading of emissions rights' (Hein, 2019, p.97).

The Convention categorizes countries into two groups for GHG reduction: *Annex 1* and *Non-Annex 1* countries. *Annex 1* is a list of developed countries and countries whose economies are in transition to market economy. Countries on this list are required to specifically commit themselves to adopting mitigation measures to limit emissions of GHG to protect and enhance their GHG sinks and reservoirs. To ensure the *Annex 1* countries demonstrate their commitments to reducing GHG, Annex B of the Kyoto Protocol specifies an assigned quantified emission reduction limit for each country. This provides the basis against which their efforts to reduce GHG is measured. Thus, the *Annex 1* countries are expected to demonstrate they were leading the global efforts to modify longer-term trends in anthropogenic emissions consistent with the objective of the Convention by meeting their commitments in Annex B of the Protocol (Article 4.2(a), United Nations, 1992; Annex B, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Kyoto Protocol, 1997). The *Non-Annex 1* countries are primarily developing countries that are not listed in *Annex 1*. The Convention also has an *Annex II* which comprises a list of developed countries (largely Annex 1 Countries) that are required to provide new and additional financial resources to meet the agreed costs to be incurred by developing countries Parties (Non-Annex 1 Countries) in complying with the Kyoto

Protocol, in particular the CDM (Article 4.3, United Nations, 1992; Article 12, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Kyoto Protocol, 1997). The backdrop to these categories is based on accusations that developed countries bear the greatest responsibility for the global climate crisis (Kutting, 2004).

Article 3 of the Kyoto Protocol requires the *Annex 1* countries aim to reduce their overall GHG emissions by 5% below 1990 levels during the first commitment period, 2008 to 2012. This would ensure their aggregate GHG emissions did not exceed their quantified emission limitations and reduction commitments in Annex B of the Kyoto Protocol. However, the calculations for the net change were to be limited to afforestation, reforestation and deforestation since 1990.

Simply put, the CDM is an emission credit derived from a project. It allows parties to obtain a certificate confirming the holder's project meets emission reduction benchmark prescribed in the Kyoto Protocol. Based on the certificate, the holder is qualified to apply the earned emission credit against their assigned commitment limit in Annex B of the Protocol or trade it on a voluntary carbon market. For example, an *Annex 1* country, the USA, provides financial support to a dam project in a *non-Annex 1* Country, Liberia. The project is certified to have a net credit of 3% in terms of GHG emissions reduction. As a result, the US would be issued a certificate confirming the project has contributed to GHG reduction benchmark by 3%. Thus, the US has earned 3% credit in GHG reduction from the project in Liberia. The US could use that earned credit against its GHG reduction commitment of 93% in Annex B of the Protocol. If the US uses the credit, its 93% would be reduced by 3%. By this formula, the 93% GHG emissions which occurred from activities in the US is offset against the 3% GHG reduction activities of the dam project in Liberia but financed by US.

While the CDM has been instrumental in incorporating CO₂ emissions from the forest sector due to deforestation into the Convention framework, it attracted considerable concerns at inception. Of the numerous concerns, the CDM as an invitation for developed countries to offset their bad polluting habits through earning emission reduction credits from funding GHG reduction measures in less developed countries is the top most (Fiske and Paladino, 2017, p.1; Paulson, 2009). For critics such as Gutierrez (2017), the CDM in practice, meant assigning rights to pollute.

The criticisms of the CDM were connected to the numerous questions that confronted it at inception. The questions include: (i) How does one account for the non-permanent reductions of carbon since trees and vegetations absorb carbon dioxide as they grow and release it back

into the atmosphere as they decay and die? (ii) What if after 20 or 30 or 60 years (the time allowed for CDM projects), and once the credits have been sold and used, the plantation catches fire or succumbs to a disease, and thereby releasing the stored carbon back into the atmosphere? (iii) Who is liable for this re-emission of carbon after all these years? (iv) How can one ensure leakage does not happen since establishing a plantation in one area may lead to deforestation in another area because agricultural activities do not take place in a vacuum? (v) Who owns the carbon that trees necessarily absorb in the process of photosynthesis? (Gutierrez, 2017, p. 62). Other questions being asked are: could removal by sinks be accounted for since it was not 'human-induced' as required by the CDM? Will setting aside a piece of land as carbon stock [protected area or park for example] result in other areas being affected by the displacement of activities from that land to other locations? How does one interpret "since 1990", the base year for the calculations of the net change in emissions from afforestation, reforestation and deforestation? Is it fair to use the same baseline for all countries? How does one verify and ensure accuracy? (Paulson, 2009, pp. 60-80; Article 3, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Kyoto Protocol, 1997). For some critics, these sorts of questions could be summed up in four main concerns or limitations, particularly the inclusion of avoided deforestation projects under the CDM (Boyd, 2010, Paulson, 2009). The summations are leakage, permanence, additionality and measurement.

By leakage, the concern was about whether a CDM approved project that has already earned a certificate of emission reduction (CER) would not lead to an increase in emission elsewhere. A leakage could be primary (activity shifting) or market-driven (Schwarze et al. 2002). An example of primary leakage is a forest conservation project that displaced farmers in one area only for them to clear adjacent forest in another. An example of market-driven leakage is a successful conservation project that reduced the supply of local timber and thereby led to an increase in timber prices which invariably led to increased pressure on unprotected forests elsewhere. Another example of market-driven leakage could be the building of a relatively clean-burning natural gas plant that leads to an increase in the price of natural gas in an area such that the demand for coal or oil is preferred (Schwarze et al. 2002). In the case of permanence, the concern had to do with the recognition that the storage of carbon in forests is not necessarily permanent but can be reversed in the future, voluntarily or accidentally (Paulson, 2009). For example, an accidental forest fire in a protected area could lead to increased emissions. The third and fourth concerns about measurement and additionality relate to the difficulties of how to accurately measure the amount of CO₂ emissions avoided from a particular project area, and how to demonstrate the additional value added relative to business as usual (Boyd, 2010). These concerns were not lost on participants at the seventh

meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP7) in Marrakesh in 2001. As a result, deforestation was excluded from the first commitment period of the CDM (2008-2012). It should be noted however that, some other commentators maintained that the concerns raised could be addressed. For example, Brown et al (2002, P. 1593-1605) argued that 'existing techniques and technology can address the objections raised to including carbon sinks to ameliorate climate change'. How did COP7 address these issues? COP7 in Marrakesh, Morocco took up this issue.

2.30 Clean Development Mechanism post Kyoto to REDD+

The issue of deforestation suffered setback in 2001 at COP7 in Marrakesh. The Marrakesh Conference, which also served as the first meeting of the *Conference of the Parties to the Convention that serves as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP1)*, excluded deforestation despite the Kyoto Protocol specifically including deforestation as part of the measures in the original formulation of the idea of CDM (Art 3.3 and Art. 12, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Kyoto Protocol, 1997). This happened despite COP7 adoption of definitions, modalities, rules and guidance relating to land use, land-use change and forestry activities under Articles 3, 6, and 12 of the Kyoto Protocol for application to the first commitment period (2008- 2012) of the Protocol (Decision 11/CP.7; Draft decision -/CPM.1, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2002). The Marrakesh meeting instead requested the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technology Advise (SBSTA) to incorporate the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC was tasked to elaborate methods to estimate, measure, monitor, and report changes in carbon stocks and anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks resulting from land use, land-use change and forestry to effectuate the CDM. Thus, while the issue of deforestation was important to combatting greenhouse gas emission from the forest sector, the Marrakesh meeting first and foremost thought the methodological issue needed to be clarified. The meeting concluded that concerns about proper accounting for land-use, and land-use change and forest activities that were a direct result of human activities need to be addressed first. Therefore, deforestation was excluded from the first commitment period (2008-2012) until concerns of leakage, permanence, additionality and measurement. Of these concerns, the issue of avoided deforestation in the context of leakage was more critical. In this regard, the final outcome of the COP7 meeting in Marrakesh accepted reforestation and afforestation only for inclusion in the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. The meeting restricted forest activities in tropical developing countries and completely excluded any activities aimed at reducing emissions from tropical deforestation (Boyd, 2010).

The exclusion of deforestation from the first commitment period (2008-2012) at COP7 in Marrakesh was due to the lack of sufficient technologies to accurately measure carbon stocks, and anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions by sources, and removals by sinks resulting from land-use, land-use change and forestry. However, at COP11 in 2005, a justification was provided to include deforestation under the CDM (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2005). The Coalition for Rain Forest Nations (CfRN) was instrumental in this regard. The central plank of the CfRN's argument is that greater value should be ascribed to standing trees than was the case. In this respect, the Group contends that:

Until living forests have a greater value than those being destroyed, deforestation would continue until the last tree is cut because deforestation is primarily an economic problem, and not exclusively an environmental concern as has been traditionally considered (Bietta, 2010, p.28).

Based on this economic rationality of the value of a standing tree, Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica, both members of the CfRN, tabled a proposal entitled '*Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries (REDD): Approaches to Stimulate Action*' at COP11. They argue this would give substance to Article 2 of the 1992 Convention, and Articles 2 and 4.1 of the Kyoto Protocol 1997 (Carbon Planet, 2009). It is important to note that this is the original REDD concept where the last 'D' stood for 'developing countries', and not 'forest degradation'.

COP11 affirmed eight principles in Decision 7/CMP.1 of COP7, and decided that the IPCC good practice guidance, and methods to estimate, measure, monitor and report changes in carbon stocks and anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks resulting from land use, land-use change and forestry activities should apply. COP11 also decided that the IPCC *Revised 1996 Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories* should be used to account for those anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions by sources and removals by sinks (Decision 16/CMP.1, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2005). As a result, COP11 requested the Convention Secretariat to organize, in conjunction with the 24th session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), a workshop in May 2006, to consider carbon dioxide capture and storage as clean development project activities, taking into account project boundary, leakage and permanence (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2006). This effectively placed the REDD proposal of the CfRN on the agenda of the UNFCCC.

Four key factors may have contributed to the success of the CfRN's proposal at COP11 despite some resistance from the United States and Brazil (Bietta, 2010). Firstly, it was framed in logic of the market that projected conservation as a financially attractive solution with real economic returns. Secondly, it addressed the permanence and additionality issues through its national accounting concept. This required a national accounting system that recorded a country's greenhouse gas emissions balances and set a national forest reference emission level. This meant using the 'net-net accounting' method which took into consideration emissions reduction below a set national reference level. In other words, the 'gross-net accounting' method that tended to avoid emissions is not used. Thirdly, leakage was addressed given that the entire forest land of a country is accounted for. Finally, its continued non-inclusion on the agenda of the Convention would have exposed the contradiction of reports by experts that emissions from deforestation constitute more than 20% of CO₂ emissions by sector, second only to the energy sector, but yet the COP failed to act to address that source of emission (Bietta, 2010, IPCC 2014).

In 2007, the COP13 meeting in Bali, Indonesia significantly advanced deforestation issues further based on the report of SBSTA24. The meeting launched a comprehensive plan, the Bali Action Plan, which aims to enhance national and international action on mitigation of climate change, including consideration of policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (Decision 1/CP.13; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2007). This is how the REDD+ formulation came about. This formation took into consideration Article 4.1(d) of the Convention which calls on parties to promote the use of the forest as sinks and reservoirs of all GHG emissions. As a result, the issue of forest degradation and sustainable management of the forests and enhancement of forest carbon stock and conservation were incorporated. This thereby distinguished REDD+ from the original REDD proposed by the CfRN in 2005 in which the second 'D' was for 'developing countries.' In the new formulation, the second 'D' stands for 'forest degradation' while the '+' stands for 'including conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stock'.

With the REDD+ formulation, SSBTA was again tasked with undertaking works to ensure all methodological issues were addressed to implement the REDD+. Thus, the Bali decisions firmly placed REDD+ on the UNFCCC agenda (Boyd, 2010). To advance the Bali Action Plan, a subsidiary body, the *Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action* under the

Convention was established (Decision 1/CP.13, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 2007; Obersteiner et al 2010).

The *Ad Hoc Working Group* submitted a progress report to COP14, 2008 in Poznan, Poland. The meeting welcomed the progress achieved (Decision 1/CP.14, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2008). Thereafter, the COP16 meeting in Cancun, Mexico 2010 encouraged developing country parties, within their respective capabilities and national circumstances, to contribute to mitigation actions in the forest sector by undertaking REDD+ activities. Developing country parties were also requested to develop a national strategy or action plan, national forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level, a national forest monitoring system, and a safeguard information system (Decision 1/CP.16, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 2010; La Vina and de Leon, 2017). The COP19 in Warsaw, Poland 2013 resolved to accelerate the full implementation of decisions constituting the agreed outcome pursuant to decision 1/CP.13 of the Bali Action Plan (Decision 1/CP.19, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2013). As a result, the technical discussions for REDD+ were put on an accelerated track and a process established to negotiate the REDD+ as part of a new climate policy (La Vina and de Leon, 2017, p. 174)). The 2015 UNFCCC Paris meeting achieved that policy goal.

2.40 REDD+ at the Paris Summit

The COP21 meeting codified REDD+ in the 2015 Paris Agreement. Article 5 of the Agreement specifically referenced REDD+ by encouraging parties to implement and support, amongst others, policy approaches and positive incentives for activities relating to REDD+. This brought to a climax the decade-long REDD+ evolution path since its entry on the agenda of the Convention in Montreal in 2005. This REDD+ evolution path, traced through the significant milestones at COPs' meetings, is summarized in Figure 1 below.

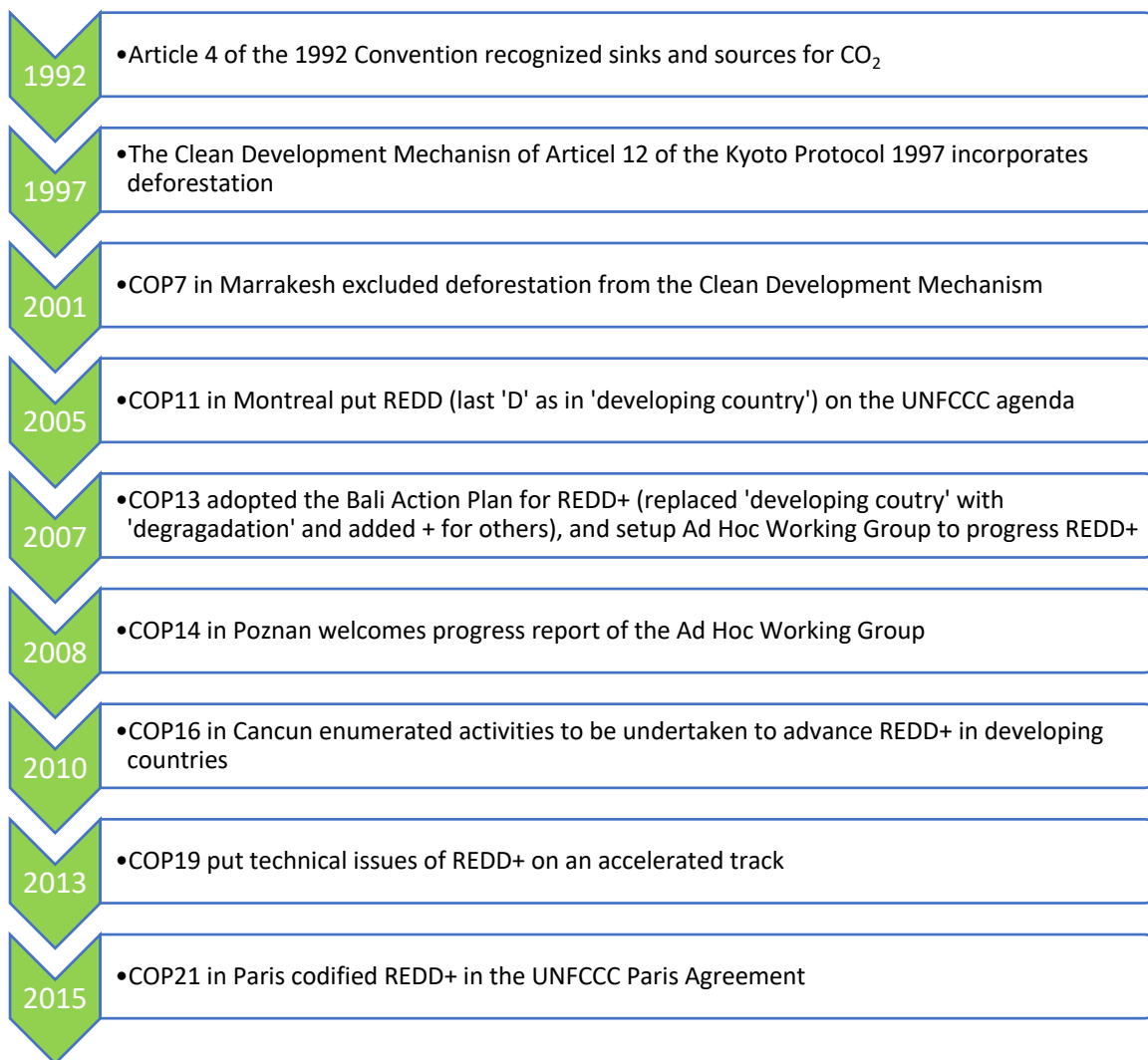


Figure 1: REDD+ Evolution.

Source: author's original diagram

The Paris Agreement is significant in two respects for REDD+ related issues, as noted above. Firstly, it states the targeted temperature goals (Article 2). Secondly, it recognizes forests as a major source for mitigating increases in CO₂ emissions (Article 5). In this regard, it is obvious that any meaningful effort to tackle the global climate crisis that excludes forest sector related emissions - reservoirs and sinks, would make it difficult to attain the temperature goal of 2°C above pre-industrial levels and limiting increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial level. The codification of REDD+ was very significant in the context of the Convention. This paves the way for the implementation of REDD+ initiatives in developing countries. The remaining sections of this chapter set out the aims of REDD+ and how it is designed to function, and

provide an overview of progress to date in the implementation in developing countries, with a specific focus on Liberia.

2.50 The REDD+ Aims and functioning

REDD+ has emerged recently as one of the most discussed terms in global environmental politics (Angelsen et al, 2012; Boyd, 2010; Hein, 2019; Lovera-Bilderbeek, 2019; La Vina and de Leon, 2017). A google scholar search of the term REDD+ during this research returned 9,180 results in 0.03 seconds. The main objective of the REDD+ is to provide results-based payments to developing countries through verified emissions reductions from their forests (Benjaminsen and Kaarhus, 2018; Buscher, 2012). It is designed to incentivize developing countries to conserve their forests for financial compensation from carbon stored in the forests. The stored carbon in turn could be used by developed countries to offset their carbon emissions commitment under the UNFCCC (Hein, 2019; UN-REDD Programme Fact Sheet, 2016;). It is believed the trapped carbon in the standing trees would not only reduce CO₂ emissions into the atmosphere, but could also be sold on a market for carbon trade (Lohmann and Bohm 2012; McAfee, 2017).

The aims of REDD+ may be viewed from one of two perspectives, broader or narrower. The broader perspective involves efforts at the local, subnational, national and global levels to reduce CO₂ emissions from the forests, and to address issues of biodiversity and conservation at the same time. This perspective looks further than the carbon in standing trees to the multiple values of the forest including endanger plants and animal species. In contrast, the narrower perspective limits the focus of REDD+ to CO₂ emissions, and removals by the forest. It concerns conditional payments based on verified carbon stored in the forest by developing countries (Angelsen et al, 2012, p. 35; Angelsen and Desmond 2012, p. 32). The focus of this study is the narrower perspective because the central issue of the research is about the Paris Agreement that aims to reduce CO₂ emissions globally. The REDD+ sets out to solve a fundamentally collective action problem: to create a system that provides forest users with economic incentives that reflect the value of the carbon sequestered, and stored in trees' (Angelsen et al, 2012, p. 2). The REDD+ is also 'an ambitious political, economic and social engineering project' (Angelsen et al, 2012, p. 2).

REDD+ is designed in a way that participating countries are required to go through three phases as follows: (i) the readiness phase, (ii) demonstration phase and (iii) implementation/result-based phase. The readiness phase could be likened to the planning phase (Butt, Lyster and Stephens, 2015; UN-REDD 2016). At this phase, countries design national strategies and action plans; formulate REDD+ policies and measures; identify

demonstration activities; and the commence the building of relevant capacities to implement REDD+. The demonstration phase could be considered the practice phase. At this stage, countries test the national strategies, policies and action plans developed at the readiness phase. This may include results-based demonstration activities and may require additional capacity building, technology development and transfer. Finally, the implementation phase ensures results-based actions are implemented at the national level and results are fully measured, reported and verified (MRV) (UN-REDD 2016; Astuti, 2016; Schroeder and Mcdermott, 2014)).

The 'Three- Phase' design (Readiness, Demonstration and Implementation phases) has been criticized by some commentators because they argued that it is based on donors' funds which is not sustainable. They argue that this source of funding is a voluntary donation that is subject to the 'shifting political will of donors' (Piris- Cabezas, 2010, p. 152). For these critics, 'it is market demand [involving private actors] rather than government funded donors' funds for REDD+ payments that would lead to a viable carbon market' (DeShazo, Pandey and Smith, 2016, pp. 66,67). To such critics, the current Three-phase REDD+ design is 'inefficient from an economic perspective' (Lovera-Bilderbeek, 2019, p. 121). Thus, there has to be a fourth and final phase, the 'Investment Phase' that is purely driven by market demands for the sequestered carbon (McAfee, 2017, p.39; Munden Project, 2011).

Essentially, the REDD+ scheme is structured on a set of technical processes that could lead to financial payment to developing countries for carbon stored in their forests from the carbon funds managed by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and the UN REDD Programme (Butt, Lyster and Stephens, 2017, pp. 6-8). These are donor finance funds (Bosquet, Pagiola and Aquino, 2010, pp. 83, 84; DeShazo, Pandey and Smith, 2016, p. 6). The implementation of the REDD+ scheme at the global level is managed through a multilateral arrangement that involves the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD Programme) as the lead. The UN-REDD comprises technical expertise from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and Forest Investment Programme (UN-REDD Programme, 2018). The number of partner countries for the UN-REDD is 65 and cuts across Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean Regions (UN-REDD Programme 2020, p. 5). A REDD+ Country Participant is a developing country located in a subtropical or tropical area that has signed a Participation Agreement to participate in the Readiness Fund (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, 2017). As of this research, forty-seven developing countries have been selected to

join the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) -18 in Africa; 18 in Latin America; and 11 in the Asia-Pacific region.

REDD+ progress globally is generally at the readiness phase. Countries are developing the various national plans or actions to move to the demonstration and implementation phases (McAfee, 2017, p.39; UN-REDD Programme 2020). Global progress for REDD+ could be assessed against the four pillars of the Warsaw Framework. This Framework requires a partner country to develop a REDD+ national strategy or action plan (NS/Aps); national forest monitoring system (NFMS); forest reference emission levels/forest reference levels (FRELs/FRLs) and safeguards and safeguard information systems (SIS) (Hein, 2019; UN-REDD Programme; United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat, 2016). Globally, over the last 10 years (2008-2018), 34 countries have advanced their National REDD+ Strategies, and 32 of the 34 countries have finalized, and adopted strategic policies for nature-based emissions reductions. 29 countries were helped to meet international reporting requirements or generate data to improve the quality of reporting and enhance transparency through visualization of national data. 39 countries have developed their forest emission reference levels/forest reference levels. 36 countries received support from UN-REDD with their approaches to meeting the Convention safeguard requirements. While a majority of countries are still at the design stage, a few have made some progress. Of the 36, nine have made progress with their summaries of information (SOI), and six made progress in designing their national safeguard information system (SIS). As of December 2020, seven partner countries only have been able to complete the four pillars of the Warsaw Framework and received a total payment of \$496.8million under the Green Climate Fund's (GCF) pilot programme for results-based payments (UN-REDD Programme 2020, pp.5, 6; UN-REDD Annual Report, 2018). The GCF is an operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Convention. It is the world's largest climate fund that supports developing countries to pursue efforts towards low emission and climate - resilient development pathways as stated in Article 2.1(c) and Article 9 of the Paris Agreement (Global Climate Fund Annual Results Report, 2020).

2.60 REDD+ in Liberia

Liberia is one of 65 partner countries of the UN-REDD Programme Scheme. Liberia is currently at the readiness phase of REDD+. Liberia started the REDD+ process in 2008 when the process for crafting its request for proposal (RPF) started. Since then to 2018, Liberia has established a National Climate Change Secretariat at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a REDD+ Implementation Unit (RIU) at the Forestry Development Authority (FDA). Through the EPA and the RIU, Liberia has developed a National REDD+ Strategy; REDD+

Communication Strategy; Liberia Forest and Cover Maps; Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA); Environment and Social Management Framework and validated Liberia's National Forest Definition. Also, the conduct of a National Forest Inventory (NFI) and Emission Reference Level has been undertaken, and safeguard information strategy developed (Acworth, 2019; Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, 2020; Liberia REDD+ Annual Progress Report, July 2017 -June 2018; Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, 2016).

Liberia received an initial grant in 2009 from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility to prepare its readiness proposal and has been engaged with the 'Readiness' phase of REDD+ since 2012. As of 2015, the FCPF disbursed a total grant of US\$8.6million to Liberia as shown in Table 1 to support the REDD+ Readiness Phase (World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, 2017). In addition to funds from the FCPF, a 2014 Agreement between Norway and Liberia requires Norway to provide US\$37.5Million in support of Liberia's REDD+ preparation. This grant amount came out of a US\$150.0Million fund committed by Norway under the Liberia Forest Sector Project (LFSP) to support both REDD+ and Sustainable Management of Liberia's forest. The Norwegian support is expected to last up to the implementation phase of REDD+ in Liberia (Forestry Development Authority National Strategy for REDD+ in Liberia, 2016).

Approved	Grant	Amount (US\$)
May 18, 2009	First Grant Agreement - Readiness-Preparation Proposal (R-PP Formulation Instalment)	\$200,000
June 12, 2012	2 nd Grant Agreement-Preparation for 'Readiness' (Preparation Instalment)	\$3,400,000
September 2, 2015	3 rd Grant Agreement (Additional Preparation Readiness Instalment)	\$5,000,000
	Total	\$8,600,000

Table 1: FCPF Grants Support to Liberia for REDD+ 'Readiness' Activities

Source: World Bank Group FCPF, 2017

In addition to funding from the FCPF and the Kingdom of Norway Liberia Forest Sector Project, Liberia is also beneficiary of bilateral arrangement with the European Union (EU) through the

Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) under the EU Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Programme. The VPA is an additional avenue to support REDD+ activities in Liberia (Forestry Development Authority National Strategy for REDD+ in Liberia, 2016; Liberia and EU Voluntary Partnership Agreement, 2011).

2.70 Conclusion

The REDD+ codification in the Paris Agreement may be traced to the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol. Through the CDM, especially after how the issue of leakage of carbon from the forest sector would be addressed, deforestation was included in the CDM. Thus, it laid the basis for trade in carbon from the forest sector through the REDD+ scheme. The design of the REDD+ comprises three phases: (i) readiness, (ii) demonstration and (iii) implementation. However, the ultimate goal is the 'Investment Phase' that involves a voluntary carbon market comprising private investors. There are 65 partner countries globally currently engaged in the REDD+ scheme of which Liberia is one. The REDD+ implementation is generally at the 'Readiness Phase. Since the REDD+ inception, it has been extensively studied in global environmental politics. How has this studied been? The next chapter considers that question.

Chapter 3: How REDD+ is studied in Global Environmental Politics

3.0 Introduction

The Convention recognizes the importance of the forest sector to combating the global climate crisis. Article 4 of the Convention calls on parties to promote and cooperate in the development, application and diffusion of practices that would control, reduce and prevent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol in all relevant sectors, including forestry. However, Article 4 is not specific enough on how such emissions reduction should be achieved by the Parties. The Kyoto Protocol sought to address this limitation through the Clean Development Mechanism. As was discussed in Section 2.4 of chapter 2, deforestation was excluded from the CDM by COP7 until concerns about the issue of leakage, permanence, additionality and how to account for the carbon stored in forest were addressed. The report of SBSTA24 at COP13 in Bali, Indonesia 2007 addressed those issues, and led to the adoption of REDD+ at the meeting under the Bali Action Plan (Boyd, 2010; Butt, Lyster and Stephens, 2015; Decision 1/CP.13, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2007), and codification at COP21 in Paris in 2015 (Decision 1/CP.21, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2015). Thus, the CDM marks the start of scholarly discussions on how emissions reduction from the forest sector could be used to combat the global climate crisis.

There is now an enormous academic literature on REDD+. In order to inform and organize a critical review of this literature and to identify crucial distinctions between contending analyses, in this chapter, I will employ the important distinction made by Robert Cox between 'problem-solving' and 'critical' approaches (Cox 1996). From the problem-solving perspective, scholars are primarily concerned with how to make the REDD+ concept work effectively in existing and proposed frameworks - conceptual and institutional (Angelsen et al, 2012). Generally, the problem-solving scholars focus on perceived benefits of the REDD+ scheme. In contrast, the critical perspective calls into question the entire social and political context in which the REDD+ evolved (Cox, 1996). Some critical scholars see REDD+ as an attempt by developed countries to negate their responsibilities for emissions reduction through the purchase of carbon credits from a REDD+-developing country while persisting in those polluting activities (Lohmann, 2014; Monbiot, 2014; Paterson, 2014) that are the root causes of the climate crisis in the first place (Kutting, 2004; Middleton and O'Keefe, 2001; Fletcher, 2014). Others see REDD+ as an injection of neoliberal market practices in climate change governance (Buscher, 2012; McGregor et al, 2015; Collins, 2017; Astuti, 2016; Scheba, 2015; Fletcher, 2012). Other critical scholars still think, REDD as a carbon sink is not only 'a pass for developed countries

to pollute, but also 'assigns equal responsibilities and obligations to all countries for the increase GHG emissions even though the industrialized nations are historically responsible' (Gutierrez, 2017, p. 62).

The contending perspectives suggest that the implementation of REDD+ may not be straightforward. There are likely to be challenges that could originate from the local, national, regional or global context. Therefore, an understanding of the challenges is important to the effective implementation of REDD+ generally, and in particular, REDD+ contribution to the goal of the Paris Agreement. However, the challenges cannot be understood without a review of the REDD+ literature to understand how policy-makers and scholars view the REDD+.

The chapter firstly considers the 'problem-solving' literature on REDD+ implementation. The focus is on implementation challenges to the REDD+ in partner countries, especially as it relates to issues of participation, livelihood, benefit sharing and land tenure/ rights of forest communities. Secondly, the critical literature is discussed, in particular, the critique of REDD+ as an injection of neoliberal logic into environmental governance, and the limitations of neoliberal markets. One of the terms used across the critical literature is the idea of neoliberalization and the importance of clarifying how this notion is understood. Therefore, the chapter finally elaborates what is meant by neoliberalism, and examines the neoliberal features of REDD+. This includes returning in greater detail to examine how REDD+ emerged from the Clean Development Mechanism innovation.

3.10 REDD+ Discussions in GEP: Problem-Solving Perspectives

There are thousands of studies on REDD+. These studies covered many broad issues, including governance; commodification; equity; livelihood; carbon trade; payment for ecosystem services (PES); property rights, and carbon rights. The REDD+ studies, according to Angelsen et al, may be broadly considered under three generations: First, Second and Third (Angelsen et al, 2012).

The first generation of studies about REDD+ focused on REDD+ design and architecture at all levels: institutional set up, how to deal with particular challenges (Voigt and Ferreira, 2015;). This early academic literature generally argues that dominant REDD+ discourses, for example, the valuation of carbon stored in standing trees to reduce GHG emissions, and power relations at UNFCCC's negotiations, may have influenced the adoption of REDD+ (Backstrand and Lovbrand, 2016; Hein, 2019; Igarashi, 2011; Nielsen, 2016; Thompson et al, 2011; Hansen et al, 2010). These matters have been examined in the previous chapter. With the codification of REDD+ in the Paris Agreement, this phase is now past. The second-

generation studies looked at the political economy and implementation of REDD+ while third-generation studies assessed the impact of REDD+ (Turnhout et al, 2017; Gupta et al, 2014; Corbera and Schroeder, 2010; Madeira, 2008).

Much of the literature reflects the optimism that was generated during the founding of the scheme, especially in the capacity of the REDD+ to save tropical forests (Angelsen et al, 2012; Collins, 2017). As such, the effective implementation of the scheme was primary (Angelsen 2010; Artela, 2016; Artela et al, 2015; Arhin 2017; Sheng and Qiu 2018; FDA, 2016; Henry et al, 2011; Shrestha and Shrestha, 2017). In this regard, the REDD+ concept and proposed benefits are accepted. According to this thinking, REDD+ is seen generally as a 'win-win' cheap and cost-effective method of CO₂ mitigation that has the potential to provide financial benefits to host communities, provided that various issues, primarily in the local context, are addressed (Kissinger, Herold and De Sy, 2012; Knowles et al, 2010; Romijn et al, 2012; Kissinger, 2011; Groom and Palmer, 2012; Mathews and Paterson, 2005; Chernela and Zanotti, 2017). Studies along these lines concur with the notion that the REDD+ scheme has the potential to ensure the conservation of the forest by community forest dwellers since it would incentivize them to treasure standing trees compared to felled trees (Angelsen, 2010). As a result, the focus is often about perceived challenges to effective implementation and not about the limitations of the REDD+ concept itself (Korhonen-Kurki et al, 2018, Angelsen, et al, 2010; Arhin, 2017; Bosetti and Lubowski, 2010; Astuti and McGregor, 2015). In addition, proponents of the REDD+ scheme argue it could lead to donors' support for developing countries national budgets (Phelps et al, 2010; Madeira, 2008). Further, they think developing countries would also participate in benefits-sharing from traded carbon while simultaneously pursuing their respective national emissions reduction targets through other means under the Convention.

This optimism is not shared by all scholars. Various critical concerns are raised in this literature. Cox's important notion of 'problem-solving' does not mean a lack of any criticism, but rather, a general acceptance or lack of questioning of the broader context within which a particular set of practices or institutions exist. For example, Brown argues that there is little to suggest that the REDD+ palette of economic incentives is sufficient on a project-by-project basis (Brown, M. 2017); Howson and Kindon (2015) contend that, beside transforming across distances, the REDD+ benefits often become elusive despite the virtuous idea of equity it espouses. Thus, the REDD+ governance is more than the perceived economic benefits. Issues such as participation, livelihood and equity/land tenure are therefore critical if REDD+ is to be properly governed.

Participation is considered to be central to good governance principles. REDD+ architects are fully aware of this. Therefore, efforts are continually made to incorporate mechanisms of participation as one of the principles in REDD+ implementation (Mulyani, 2014; Lyster, 2011; Kanowski et al, 2011). For example, the 2010 Cancun Agreement called for full and effective participation of stakeholders, particularly indigenous people and local communities (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2011; Chomba et al, 2016). These principles encompass 'transparent and inclusive policy-making; coherent science-based policy that removes barrier to success and sustainability and promotes wise use of technology and markets; accountable and transparent bureaucracy with monitoring and enforcement capacity; and a strong civil society' (World Bank, 2000 cited in Larson and Petkova, 2010, pp. 1-2 as cited in Corbera and Schroeder, 2011). As Woods has summarised, these principles involve 'promoting transparency, accountability, efficiency, fairness, participation and ownership' (Woods, 2000, p.1). A strong multi-stakeholder consultative mechanism during REDD+ implementation is a recognition of these principles (Artela et al, 2016, p.1). The involvement of key stakeholders, in particular forest dwellers in REDD+ meetings on how best to make the scheme work, seems the first of such recognition (Collins, 2017; Knowles et al, XX; Thompson et al, 2011). The extension of invitations to key REDD+ stakeholders to discuss REDD+ programmes implementation; create awareness; seek inputs or get community consent is now a permanent feature of REDD+ activities.

While participatory meetings may be important to the success of REDD+ implementation (Brown, M., 2017; Scheba, 2015), some authors argue it is not enough. They contend that REDD+ is a global environmental governance project that cuts across many levels, from the local to global, and involves many interactions and interests. Therefore, an understanding of the authority and power relationships, and the dynamics between the various actors is critical (Howson and Kindon, 2015; Thompson et al, 2011; Isyaku, 2017; Wibowo, 2015; Igarashi, 2011). They assert understanding which actor exercises the most influence on the process, especially where REDD+ governance is seen as top-down is crucial (Brown, 2017). In these studies, REDD is conceived as a global scheme implemented at the local level. Therefore, power relations cannot be ignored. Corbera and Schroeder argue, for example, that 'good governance principles are not sufficient to ensure the legitimacy and efficiency of REDD+, insofar as deforestation and degradation are driven by processes which can be external to the forest sector, such as existing, evolving and new markets for agriculture commodities or trends in urban development' (Corbera and Schroeder, 2011, p. 4). These authors, in drawing attention to unequal power relations and structural inequalities, could be considered critical in a general sense. Nevertheless, their ultimate perspective is that attending to these inequalities in power between various actors involved in REDD+ is important *for the successful functioning*

of the scheme. Therefore, in terms of the crucial distinction made by Cox, these analyses remain within an overall problem-solving approach.

Further to looking at REDD+ governance on principles of good governance, Thompson, Baruah and Carr consider the governance framework. For them, the framework focuses on three overlapping lines of inquiry: what is being governed; who is governing, and how is that governance taking place. Therefore, REDD+ should be seen 'as a form of governance, a means of aligning a diverse set of stakeholders around agreed-upon objects to be governed, tools of governance, and forms of environmental, economic and social knowledge' (Thompson, Baruah and Carr, 2011, p. 102). In this regard, the argument that, while concerns about issues such as land tenure, distribution of benefits, and the recentralization of forest management under REDD+ are important in their own right, they remain issues framed by the underlying governance framework. These contending views on REDD+ governance underscore the complexity of the myriad of issues surrounding the REDD+ scheme. Livelihood concerns for forest communities is one of such issues.

Some authors are of the view that addressing the livelihoods for forest communities is critical to REDD+ implementation. For them, REDD+ goes beyond governance and management of carbon related issues (Nielsen, 2016). Forest communities, besides farming, also use the forests for energy (firewood); hunting (food for protein), medication (herbal medicine), timber (shelter) and shrines (spiritual wellbeing) (Poffenberger, 2017). Therefore, some authors contend that livelihood concerns appeared uppermost for forest communities. Thus, some studied argue that REDD+ may need to provide alternative livelihoods or strike a balance between the livelihood needs and carbon sequestration needs, something that most REDD+ projects seem to recognize. For example, a project in Mozambique offered local farmers the choice of enrolling in one or more of agro-forestry/reforestation land-use systems that utilize native species (Groom and Palmer, 2012); another in Tanzania Rungwe District incorporated better farming practices, beekeeping and improved stoves (Ojija, 2015); and in Kenya, the REDD+ project ability to protect the forests was said to have been influenced most by a pro-poor asset such as land tenure and water access (Atela et al, 2015)The project included communal forestry which enables peasants to participate and benefit from the project, and allows access to water that determines the level of agriculture productivity and intensity of forest use for livelihoods (ibid).

Despite these project initiatives, some critics think that there are insufficient incentives within the REDD+ scheme to dissuade forest communities from their current practices. For example, Poudel and colleagues argued that a REDD+ pilot project in Nepal has affected poorer

households the most because the negative effect of tightened forest protection has outweighed the benefits provided to them (Poudel et al, 2015). In other words, the project was not equitable enough. Phelps and colleagues argued further that, REDD+ would lead to recentralization of forest governance since the forest management would be taken away from the local level. As a result, livelihoods of the communities would be impacted considering that the central government may be more inclined to control revenue generation from the forest (Phelps et al, 2010), which could deny the forest community a fair share of revenue distribution.

Equity, specifically land ownership right, seem the core of all governance issues eventhough issues of participation and equitable benefit-sharing are important to REDD+ governance (Boyd, 2011; Ramos and Osorio, 2013). All governance issues are dependent on forest community ownership of the land. Without land ownership, forest communities cannot be involved in the REDD+ scheme (Corbera et al, 2011). Therefore, the land equity issue is identified as one of the most critical governance issues confronting REDD+ implementation. There seems to be a general consensus amongst scholars to firstly establish the land ownership prior to a REDD+ project. The majority of authors recognized that, without proper ownership over forest land, the REDD+ scheme implementation may face considerable challenges (Saunders, Tenison and Swingland, 2002; Lyster, 2011; Karsenty, Vogel and Castell, 2014; Howson and Kindon, 2015). These challenges include land conflicts; invasion of protected areas; illegal logging; exclusion of forest dwellers; land closures to illegal and legal mining and agricultural concessions. This makes the certification of a community's title or tenure agreement to a piece of land as one of the extensively discussed REDD+ issues (Barletti and Larson, 2017; Larson et al, 2013; Corbera, 2011; Lyster, 2011).

The question of land in the context of REDD+ is discussed in various ways. Generally, it includes a jurisdictional and historical approach (Hein, 2019). The jurisdictional perspective is concerned with who has control over the land. These are often derived from the laws of a country. Based on the law, a parcel of land may be classified as indigenous, communal, private or public land. Title and tenure, and the associated rights to the land varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. For example, in Indonesia the Forest Law 41/1999 and Basic Agrarian Law 5/1960 determine the ownership and rights access (ibid); while in Brazil, the 1988 constitution does, especially as it relates to exclusive usufruct rights to indigenous peoples (Chernela and Zanotti, 2017). However, some jurisdictions may have similar land laws and practices. Historically, the title to the land is often derived from a community's long period of stay on the land. These are common to indigenous and customary lands. In this regard, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007 (UNDRIP) represents the foremost

international treaty recognizing the importance of land ownership under schemes such as REDD+. Article 26.1 of the Declaration specifically states 'indigenous peoples have rights to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired' (United Nations, 2007). Further, Article 10 calls for indigenous people not to be forcefully removed from their lands or territories, and that they cannot be relocated without free, prior and informed consent (FPIC). Their right to return to such land is also recognised in the Declaration (United Nations 2007; Butt, Lyster and Stephens, 2015). In light of this recognition, Cherenela and Zanotti (2017, p.223) contend that in Brazil 'indigenous territories have been more effective than other protected area types in maintaining standing forests and sequestering carbon'. In chapter seven of this research, I explore indigenous land ownership in Liberia.

The availability of these land laws, however, does not guarantee the protection of land rights or tenures. Allegation of rights abuses of forest communities or indigenous people in REDD+ context abound (Barletti and Larson, 2017; Larson et al, 2013). In some instances, forest communities have resisted REDD+ on grounds that there is a 'potential risk of land grabbing by outsiders and loss of local users' rights to forests and forest land' (Larson et al, 2013, p. 1). This situation is attributed to different factors, including weak implementation of laws, overlapping functions among state agencies, and poor management of forests in some jurisdictions (Ramos and Osorio, 2013). Whatever the land ownership situation in a jurisdiction, the establishment of land rights and tenures for a community is considered critical to carbon rights (Corbera et al, 2011; Howson and Kindon, 2015), and by extension to trade in carbon. This issue sits at the core of REDD+ - the sequestration of carbon from forests. Considering the centrality of carbon rights to REDD+ implementation, it is understandable that, as we will see, the majority of critical studies focus on carbon issues, including commodification, payment for ecosystem services (PES) and carbon trade.

In summary, the problem-solving literature on REDD+ generally accepts the REDD+ concept, and the 'win-win' narrative that it has the potential to offer to all parties involved. Therefore, the central preoccupation of the literature is with issues regarding effective implementation in developing countries. This literature tends to concern itself with issues like principles of good governance, participation in decision-making, equity and benefit-sharing and land tenures/rights. Of these issues, and no matter where the REDD+ is being implemented, the establishment of land rights, and tenures for a community are critical to carbon rights (Corbera et al, 2010; Howson and Kindon, 2015).

3.20 Critical Perspectives of REDD+

Numerous authors are critical of REDD+ in a more broadly questioning way, despite its global acceptance, and the pre-occupation of the problem-solving scholars with how to make it work effectively. Some see it as an attempt to inject neoliberal market practices into nature, and forest conservation through market-based measures (Buscher, 2012; McGregor et al, 2015; Collins, 2017; Astuti, 2016; Scheba, 2014; Fletcher, 2012; Scheba and Rakotonarivo, 2016). Others see REDD+ as the commodification of nature (Benjaminsen and Kaarhus, 2018; Fletcher, 2010). The process of commodification is central to the functioning of capitalism, by which exchange values are assigned to things (Mrozowski, 1999). Through the process of commodification, the services of nature (carbon in this case) are given a price and assigned property rights, which then enables trade in these services within a global market (Liverman, 2004). This is considered as part of the broader attempt to value ecosystem services in monetary terms while articulating such value through markets to create economic incentives for conservation (Baggethun and Perez, 2011). For some critics, such commodification of nature has largely failed despite the international hype around it (Bond, 2012). For example, McCauley argues that it is the primacy of ethics and aesthetics in conservation that enable significant, and long-lasting gains in conservation, and not commodification and resulting market-based conservation mechanisms (McCauley, 2006). Monbiot contends that the idea of making money from schemes such as REDD+ that consider carbon a natural capital – and thereby entail the pricing, valuation, monetization, and financialization of nature in the name of saving it – is a ‘road to ruin’ (Monbiot 2014). For other critics, PES is not only a neoliberal conservation practice, but is also based on the paradoxical idea that capitalist markets are the answer to their own ecological contradictions (Buscher 2012; Reyes, 2012).

Other critics focus on the claim made by some neoliberal conservation actors that REDD+ could support community conservation. On the contrary, these studies suggest that the reality is that REDD+ practices a form of exclusion that deepens rather than reduces poverty (Scheba and Scheba, 2017). In this respect, some authors consider REDD+ as a policy that has the potential to lead to a net upward redistribution of wealth from poorer to wealthier classes, and from rural regions to distant centres of capital accumulation, mainly in the global north (McAfee, 2017). Further still, there are those that think ‘REDD+ perpetuates a top-down process rather than collective exercise’ (Brown, M., 2017, p.203). There are also those that believe the REDD+ is too hooked on forest carbon such that it fails to acknowledge the linkage between deforestation, and the prevailing political, economic, ecological and social issues (Bastakoti, 2017; Thompson, Baruah, and Carr, 2011). Similarly, Scheba and Scheba argue REDD+ faces limitations due to structural inequalities which mean that the commodification of

carbon inevitably causes new forms of inclusion and exclusion to local forest-dependent villages (Scheba and Scheba, 2017). Collins (2017) argues that involvement with REDD+ facilitates continued exploitative, resource driven engagement with REDD+ Partner Countries contrary to its purported embodiment of a new, and more effective way of managing the globe's remaining tropical rainforests. Collins maintains that REDD+ re-envision the physical environment, the forest community that depend on it, and the wider society in ways that make them amenable to the spread of capital, and in some instances, shaped into capital, representing those distinctive ways of being which characterize subjects amenable to neoliberal governmentality (Collins, 2017, pp. 197-198).

For critical commentators in general, REDD+ introduces new methods of forest governance which inject a neoliberal market logic that could lead to territorialization, land grabs, enclosures and many other problems, including attempts to ensure an imagined value for a fictitious carbon commodity (Astuti, 2016; Collins, 2017; Sheng and Qui, 2018; Scheba and Scheba, 2017; Bastakoti, 2017; Reed, 2011; Ramcilovic-Suominen, 2019; Scheba and Ramcilovic-Suominen, 2016). For example, Alcorn argues that 'the carbon market and REDD+ programs give new financial incentives to national governments to assert sovereign claims over forests' (Alcorn, 2017, p. 255). As a result, state-linked elites could be driven to use REDD+ funding or private carbon sales to threaten the tenurial security of communities. Alcorn maintains that, the argument that "social forestry" (that is where communities provide labour in state-owned forests) is a progressive way to provide social benefits from REDD+ without recognizing the community tenure over the forests, would still not stop the threat posed by carbon markets to communities' land tenure. On the contrary, Alcorn considers that these policies offer easy entrance for large-scale transactions initiated by interests of the global North seeking to offset their own greenhouse gas emissions (Alcorn, 2017, p.255). Notwithstanding these criticisms, some scholars are of the view that the injection of market logic into environmental problems such as deforestation could see the forest paying for its own preservation. This is essentially the commodification of forest carbon that would open up new space for non-state actors to participate actively in climate governance (Corbera and Brown, 2010). Thus, it is good for the restructuring of forest-people relations towards new market-oriented public-private partnerships (Scheba & Sheba, 2017; Reed, 2011). This commodification of carbon requires the establishment of a carbon trading market.

Carbon markets are currently one of the most widely endorsed policy responses to the global climate crisis. Along with fossil fuel taxation, markets in carbon allowances and offsets are lynchpins of the green economy (McAfee, 2017). The complexity of contending positions in the literature on carbon markets reveals the importance of Cox's distinction between 'problem-

solving' and 'critical' analyses (Cox 1996). The dominant view is that carbon-trading markets (mandatory or voluntary) would facilitate the capture and mitigation of CO₂ emissions because it would introduce a new source of funding for land stewardship and forest rehabilitation (Sandor, Bettelheim and Swingland, 2002; MacKerron et al, 2009; Russel-Smith et al, 2015). In other words, this would create of a sort of 'carbon bank' (Gruffyd Jones, 2012) that would facilitate the trade in carbon and result in the availability of more money to preserve the forest (Backstrand and Lovbrand 2006). From this problem-solving approach, the central question is how to ensure that markets can function smoothly so that the outcome of carbon capture is realised. These optimisms are not shared by critical scholars, who see the very functioning of capitalist markets as contributing to the environmental crisis. For example, Childs argues that this would effectively privatise the atmosphere (Childs, 2012). Whittington thinks the atmosphere business (carbon trade in this case) is characterized by multiple levels of uncertainties (Whittington, 2012). According to Lohmann, one function that carbon markets have come to assume - partly by intention and partly not - is to conceal a lack of effective action about climate change, and therefore they are designed not to be understood by ordinary people (Lohmann, 2012). Lohmann also argues carbon markets constantly give rise to fresh externalities that are so overwhelming they invalidate the REDD+ project. In this regard, Lohmann is of the view that the nature of a commodity, including price discovery, draws emphasis away from the long-term structural change demanded by global warming (Lohman, 2014).

Other critical scholars argue that the neoliberal market logic of REDD+ may only act to reinforce the underlying drivers of deforestation, and climate change (Carbon Trade Watch, 2013). Along these lines, Buscher argues that "PES, in this case REDD+ and the process by which it is marketed, are both inherent to 'neoliberal conservation'- the paradoxical idea that capitalist markets are the answer to their own ecological contradictions" (Buscher, 2012, p. 29). Notwithstanding the limitations in carbon markets, an explosion of market-based and neoliberal approaches to environmental policy is now a permanent feature of global climate governance. As a result, the creation and harnessing of financial instruments to value environmental goods and provide the needed funding for their preservation is continuing apace (McElwee et al, 2014).

While issues of carbon dominate the critical literature, it would be important to recognize that the criticisms were not limited to carbon issues only. For example, Cabello and Gilbertson contend that, regardless of financial input, governance and/or participation, REDD+ would not be successful as a means of climate mitigation or forest protection because it is framed within an epistemological understanding of forest and land which supports the domination of nature

by humans for economic profits (Cabello and Gilbertson, 2012). In this regard, critical commentaries are not limited to carbon issues as problem-solving commentaries are not about governance issues only. The distinction would derive from the nature of the commentary. It is either about improvement in REDD+ implementation or it questions the very concept, and the broader context in which REDD+ evolved and is being implemented. If it is the former, then it is problem-solving. If it is the latter, then it is critical.

In summary, the critical literature generally considers the REDD+ scheme as an attempt to employ neoliberal market logic, in particular, the commodification of carbon in trees, to address the global climate change crisis. The main contention is that the market cannot be expected to correct the problems it has created. For the critical scholars, the root causes of the climate crisis are a result of centuries of capitalist social relations which are now ever further entrenched through neoliberal market practices, and therefore, it is paradoxical to expect the same market practices to correct the problems they are creating.

As I have shown, much of the critical literature including the critique of commodification, emphasises the *neoliberal* character of REDD+. The concept of neoliberalism appears throughout the critical literature, and yet is often used in different ways. It is therefore important to pause and consider carefully how neoliberalism is understood in this research, and how REDD+ should be understood in terms of neoliberalism.

3.30 How Neoliberalism is understood for this Study

Firstly, I must state that the extensive breadth and depth of the corpus of academic literature on the term neoliberalism cannot be covered in this brief discussion. The purpose of this discussion is to draw out the aspects of neoliberalism that are most relevant for my research, in particular as a new social order based on 'the primacy of markets and property rights' (Robison, 2006, p. 5; Rodan, 2006, p. 197).

Neoliberalism can be traced to classical liberalism - a theory that sees producers as servants of consumers who pursue their material needs as they see fit (Steger and Roy, 2010; Robison, 2006; Gamble, 2006). The classical liberals were dedicated to the protection of private property and legal enforcement of contracts, and believe the 'invisible hand' of the market ensures the most efficient and effective allocation of resources while facilitating peaceful commercial intercourse among nations (Butler, 2015; von Mises, 2002; Lehto, 2015). During the twentieth century classical liberalism was succeeded by neoliberalism which, it is often thought, advocates for less government intervention in the market place under novel conditions of globalization (Steger and Roy, 2010; Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism, as an

economic doctrine, grew out of opposition to the post 1945 World War II Keynesian economic model that dominated economic practices until the oil crisis of the 1970s (Chomsky, 1999; Harvey, 2005; Robison, 2006; Gamble 2006). Neoliberalism is often coupled with Thatcherism - the belief in the superiority of the market to the state and of private property to public and social ownership in the developed world (Arestis and Sawyer, 2005), while in the developing world, it is the promotion of the 'Washington Consensus' (privatization and deregulation; trade and financial liberalization; shrinking the role of the state; encouraging foreign direct investment) and the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) by the IMF and World Bank (Castree, 2010; Chomsky, 1999; Gowan 1999).

Neoliberalism seems not to have a unified definition to the extent of Keynesianism (Davies 2017). Here, I am considering neoliberalism as a form of capitalism. This study primarily sees neoliberalism as the dominant ideology in the contemporary global economic order. In other words, as a macroeconomic doctrine which key elements include valorisation of private enterprise and suspicion of the state (Ferguson, 2009). This is quite different from 'neoliberal institutionalism'.¹

As a phase or form of capitalism, it can be helpful to think about neoliberalism in at least two related ways. Firstly, neoliberalism represents a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2005). The state's interventions in markets, once created, are kept to a bare minimum. Secondly, the term neoliberalism refers to a deliberate project to implement such ideas in practice. It is seen as a political project of the corporate capitalist class to curb the power of labour which is considered a threat, both politically and economically, especially towards the end of the 1960s, and into the 1970s in western societies (Harvey, 2016). This project seeks legitimacy through a resort to consent of the governed by employing the language of freedom. Harvey argues that 'people were captured into the neoliberal project by a narrative that positions neoliberalism as the exclusive guarantor of freedom' (2005, p.40). In other words, neoliberalism is portrayed as the only route to modernity without which people could be condemned to perpetual backwardness. The neoliberal project is pursued through diverse channels, including the circulation of a powerful ideology through corporations, media and numerous institutions that constitute civil society (Harvey, 2005).

¹ Neoliberal institutionalism is a theoretical approach to the study of institutions within the discipline of International Relations (IR). In IR, neoliberal institutionalism or regime theory seeks to demonstrate that international cooperation is possible, even on realist premises - namely that states are rational, unitary actors that seek to maximize their utility in an anarchic international system (Jervis, 1999; Stein, 2008; Islam, 2009).

Neoliberalism, as a project, transcends national levels of western societies to the global stage (Gowan 1999).

Neoliberalism globally passes as a project of the transnational capitalist class. In this context, it was considered a counter-revolutionary project. As a counter-revolutionary project, Harvey thinks it was meant to nip in the bud what, at that time, were revolutionary movements in much of the developing world, including Mozambique, Angola and China, but also a rising tide of communist influences in countries like Italy, and France, and to a lesser degree, the threat of a revival of that in Spain (Harvey, 2016). This counter-revolutionary project was primarily executed through loans to 'Third World' or 'Periphery' countries during the 1960s and 1970s (Dumenil and Levy, 2005, p. 17). Also, this counter-revolutionary project was pursued through what Perkins calls the 'Economic Hitman'. These are people, according to Perkins, that are employed by private US corporations, including securing loans from the World Bank. Perkins asserts they represent a back channel of the US to promote US commercial interests (Perkins, 2016; p. xiii; see more generally Chomsky, 1999; Mirowski and Plehwe 2009). This neoliberal counter-revolutionary project (in the form of loans to developing countries to primarily counter communism) led to huge debts in the periphery countries. Hence, the so-called 'Third World debt crisis' (Dumenil and Levy, 2005, p. 17; Saad-Filho, 2005, p. 224; Harrison, 2006, p. 98). However, while the economies of the 'periphery countries' were collapsing under the heavy debt burden, which had become four times larger in the 2000 compared to the 1980s, the real interest rate on the loans jumped from negative to 2% approximately. This resulted in the transfer of "large interests to banks at the centre, notably in the United States" (Dumenil and Levy, 2005, p. 17; Toporowski, 2005, pp. 107, 108). This invariably further gives credence to neoliberalism as the latest stage of capitalism, the protection and guaranteeing of high income to wealthy owners of capital.

Further as a project, neoliberalism could be seen as a new social order. In this regard, Dumenil and Levy contend that "it is fundamentally a new social order in which the power and income of the upper fractions of the ruling classes - the wealthiest persons - was re-established in the wake of a setback" (Dumenil and Levy, 2005, p. 9; Dumenil and Levy, 2011, p. 22). Similarly, Hardin argues that neoliberalism may be construed as a "free, well-functioning society that is composed of corporations, whether of one or many individuals, and operating according to corporate logic" (Hardin, 2014, p. 215). Thus, Harrison thinks neoliberalism is "a model of a market society" and "the deeper purpose of neoliberal agencies [World Bank and IMF] work is to fashion states that enable the full realization of [such] market societies" (Harrison, 2006, p.108). From this perspective, neoliberalism is considered a deliberate project that aims to intervene in the fabric of society to create the conditions of the market and to expand the logic

of the market to all spheres of social life. It is along such lines that Foucault argued that neoliberalism is not just about the deployment of new, market-based techniques of government within the terrain of the state itself, but also a new construction of “active” and “responsible” citizens and communities who can be deployed to produce government results that do not depend on direct state intervention (Foucault, 2008, p.131; Ferguson, 2009; Lemke, 2010). Neoliberalism construed in this sense, Ferguson (2009) argues, enables the “responsibilized” citizen to operate as a miniature firm, responding to incentives, rationally assessing risks, and prudently choosing from different courses of action. Thus, neoliberalism is basically a new social order that frames the people as enterprise of themselves. The next chapters explore if the REDD+ ‘Readiness’ project in Liberia could be seen in a similar light.

From this understanding of neoliberalism, and drawing on the previous review of literature, it can be seen that the core concept of REDD+ is based on neoliberalism. REDD+ primarily sees carbon in trees as commodity, even though fictitious, which could be traded for a profit. In order to sharpen the appreciation of how the very conceptualization of REDD+ is neoliberal at its core, it is necessary to recap briefly some criticisms of the Clean Development Mechanism since, as documented in chapter 2, REDD+ originates from the CDM.

3.40 Criticism of the Clean Development Mechanism

The origin of the REDD+ is the CDM of the Kyoto Protocol. The CDM carbon certification scheme represents the first mechanism of the carbon trade (Mathews and Paterson, 2005). This is the first major policy measure within the UNFCCC that aims to reduce CO₂ emissions from the forest sector. Thus, the trade in carbon is the main link between REDD+ and the CDM. In fact, the primary aim of REDD+ is to create a trade for the carbon stored in the forests of developing countries in exchange for monetary reward. The CDM is basically a project-based mechanism through which developing nations sell carbon credits, termed ‘certified emissions reductions’(CERs) measured in tonnes of CO₂-equivalent, to developed countries to meet their emissions reduction commitments under the Kyoto Protocol (Boyd et al, 2009). However, as chapter 2 documented, COP7 in Marrakesh 2001 excluded deforestation from the CDM until the concerns of leakage, permanence, additionality and measurement of emitted carbons from the forest sector were addressed (Decision 11/CP.7; Draft decision - /CPM.1, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2002). The concerns around deforestation also marked the start of a vigorous debate around carbon trading schemes, including the REDD+ under the UNFCCC. These debates precipitated criticisms of the CDM, including how it was structured.

The CDM is supervised by an executive board under the authority of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (Article 12.4, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Kyoto Protocol, 1997). The Executive Board accredits *Designated Operational Entities* (DOEs) to undertake the task of validation, verification and certification of projects under the CDM scheme (Paulson, 2009; UNFCCC 2001). However, there have been concerns about the potential of conflict of interests involving DOEs since their primary goal is to make profit. In this regard, DOEs may rather choose to keep their clients happy than to interpret regulations strictly. As a result, CDM projects in the long-run may suffer from insufficient control. This situation could undermine the market's confidence in the CDM (Paulson, 2009; Talberg and Nielson, 2009). Also, given the high demand in the market for validation and verification services for CDM projects, DOEs are spending shorter time on each project. Some critics argue for an effective oversight by the Executive Board, especially where threats for sanctions against DOEs appear weak (Schneider, 2007). The Executive Board seems aware of such concerns, and has strengthened its projects assessment overtime (Schneider 2008). The Executive Board rigorous oversight of DOEs seems to contribute to the CDM success over the years in developing new and global market for GHG emission reduction (Talberg and Nielson, 2009). Nonetheless, some critics still think the Executive Board oversight is not stringent enough. For example, Pearson notes that "many governments and businesses were disappointed with the CDM and saw it as "cumbersome and unrewarding and tangled with red tape" (Pearson, 2007, p.247). REDD+ is likely to face similar concerns, especially that which has to do with confidence in the carbon markets.

The issue of confidence in markets remains critical to any carbon trading scheme. The REDD+, like the CDM, would ultimately rely on the market to function effectively. Therefore, without confidence in the market by participants, the scheme may fail. This may be one of the reasons why a majority of the staunchest criticisms of the CDM is related to the market-based nature, the carbon emission trading scheme. For example, Pearson contends the fundamental problem with the CDM has to do with its structure as a project-based market mechanism in which the search for least-cost carbon credits is the paramount consideration (Pearson, 2007). Pearson argues further that, evidence suggests most industrialized country governments and corporations are using the CDM merely to reduce the cost of complying with their Kyoto targets and, as such, are searching for projects that deliver large volumes of cheap credits. Similarly, McAfee argues that, market-based PES such as REDD+ market- efficiency criteria clash directly with poverty-reduction priorities. Therefore, McAfee considers that an application in international conservation policy (REDD+ in this case) of the market model, in which profit incentives depend on differential opportunity cost, will entail a net upward redistribution of

wealth from poorer to wealthier classes (McAfee, 2012). In this regard, anything about market competition and confidence cannot be ignored because cost and benefits are the key factors that determine consumers' behaviours in the market place. The search for projects that deliver cheap credits under the CDM scheme is a demonstration of such behaviours. These are the core of the free market practices, and therefore, key to the success of any scheme in such market environments. In this context, market integrity must be upheld by the Designated Operational Entities and Executive Board, especially where there is no visible good to be traded, and where the buyer and seller are only interested in the rights to emission reduction and not necessarily in the actual reduction itself (Paulson, 2009). Similarly, Muller argues that, left to market forces alone, the CDM would not significantly contribute to sustainable development (Muller, 2005). This view is also shared by Bohr and Dill who argue that the CDM places many developing nations at structural disadvantage since they are considered too risky for sustainable development investment, in particular given that the CDM encourages investors to seek projects with the potential to generate profits independent of emission credits (Bohr and Drill, 2011; Cames et al, 2016).

Notwithstanding the deficiencies in the carbon trading scheme of the CDM, other commentators, including the World Bank, still view it as a good way to reduce carbon emission (Lewis, 2010; DeShazo, Pandey and Smith, 2016). Cames et al think the CDM provides an important base for the elaboration and design of future mechanisms for international carbon market, at least in terms of standards, procedures and institutional arrangements (Cames et al, 2016). Without going into an in-depth discussion of these issues since the focus here is how REDD+ is discussed in global environmental politics, they are however being flagged here to highlight that REDD+ did not only evolve from the CDM, but also operates on the same neoliberal market logic, and therefore is likely to face similar challenges as the carbon trading schemes of the CDM. To this extent, Cames et al suggest that given the inherent shortcomings of the of the CDM, climate mitigation efforts should focus on forms of carbon pricing that do not rely extensively on credits, and on measures such as results-based climate finance that do not result in the transfer credits or offsetting the purchasing country's emissions (2016, p. 11). Paradoxically, this is the very logic upon which the REDD+ rests. Thus, a deeper understanding of the neoliberal market logic of REDD+ may help us to appreciate the challenges to the REDD+ implementation in partner countries like Liberia.

3.50 REDD+ as a product of Neoliberal Market Logic

The CDM carbon trading schemes, in particular the voluntary carbon trade, provides the model for REDD+ emission reduction. At the penultimate phase of REDD+, certified emission reduction would be exchanged on voluntary market or over-the-counter trade of the CDM. This

penultimate phase is a flexible market particularly aimed at private sector actors, and participation rests entirely on trust between buyers and sellers (Carbon Market Watch, 2019). REDD+ projects therefore require a lot of technical processes involving exact measurements, and calculations to certify the emission reduction from a country's forest cover. The measurement of the forest size and boundaries; the national reference level or baseline; setting performance indicators; emission factors; monitoring and reporting system (MRV); and putting in place safeguards systems would need to be established. Further, REDD+ has to address governance and implementation issues, including land tenures and ownership; carbon and property rights if the market is to function efficiently and effectively without distortion. It is only after a REDD+ participating country has put in place these measures to demonstrate its emissions reduction that it would receive payments. This is the reason why REDD+ is also referred to as a results-based payments scheme (Astuti, 2016; Schroeder and Mcdermott, 2014). Figure 2.0 shows how REDD+ is designed to function on the voluntary carbon market.



Figure 2: Equation depicting REDD+ carbon trade on the voluntary carbon market

Source: Munden Project, 2011

A look at this equation, and the long process that REDD+ went through, in particular the requests for expert-advice on clarifications of the issues of leakage, permanence, additionality and measurement under the CMD scheme, fit well with the core principles of neoliberal market logic. The expert-advice is meant to ensure carbon, as a commodity, could be traded. Therefore, it was important to ensure the exact measurement of the forest, and the rightful ownership as a private property to guarantee the sale of carbon stored in the forest. To summarize, the neoliberal logic of REDD+ is the commodification of carbon, which involves conversion of an intangible entity, carbon, into a unit that is measurable, trackable, and globally tradable (Fiske and Paladino 2017). This process, as in the REDD+ readiness phase in this case, which is accomplished through complex technical, and administrative procedures that are site-specific, and require skills not usually in the toolkit of the rural poor.

3.60 Conclusion

The study of REDD+ broadly falls under one of two approaches: problem-solving or critical. The problem-solving approach is technical and concerns the effective implementation of REDD+. It focuses on challenges like institutional weakness and lack of capacity in partner countries. The proponents of REDD+ argue that a trade in sequestered carbon would incentivize forest communities into protecting the forests (Angelsen, et al, 2010; Arhin, 2017; Bosetti and Lubowski, 2010). Themes common amongst problem-solving proponents include forest communities' participation in decision-making, livelihood, land tenure/rights and institutional capacity building (Mulyani, 2014; Kanowski et al, 2011; Saunders, Tenison and Swingland, 2002; Lyster, 2011; Karsenty, Vogel and Castell, 2014; Howson and Kindon, 2015). The core argument from this perspective is that the successful implementation of REDD+ rests on addressing participation of forest communities in decision-making; providing sustainable livelihood and ensuring equitable land tenure and rights. Structurally complex social issues with political implications are largely ignored.

The critical approach investigates the broader context of the problem, including the very concept of the REDD+ (Cox, 1996). It is generally focused on the REDD+ neoliberal market features, in particular, the commodification of carbon, and the associated challenges with carbon markets (Astuti, 2016; Collins, 2017; Sheng and Qui, 2018; Sheba and Sheba, 2017; Bastakoti, 2017; Reed, 2011). Critical studies argue generally that REDD+ extends neoliberal market logic into environmental governance, which has largely exacerbated the environmental problems it aims to solve. This is the approach used for this study.

There are two main reasons for the adoption of a critical approach. Firstly, I realized that the conditions in the country generally, and in particular the rural forest communities, would be explained better by the critical approach after seeing the conditions first-hand, and listening to the experiences of the villagers. The initial findings from the field visit showed the challenges to the REDD+ scheme run deeper. They are rooted in the country's past. This requires broadening the context of the investigation beyond the REDD+ apolitical technical considerations that are internal to the country. As a result, the investigation is extended to the international context, especially the 'dominant global capitalist economy' (Senker, 2015, p.97). I also changed my initial theoretical lenses (discourse analysis and governmentality of power) to colonialism, neocolonialism and neoliberalism. These theoretical lenses are better suited to historicize the challenges in the country through a global context. This ensures a deeper appreciation of the structural issues facing the country.

Secondly, it is how this study understands neoliberalism. Neoliberalism, as discussed in Section 3.30 above, is first and foremost ‘the third and most recent phase of modern capitalism’ (Dumenil and Levy, 2011, p. 10). Capitalism here being the exploitation of the means of production – land (all natural resources on and beneath the land, water and in the air), labor (man hours) and capital (machines and money) based on private ownership to produce goods for human consumption (von Mises, 2002, p. 19). Next, neoliberalism is considered a new form of social order that involves a shift in the internal social relationships within states in favor of creditor and rentier interest, with the subordination of the productive sectors to financial sectors (Dumenil and Levy, 2005; Gowan, 1999; Gamble, 2006). It aims to create an insulated system of techno-managerial governance that would protect the market from politics, and possesses the authority to redefine society in terms of an ongoing series of highly functional voluntary transactions between rational individuals (Robison, 2006). Additionally, neoliberalism, as REDD+ in this case, is not only a technical-managerial market-based solution to address the climate crisis, but is also a scheme to re-engineer and govern forest communities’ social relations towards ends of the market. Lastly, neoliberalism is a set of economic policy prescriptions – private property rights, free market, free trade and free movement of capital that shape global trade (Gamble, 2006).

This understanding of neoliberalism better illuminates why a country like Liberia confronts the type of challenges discussed in Part II of the thesis. It is through this understanding, for example, that one can explain how “banks in the European Union, United Kingdom, United States and China earned \$1.74 billion dividends from deals worth \$157 billion with firms accused of destroying tropical forest in Brazil, Southeast Asia, and Africa” (Global Witness 2021, p. 3). Interestingly, these deals happened after the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. Figure 3 below depicts how the interests flow to the Banks across the globe.

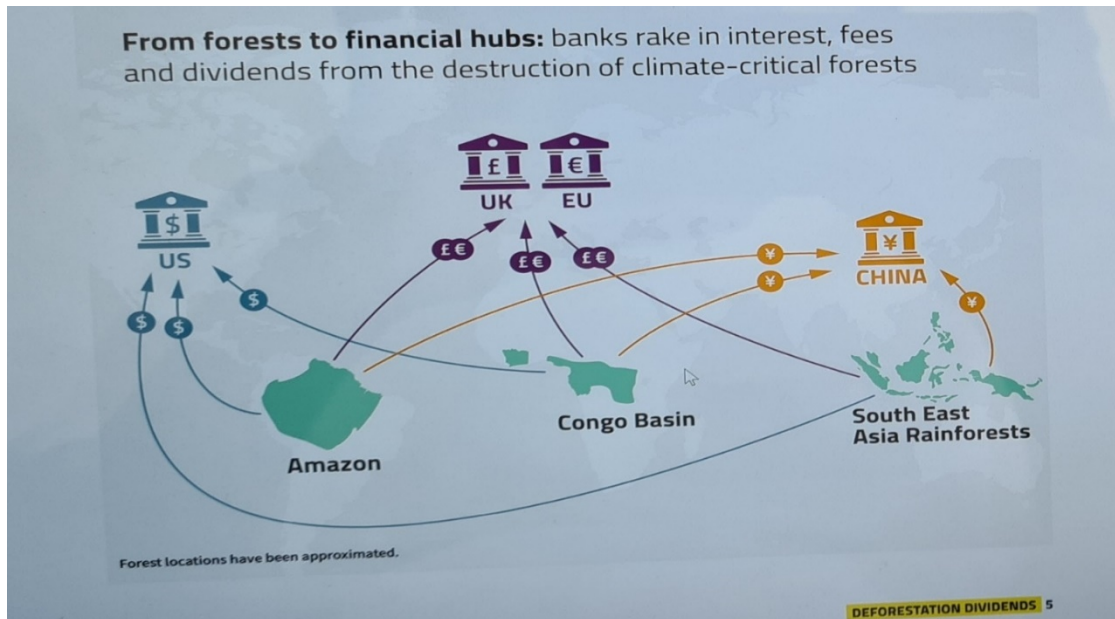


Figure 3: Flow of Interests to Banks in EU, UK, US and China from Deforestation Deals

Source: Global Witness 2021

This is the neoliberal lens through which Part II and III of this research should be read. For this study, the challenges to the REDD+ scheme are more about how neoliberal economic policies enable capitalism on a global scale. This in turn provides private businesses the trading environment to engage in deforestation activities in distant places like Liberia. The REDD+ as a neoliberal market concept is only giving practical effect to this understanding of neoliberalism. The discussion is structured into four chapters. Part II presents three chapters on the political, economic and social/structural challenges. Part III discusses the challenge of property rights in Liberia. The structure is solely for unpacking the multiple layers and intertwinements between these challenges.

Part II: Challenges to REDD+ in Liberia

Chapter 4: Political Challenges to REDD+ in Liberia

4.0 Introduction

This chapter and subsequent chapters are based on analysis of discussions with interviewees involved in REDD+ in Liberia. These discussions with interviewees, ranging from NGO staff, staff working for various formal REDD+ elements to villagers, centred on the experiences of REDD+ implementation in Liberia to date, and the challenges that were faced and encountered. For the sake of analytical clarity, the many issues raised in the interviews were divided into the over-arching categories of political, economic, and social/structural, though in fact many such issues overlap and, in concrete terms, are not isolatable or mutually exclusive. The method adopted for analysis of this material was first to present and summarise the various experiences and concerns discussed in the interviews, and then to go on to analyse these further, moving from the descriptions and direct experiences of Liberians to a theoretically and historically informed analysis and account of the character and roots of these various challenges. This method is informed by, or situated within, the critical perspective as elaborated in Chapter Three. That is, the analysis of the challenges to implementation of REDD+ are situated within their broader historical and global context. This sheds a critical light on the character and experience of REDD+ which is unavailable to studies concerned primarily with challenges to implementation arising from, for example, apparent institutional weaknesses or lack of capacity within the implementing country context.

This first chapter starts by presenting the many political challenges referred to by interviewees involved in the REDD+ implementation in Liberia. It discusses the broad powers given to the Presidency by the constitution. It particularly considers the issue of lack of inclusive decision-making and the impact of the over-centralization of executive power, especially how it challenges the REDD+ implementation in Liberia. This discussion is informed directly by the content of the fieldwork interviews.

Secondly, the chapter considers how to make sense of and explain the various features of Liberia's current political condition mentioned repeatedly by interviewees. The dominant approach to characterising the postcolonial condition of Africa's states, especially in terms of politics, is neo-patrimonialism. In other words, many of the concerns identified in the interviews, such as centralisation of political power, would conventionally be considered as classic features of an African neopatrimonial regime (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997, Callaghy, 1987; Clapham, 1982; Bayart, 2009; Sindzingre, 2012). However, I argue that Liberia's internal challenges cannot be adequately understood through these Africanist lenses which ignore the colonial and neo-colonial context.

Thirdly, the chapter provides an alternative and more critical account of the features identified as challenges to REDD+, which situates Liberia's 'internal' present in its global and historical relations. This involves, first, considering the influence of the United States of America. The contention is that successive governments in Liberia are essentially 'client regimes' controlled from outside (Kieh, 2012). The chapter then analyses Liberia's political challenges with respect to Liberia's colonial legacy. I contend that the country's contemporary political challenges are rooted in the country's past. Overall, the chapter argues that to appreciate the contemporary political challenges to REDD+ implementation in Liberia particularly, and the Paris Agreement generally, one needs to understand the colonial and neo-colonial context of Liberia.

4.10 Contemporary political challenges in Liberia

There appears a general consensus across expert interviewees that Liberia, through REDD+, could contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) as per the 2015 Paris Agreement, especially given the country's vast forest reserves, which is estimated at 43% of the remaining Upper Guinea Forest (Interviews, ER4, 14/08/2019; ER5, 15/08/2019; ER6, 16/08/2019; ER7, 19/08/2019; ER10, 20/08/2019; Appendix 1). Some experts also think, besides the climate change issue, REDD+ is a good source of budget support; protection of biodiversity; opportunity for new investment opportunities; potential source of income for forest communities from the sale of carbon credits (Interviews, ER3, 13/08/2019; ER1, 12/08/2019; ER2, 13/08/2019; ER5, 15/08/2019; ER7, 19/08/2019; ER12, 8/11/2019; Appendix 1). Similarly, the village focus groups also generally believe the REDD+ idea is good provided their livelihood concerns can be addressed (Focus Group Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/2/2020; Appendix 1). However, they all think for that to happen, some political, economic and social/structural challenges must be addressed. The political challenges are discussed here while the economic and social/structural challenges are considered in the next two chapters.

During focus group discussions with the villagers, the FDA, the statutory body with oversight responsibility of the country's forests, came into sharp focus. There appears a general lack of trust in the FDA amongst the villagers. With the exception of one village, out of five, the residents of the villages think the FDA has failed them (Focus Group Interviews, V1 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/2/2020; Appendix 1). For example, residents in one of the villages claimed the FDA does not address their concerns whenever they are raised. They accused the FDA of abandoning the ECO Assistants, the village volunteers that man the protected

forest areas, just three months after their recruitment. They alleged the FDA has failed to pay the US\$30.00 token of appreciation to the ECO Assistants for almost two years as at February 2020. Similarly, the residents in another village claimed the FDA is yet to fulfil a promise of US\$4,500.00 agreed between the FDA and the village for a piece of land given to the FDA to construct a Sub-Office. In addition, the villagers have accused the FDA of bringing people from outside the communities to serve as forest rangers while overlooking the youths of the villages. Still in one of the villages, the residents accused the FDA of failing to provide them with alternative livelihood after asking them to stop cutting the forest for charcoal production. They even went further to say the FDA has failed to come back to check on them to see how they are surviving. In one of the villages, the residents were categorical in their views of the FDA as in “we don’t trust the FDA because they are always telling us lies... We don’t trust the FDA because they are not doing anything for us” (Focus Group Interviews, V1 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/2/2020; Appendix 1).

The following views of residents in one of the villages better express the general sentiments of the lack of trust in the FDA by the villages:

There is an existing Agreement between the FDA and the Community. According to the Agreement, if FDA brings strangers to go into the forest, the community has to sign and approve it before the strangers go into the forests. However, the FDA has not been honouring the Agreement. The FDA is by-passing the Agreement. Any time the FDA brings people here, the FDA takes the people into the forest without involving us. Also, when we asked the FDA about the paving of our road, the FDA tells us they are not here for such big development project. Granted. But the smaller ones like contributing to our schools, the FDA still does not undertake such thing. So, the FDA cannot do the bigger ones, and yet cannot also do the smaller ones. Because of these, we are not satisfied. The FDA has a sub-office here. Before the land on which the Sub-Office is built was given to the FDA, the FDA promised us that there would be some compensation for the land. However, since the donation of the land and construction of the office, the FDA is yet to give us a cent for the land (Focus Group Interview, V5, 11/2/2020; Appendix 1).

The referenced agreement the villagers are talking about is predicated on the Community Rights Law of 2009 with Respect to Forest Land (Republic of Liberia Community Rights Law, 2009). Section 6.3 of the Law requires the Community Forest Management Body (CFMB) and the Authority or the FDA to collaborate to enter into Large-Scale Commercial use contract for timber products. Additionally, Chapter 5 of the Law grants the FDA a broad range of duties and powers including the provision of minimum standards for and assisting in the drafting of model forest management plans, forest rules, forests agreements, and other technical documents by use of the CFMB. The CFMB is a five-member body, one of whom must be a woman. It comprises a chief officer, secretary and treasurer that are appointed by the Community Assembly, the highest decision-making body of the Community as per the law

(Republic of Liberia Community Rights Law 2009, Section 4.1a). The CFMB, among others, make decisions related to managing the forest resources on behalf of the community daily (Republic of Liberia Community Rights Law, 2009, Section 4.2).

While the Law as written seems to involve the community in decisions affecting the awarding of commercial contracts to parties interested in their forests, a deeper scrutiny of the Law shows real power, through the FDA, lies with the President of the Republic. For example, Section 6.3 (c) specifically states that “these contracts in 6.3 (a) shall be approved by the President of the Republic of Liberia and ratified by the Legislature.” Section 6.3 (a) requires the selection of a company through national and international competitive bidding for large-scale commercial activities. Large-scale commercial activities are those above the ‘Medium-Scale Commercial’ use contracts (contracts covering a land size from 5,001 to 49,999.99 hectares), which are not subject to competitive bidding (See Sections 6. 1 and 6.2 of the Law). Section 6.4(d) goes further to state that “no commercial activities shall occur on community forest lands until a *Community Forest Management Plan* has been approved by the Executive Committee, the Community Assembly and the Authority (the FDA).

The FDA is critical because it harbours the requisite technical expertise on forest. The Community, whose villagers are largely illiterate, rely on the FDA for a better deal from their forest lands in case there is an interested party (Johnson, 2017). However, as discussed above, the villagers seem not to trust the FDA. This lack of trust in the FDA appears to be across the entire country and not limited to the villages studied, especially when one considers the bad practices in the forest sector of Liberia (Rochow et al, 2006). For example, in 2013 there was a massive abuse of the award of commercial logging contracts that involved the FDA under the “*Private Use Permit*” (PUP), a scheme that allows lands owners to commercialize forest assets on their lands (Executive Order 44, 2013; Global Witness and SDI, 2012; Siakor, 2011; See Appendix 5 for the full Executive Order). The Scheme was used by big companies to circumvent the National Forestry Reform Law of 2006 which was seen to be more stringent than the PUP. Such was the abuse and outcry by civil society organisations, including Global Witness, that the President of the Republic established a Special Independent Investigation Body (SIIB) on the Issuance of Private Use Permit (Global Witness, 2018; SIIB Report on the Issuance of PUPs, 2012). These abuses are inflamed by the inherent power imbalance between the FDA and villages. For example, the SIIB Report categorically stated 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 the FDA*” (SIIB Report on the Issuance of PUPs, 2012, p. VII, emphasis added).

The powerlessness of the community becomes even more precarious when viewed in terms of the source from which the FDA draws its authority, the President of the Republic. The Managing Director of the FDA usually has strong ties to the President. This is either through kinship based on blood, tribe, regions or political. For example, former managing director William K. Glay was the cousin of former President Samuel Doe while Bob Taylor was the brother of former President Charles Taylor. Similarly, John Woods had political ties to former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The current managing director, C. Mark Duyen is a Vice Chairman within the ruling Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) Party of President George Weah, and also hails from the same Kru tribal group as the President. These ties are important to the President to maintain control over the forest resources. The President prefers appointing people with shared ties who are loyal. With such ties to the President, and considering the enormous powers of the Presidency, the forest communities find it difficult to hold the FDA, in particular the Managing Director, to account in case of any injustice happening in their forests. To hold the FDA to account, the President has to intervene like in the case of the PUPs. While recognizing that the FDA has a Board of Directors that provides oversight, the Directors are all appointed by the President either as statutory members of sector ministries or the managing director of the FDA (See Appendix 6 for the Act creating the FDA 1976). As a result, they are not independent. They serve at the pleasure of the President and lack real power (Articles 54, 56 and 56, Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, 1986). Some critics have argued that the expansive powers of the President could be responsible for what is termed 'imperial presidency' confronting the country now. By this, the presidency is uncontrollable and often exceeds its constitutional powers with no accountability to parliament, for example (Daily Observer, 2016; Prempeh, 2007; Fombad and Nwauche, 2012).

There is so much concentration of power in the Executive, specifically the Presidency that almost every community or citizen in the country with a grievance usually petitions the Presidency for redress. It is only Presidential action that seems to move officials of government to act despite the fact that the law may be clear on what is required (Front Page Africa, 2018). These challenges are not limited to the forest sector or communities but across the entire spectrum of government.

How can these features of Liberia's present political system be explained? The features of centralisation of political power in the figure of the president, and frequent appointment to political power on the basis of personal ties, appear to be classic features of what scholars' call 'neopatrimonialism' (Medard, 2002; Olowu, 2000). This is a term employed widely by scholars across the disciplines of Comparative Politics, Development Studies and International Relations to characterise and explain characteristic features of Africa's

postcolonial condition. Some examples include titles like *'Neopatrimonialism in Africa and Beyond'* edited by Bach and Gazibo (Bach and Gazibo, 2012) with articles like *'Neopatrimonialism and its reinterpretations by development economics'* by Alice Sindzingre in which she asserts "in Sub-Saharan Africa, the dynamics of the aftermath of independence contributed to the formation of neopatrimonial states (Sindzingre, 2012; p. 93); *'The path from neopatrimonialism: democracy and clientelism in Africa today'* by Nicolas van de Walle (van de Walle, 2012, p. 111), and *'Rebellion and warlordism: the spectre of neopatrimonialism'* by Morten Boas and Kathleen M. Jennings (Boas and Jennings, 2012, p. 124). Other examples are found in *'The African State in Transition'* edited by Zaki Ergas with articles like *'The State as Lame Leviathan: The Patrimonial Administrative State in Africa'* by Thomas M. Callaghy (Callaghy, 1987, p. 87); *'Class, Political Domination and the African state'* by Nelson Kasfir in which he argues "the use of official patronage – patrimonialism – by those who gain control of the state apparatus provides roots for the state in the society over which it [political class] rules (Kasfir, 1987, pp. 45, 58); *'The Managerial State in Africa: A Conflict Coalition Perspective'* by Otwin Marenin (Marenin, 1987, p. 61), and *'In Search of Development in Africa'* by Zaki Ergas in which he contends "the African elites have inherited a bad situation, but have made it much worse in the twenty-five years or so since independence" (Ergas, 1987, pp. 295, 296). In the next session, I discussed how contemporary Liberia is one of the African countries most subjected to neopatrimonial analysis by much of the academic literature. In this respect, I firstly consider how such analysis has been applied to Liberia before arguing that it rests on a flawed historical account. In this context, the final section constructs an alternative theoretical and historical account of Liberia's contemporary political condition.

4.20 Neopatrimonial description of Liberia

Before discussing some neopatrimonial descriptions of Liberia, an understanding of the term neopatrimonialism and how it is generally used, especially in respect of Africa's underdevelopment, is required. Neopatrimonialism is a political concept central to an approach which generally argues that public institutions are merged with personal goals for private gains. This approach basically sees the line between the personal or private and public interests as blurred (Bratton and van de Walle, 1998; Gazibo, 2012; Thomson 2016). In the words of Jean-Francois Medard it is the "privatization of the public [interest for personal gains]" (Medard, 1982, p. 181]. In this regard, Bratton and van de Walle argue that, 'as with classic patrimonialism, the right to rule in neopatrimonialism regimes is ascribed to a person rather than to an office, despite the official existence of a written constitution' (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; p.62). Africa seems the continent most subjected to this form of political analysis (Gruffydd Jones, 2015). For decades the continent's political problems have primarily been

understood through the lens of neopatrimonial analysis or Africanist scholarship (Callaghy, 1987; Moran, 2006; Bratton and van de Walle, 1992; Medard, 1982; Bayart, 2009).

The origin of the term neopatrimonialism is patrimonialism as coined by Max Weber in his typology of authority-traditional, charismatic and legal-rational bureaucratic political regimes. Weber firstly identified patriarchal domination which rested strictly on personal loyalty and grew out of a master's authority over his household (Weber, 1968; p. 1006). He contrasted it with bureaucratic domination, which norms he believes, were established rationally, appeal to a sense of abstract legality and presuppose technical training compared to those norms that derive from tradition - the belief in the inviolability of that which has existed from the distant past. Therefore, for Weber, while under patriarchal domination the master wields his power without restraint, at his discretion and above all, unencumbered by rules, insofar as it is not limited by tradition or by competing powers; in contrast the bureaucratic authority, in principle, is established by rules and what special "competence" permits (Weber, 1968; p. 1007). Patriarchal domination in turn morphed into patrimonial domination, which goes beyond a master's household to include others within the state. Under patrimonial domination or the patrimonial state, the most fundamental obligation of the subjects is the material maintenance of the ruler, just as is the case in a patrimonial household (Weber, 1968; p. 1014). Therefore, patrimonialism or patrimonial domination of the state is generally characterized by the personalisation of power at the top, usually in an individual, as well as at all levels of authority, and the direct interchangeability of economic and political resources, that is wealth and power (Medard, 2002; Thomson, 2016; p. 115). What is 'neo' about neopatrimonialism is its contemporary use, especially as a tool of analysis of Africa's political challenges. As was stated earlier, it is often the preferred tool of analysis by a significant number of scholars, Africanist scholars in particular, of the failures of postcolonial African politicians (Callaghy, 1987; Kasfir, 1987; Gazibo, 2012; Sindzingre, 2012; van de Walle, 2012; Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Boas and Jennings, 2012). In the words of Moran, "neopatrimonialism in African governments has been invoked to explain the failure of developments initiatives, free market and privatization reforms, and the lack of "civil society" all over the continent" (Moran, 2006; p28). Some examples of such studies are 'The path from neopatrimonialism: democracy and clientelism in Africa today' (van de Walle 2012); 'Chapter 6: Legitimacy - neopatrimonialism, personal rule and the centralisation of the African State' (Thomson, 2016); 'Democratic experiments in Africa: regimes transitions in comparative perspective' (Bratton and van de Walle 1997). The defining features of these studies are the African state failures are seen primarily from internal happenings in the state while largely ignoring the historical context and external factors (Gruffydd Jones, 2015; Grovogui, 2001; Krishna, 2001), especially for this study, transnational timber trade dominance by industrialized economies.

While the entire African continent is generally subjected to neopatrimonial analysis, Liberia appears to be one of the most described countries by academics, development institutions and official documents of the Liberian Government. For example, the Government of Liberia 10 years development plan, the '*Agenda for Transformation*' states, "Liberia still remains one of the poorest countries in the world" (Republic of Liberia, 2013, p.15). John Gunther words describing the country's capital, Monrovia that "the people are too poor, [and] mercilessly exploited" (Gunther, 1955, p. 843) seems to sum up such descriptions of Liberia. Most often, the country's background in the majority of studies or documents are replete with terms or phrases like failed state, fragile state, collapsed state, least developed country, underdeveloped country, developing country; one of the most corrupt countries and pariah nation (Levitt, 2005; Ellis, 2007; Liebenow, 1987; Reno, 1998; Clower et al, 1966; Boley, 1983; Korlison, 2012; Fund for Peace, 2017; Murphy, 2003). Some scholars and documents go as far as to inscribe such terms in the titles of their works. For examples, Christopher Clapham 'The Politics of Failure: Clientelism, Political Instability and National Integration in Liberia and Sierra Leone' (Clapham, 1982); Eric Werker and Lant Prichett 'Deals and Development in a Resource-Dependent, Fragile State: the Political Economy of Growth in Liberia, 1960-2014' (Werker and Prichett, 2018); Samuel P. Jackson *Rich Land Poor Country: The Paradox of Poverty in Liberia* (Jackson, 2019); Stephen Ellis *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimensions of an African Civil War* (Ellis, 2007); Amos C. Sawyer *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia: Tragedy and Challenge* (Sawyer, 1992); Robert W. Clower et al *Growth Without Development: An Economic Survey of Liberia* (Clower, 1966), and the U.S, Congress Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on African Affairs *Weak States in Africa: U.S. Policy in Liberia* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002). For some studies, the analysis is based on neopatrimonialism: 'Liberia and Sierra Leone: Dead Ringers? The Logic of Neopatrimonial Rule' (Boas, 2001) and 'Neopatrimonial impunity in post-war Liberia and the regional resonance' (Emeje, 2013).

The main criticism of these works is usually on the over-centralization of power in the executive and failure of states in Africa to institutionalize governance. Power is largely considered centralized in the executive with an over-powerful president. As a result, the president abrogates unto himself authority which leads to the unconstitutional personalisation of the state and its resources (Thiessen, 2015; Nyaluke, 2014; Hill, 2005). These dynamics, they argue, manifest into patronage, clientelism, dictatorship, corruption and the eventual failure of the state. For example, Boas and Jennings (2012, p. 126) argue that "perversive and increasingly dysfunctional neopatrimonial systems have created machine-like character of African politics". In similar context, Bayart in his '*Politics of the Belly*' asserts that "election to a key post [in Africa], particularly the presidency, opens up access to social and economic

resources, and the logic of schism becomes irrepressible, and political fragmentation spreads” (Bayart, 2009, pp. 229, 230). These types of analyses, while often stating in passing the source of the African politicians’ financial power is from foreign companies doing business in the country, largely blame the African politicians for the state failure. There is often a glaring lack of a critical analysis to establish how those foreign interests are also a major contributing factor to the failure. Such literature, to use the words of Kamola, essentially considers Africa “only as a site of enduring crisis” (Kamola, 2012, p. 188). Notwithstanding, such Africanist analyses may reach different conclusions if the broader external historical context of Africa, especially the colonial and neocolonial environments under which the pathologies plaguing the continent develop and flourish are considered. The colonial legacies that have exposed African economies to the exploitation of the dominant neoliberal global capitalist economy now cannot be divorced from the neopatrimonial pathologies plaguing the continent in general, and Liberia in particular (Mamdani, 1984; Nkrumah, 1965; Sartre, 1964).

In contrast to such Africanist analyses, I argue that Liberia, notwithstanding the general notion that the country was not colonized, was both colonized, at least mentally, and is impacted by such colonial past. Further, I contend that the neopatrimonial pathologies that are often ascribed to Liberia ‘political elites’ are because of the financial resources they are accessing from the exploitation of the country’s resources, especially by multinational corporations (MNCs). From this perspective, the state failure cannot be ascribed to the personalization of power by African leaders alone. As a matter of fact, and from the perspective of a patron-client relationship (an unequal relationship in which the patron is often the most powerful), it is argued the patrons, the industrialized economies in this case, should bear the greatest responsibility for the state collapse and, as I will argue in this chapter, the challenges facing the Paris Agreement/REDD+. This is discussed in detail in the next session. However, it would be in order now to briefly look at some criticisms of the neopatrimonial political analysis of Africa before such consideration. This could assist one to better appreciate why the patrons should bear the greatest responsibilities of the failures of the African state despite the contention by some commentators that the clients are not just passive participants with no leverage in the relationship, and others arguing that patrimonial relationship is reciprocal (Weber, 1968; Pitcher, Moran and Johnston, 2009). Thus, this study maintains the patron appears to have the strongest of the bargaining power because of the resources at their disposal.

Some scholars have criticised the general description of Africa’s failures in neopatrimonial terms, especially in western academia and institutions. These critics contend that these Africanists scholarships or narratives fail to appreciate the historical context of the problems

and the role that former colonial powers continue to play in the affairs of these states (Wai, 2012), especially in the exploitation of the resources of these states (Moran, 2006; Gruffydd Jones 2008). Further, other critics argue that the very methodology employed to conduct such studies of Africa is flawed (Wai, 2012; Gruffydd Jones, 2015). Yet, others argue that such neopatrimonial characterization of Africa is a “serious misreading of Weber” (Pitcher, Moran and Johnston, 2009; p. 125).

Such misreading of Weber is not applicable to scholars like Mahmood Mamdani who traces state failures in Africa to the broader colonial context of the countries. For him, traits like centralization of power in single individuals and the lack of decision-making by consensus are legacies of colonialism. He argues colonialism gave rise to the centralization of power and instituted indirect rule or what he terms “decentralized despotism” through a native authority under a chief appointed by the colonial powers to control native people. Therefore, Mamdani contends the colonial legacy – the institutions created for such controls – remain intact despite the end of colonialism (Mamdani, 1996).

I share the view of Mamdani because it was colonialism that introduced the Weberian patrimonial legal-rational administrative structure within the African colonies generally, and Liberia in particular. In the case of Liberia, the arrival of the free slaves in 1822 and subsequent declaration of independence in 1847 introduced institutions of government modelled on the US. These institutions of government – the presidency, legislature and judiciary – were based on Christianity and substituted the traditional African institutions of authority, especially that which has to do with accountability of the chief to his people, and decision-making by consensus (Sawyer, 1992). The new form of government replaced the pre-colonial indigenous Liberian society with a system under which the chiefs are accountable to the authorities in Monrovia, the capital, and not to the people over whom the appointed chief presides (Mitman, 2021; Liebenow, 1987; Wreh, 1976; Conton, 1965). The indigenous Liberian societies, like other pre-colonial African governments, were not dominated by hierarchies as is generally believed by most Africanist literature, but comprised “multiple forms of political authority based on lineage and others on achievement that operated in tandem” (Moran, 2006, p.32).

The first limitation of mainstream Africanist analyses is their mis-reading of Africa’s precolonial and colonial histories. The second limitation is the tendency to ignore the specific way in which African societies and political economies are positioned within the external global system. This approach tends to “direct attention away from analysing the historical relations of extraction and accumulation between Africa and the West” (Moran, 2006, p. 33). To turn one’s attention to such analysis, one may have to recognize that the prevailing so-called bad rule ascribed to

the political leaders in Africa are being enabled by the economic policies and practices of industrialized economies and rooted in the histories of the countries (Wai, 2012). It is from such perspective that Graham Harrison argues “clientelism has become involved in many aspects of neoliberal reform” (Harrison, 2006, p. 100). In this regard, Gruffydd Jones suggests “the current conditions of structural crisis in so many of Africa’s neo-colonial states must be situated in the imperial history of global capitalism” (Gruffydd Jones, 2008; p. 180). The failure of some Africanist scholars to consider the neo-colonial or imperial context of the neopatrimonial pathologies plaguing the African continent may not be unconnected to the faulty conceptual framework employed. This framework, in the words of Wai, “posits a single conceptual framework to explain a multiplicity of complex and varied socio-political realities” (Wai, 2012, p.32). He contends further that this neopatrimonialism characterization of Africa is “based on a problematic logical circularity that posits or infers the cause and effect of weakness and failure from the same source: rent-seeking behaviour of African political classes and their pursuing of power, influence and wealth through patron/client relationships and informal networks” (Wai, 2012, p. 32). This study aligns with the views of scholars who insist on taking into account the role neo-colonialism or imperialism played in the state of affairs of Africa. Similarly, it concurs with those that argue that Africanist scholarship is euro-centric, universalizes Africa’s problems and is conceptually flawed. Therefore, I am of the view that to better appreciate Africa’s political challenges requires broadening one’s lens of analysis beyond the internal, in particular the so-called ‘patrimonial’ behaviour of the political elites, especially when they are clients of patrons outside the country (Nyaluke, 2014; Kieh, 1992 and 2012; Gruffydd Jones, 2018).

This section briefly discussed the general understanding of neopatrimonialism, especially how it blurs the line between private and public interests for personal gains. It appears the main tool of analysis of most Africanist studies despite its limitations. Critics argue that this approach is conceptually flawed and ahistorical, especially on the role that colonialism played in Africa’s problems while also neglecting the broader neo-colonial context now. In the next section, I discuss how this mischaracterization applies to Liberia. I examine Liberia’s colonial past and the political elites’ patrimonial behaviour, in particular, what Kieh calls ‘America neo-colonial client regimes’ in Liberia (Kieh, 2012). The neopatrimonial narratives appear to ignore this point. Instead, the focus is on the political pathologies of the country. The broader neo-colonial context is considered in chapter 5 on economic challenges.

4.30 Liberia’s Colonial Legacy

The majority of studies on Liberia often begin with the faulty premise that Liberia was not colonized in the way that, most of, not all other African countries, excepting Ethiopia, were

(Clower et al, 1966). They generally conclude Liberia is a result of a philanthropic exercise of the American Colonization Society (ACS) that sought to return freed slaves to Africa in 1822, and the declaration of independence by the Settlers, Freed Slaves or Americo-Liberians in 1847 (Guannu, 2010; Levitt, 2005; Sirleaf, 2009; Dunn, 2009 and 2012). The furthest that some of these studies may go is the debates surrounding whether the freed slaves accepted the ACS project or opted to remain in the United States (Boley, 1983; Sawyer, 1992; Jackson, 2019). As a result, these studies largely focus on internal political challenges, especially on the misuse of political/executive power by the elites (Dolo, 1996; Boley, 1983; Liebenow, 1987; Sawyer, 1992; Wreh, 1976). There is not much attention, except in passing, to how the settlers' world outlook, or Liberia's present condition, is generally rooted in the Weberian patrimonial administrative institutions of the United States. The only study that seems to be an exception is that of George Klay Kieh which emphatically links Liberia's descent into civil crisis to American neo-colonialism (Kieh, 2012). The ACS that governed the settlements from 1822 -1839 transplanted similar patrimonial administrative structures to Liberia. For example, Sawyer (1992, pp. 72-73) considers the ACS 1820 Constitution, *'the Constitution for the Government of the African Settlement'* "was meant to provide a basis for tutelage in the arts of modern government." The defining feature of the 1820 constitution is power being vested in a single body, the Board of Managers of the ACS which was not subject to the constitution. Similarly, the 1825 Constitution, *'the Plan for Civil Government of Liberia'*, though created a Colonial Council comprising a vice agent and two others drawn from the Settlers, "the fundamental authority to organize and administer the government and to make laws for such purposes was left exclusively to the Board of Directors of the ACS" (Sawyer, 1992, p. 75). As a result, the constitution centralized power in a body that was not accountable to the people it governed. This is significant since the ACS Board of Managers were all whites (Sawyer, 1992). The 1839 Constitution that made Liberia a Commonwealth also vested ultimate power in the ACS, which could "revoke acts of the Colonial Council "[the body duly elected by the settlers to form part of the leadership of the Commonwealth] (July 2004, p. 92). The Settler elites that succeeded the ACS Board of Managers in 1839, continued along similar path. There seems not an alternative course to the settlers since all they ever knew about government was what was handed down to them or learned from the former colonial masters. It is also critical to note that the settlers to whom the ACS transferred power were those of lighter skin or mulattoes that themselves were offsprings of former slave masters (Korlison, 2012, p. 28). The 1847 independence constitution was also no different. In this regard, Samuel Jackson contends that "the idealism that led to the formation of Liberia also led to the writing of a colonial constitution that was fashioned on the Articles of Confederation and the American constitution" (Jackson,

2019, p. 148). In this context, one could argue that Liberia's political administration replicates that of the United States.

The freed slaves that declared Liberia independent were conditioned into the American way of government during years of slavery. Under the disciplinary power of the patrimonial administration practiced in the United States, especially the institutions of slavery, the freed slaves appeared to have been disciplined or internalized the norms and mores into which they were born and grew (Foucault, 1977; Rabinow, 1984). Therefore, the colonial patrimonial administrative practices became part of their total being despite their freedom and emigration to Liberia. Thus, the settlers' world outlook, including how to run a government, was conditioned according to what Brown (1941, p.10) cited by Kieh (2012, p.168) refers to as "slave psychology". In the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, the settlers seem a classic example of colonialism to the extent that "the reality of colonialism is an infernal cycle embodied in a million colonists, children and grandchildren of colonists, who have been shaped by colonialism and who think, speak and act according to the very principles of the colonial system" (Sartre, 1964, p.51). This was the case with the settlers that established Liberia. From this perspective, and recognizing that Liberia's political elites from independence to today are socialized in such colonial patrimonial-administrative practices that universalizes an alien vision of government and modernity, one could trace Liberia's so-called 'neopatrimonial' practices to the United States. For example, the free slaves referred to the US as "the land of their nativity and Africa [Liberia] a barbarous coast" (Boley, 1983, p. 29). Additionally, the 1847 constitution, besides being written by a Harvard Law professor, Simon Greenleaf, was a replica of the US constitution (Boley, 1983; Huberich, 1969; Jackson, 2019; Gunther, 1955, p. 847). It is based on such duplication of everything American by the settlers that James Ciment observes "in Africa, they [the freed slaves] endeavoured to recreate the only social order and political order they knew, that of the antebellum South - with themselves as the master class" (Ciment, 2013, xvii). Ciment therefore concluded that, the "freed slaves, given the chance to govern themselves, had turned out to be no better than the white imperialists who had descended upon Africa around the same time" (Ciment, 2013, p. xiv; Liebenow, 1987, p. 5). As a result, Kieh (2012, p.168) argues, the "repatriates (the freed slaves) were not interested in joining with their brothers and sisters (indigenous Liberians) to build a democratic and prosperous state. Instead, consumed by a false sense of superiority, the repatriates perceived themselves to be better than the indigenes." In this regard, and despite the freed slaves' separation from the slave plantations in the US geographically and the declaration of independence 1847, they were still a product of/and in service to the 'Lords/Land of Slavery [the US today]', at least ideologically. According to Kieh, the freed slaves were conditioned to what Brown (1941, p.10) calls a "slave psychology" (Kieh, 2012, p.168). Korlison shares

similar view arguing that “we [Liberians] became and continue to remain very stereo typical of the United States in every way” (Korlison, 2012, p.29).

The settlers or elites today consider themselves citizens of the United States (Boley, 1983, p. 29; Huberich, 1947; Ciment, 2013, p. 19; Guannu, 2010, p. 2;). This has become more nuanced given that colonialism seems to have morphed into neo-colonialism, which itself is today manifested as neoliberal capitalism. In the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, “the colonist [settler/elite/ordinary Liberian in this case] is above all an artificial consumer, created overseas from nothing by a capitalism which is seeking new markets” (Sartre, 1964, p. 40). This aligns with Timothy Mitchell’s argument, drawing on Foucault, that colonial disciplinary mechanisms, have become modern strategies of control which aim not to expand and dissipate as before, but to infiltrate, re-order and colonise (Foucault, 1997 cited in Mitchell, 1988, p.35). Stephen Ellis’ contention that Liberia, like other African societies, share the same experience of indigenous societies and politics being brought more closely than ever before within the reach of economic and political forces whose main nodes of power were far distant (Ellis, 2007) could be seen in similar light. Therefore, and inspite of the general approach to the study of Liberia as not to have a colonial legacy like other African countries, the founding and existence of Liberia is rooted and steeped in colonialism, except the manifestation was not as in other African colonies where colonial masters were both physically present and rule indirectly through native administrations (Mamdani, 1996). The case of Liberia was indirect and salient. It was disguised as an humanitarian experiment of the ACS controlled by white men that were beholden to the political elites in the USA. The ACS whose membership comprised prominent US citizens, including former House Speaker Henry Clay, Supreme Court Justice Bushrod Washington and General Andrew Jackson, was essentially an outsourced project of the U.S Government that, in the view of Kieh, is “the bureaucratic wing of the ruling class” (Kieh (2012, p,168). As a result, the constitution, national emblems, names and mannerism, in particular the mentalities of the elites (Gunther, 1955, pp. 847-848; Ciment, 2013, p. xvii) are deeply rooted in the American origin of the freed slaves and shape the national way of life in post-colonial Liberia.

The way of life as espoused by the settlers or elites (consisting both settlers and indigenes who have acculturated to the settlers’ culture) today is distinct from the African peoples that inhabited the land prior to the arrival of the settlers (Clower et al, 1966, p. 5-6). The Western culture of the settlers (Gunther, 1955) has become the barometer against which Liberia appears to be measuring its progress. Liberians generally seem not to see any alternative universe to the western democratic governance, especially as championed by the US. This culture is so pervasive that a visit to the US is seen as a great achievement and source of

pride to families. The saying, “in the US, this is how it is done” has become a common refrain amongst the majority of Liberians. In *Table A*, I have drawn up a synopsis of such American imitations that are embedded in the national life of the Liberian State.

Symbol/Name	United States	Liberia
Flag	Flag Color: Red, White and Blues stripes with 50 stars. 	Flag Color: Red, White and Blue stripes with one star. 
Form of Government	Republican	Republican
Capital City	Washington DC (name after George Washington, 1 st President of the US)	Monrovia (Name after James Monroe, 5 th President of US)
State/County	State of Maryland	Maryland County
Streets (few examples)	Broad, 14 th and 16 th Streets in Washington DC	Broad, 14 th and 16 th Streets in Monrovia

Table A: Synopsis of Liberia’s imitation of America symbols and names

Source: author’s analysis

The ACS Liberia project was not purely an humanitarian gesture to resettle free slaves (largely manumitted) back to Africa. Other motives appear to be racial segregation, the fear of the threat posed by a large freed black population to the institution of slavery, the spread of Christianity and pursuit of commercial trading interests (Boley, 1983, Guannu, 2010; Sawyer, 1992; Jackson, 2019). A suspicion of the motives of the ACS by most freed slaves may have been part of the reason why only a small number, 2,885 freed slaves elected to come back to Liberia within twelve years of the ACS experiment (Sawyer, 1992, p.40).

Racially, sections of the US at the time were opposed to inter-racial marriages. People of this thought argued that the presence of freed blacks posed a risk of contaminating the whiteness of America, in particular where inter-racial marriages were to exist. For example, Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the US and who himself was a slave owner, was said to have argued that free slaves be removed beyond reach of mixture so that they would not stain the blood of their masters (Boley, 1983). As a result, the general consensus according to Boley, was that “black and white races were incompatible and definitely ought to live apart (Boley, 1983, p.10). As for the freed slaves posing danger to the Republic, the elements of reasoning were (i) the widespread belief in the inferiority of blacks; (ii) the incorporation of freed slaves as full citizens was considered a danger to the European heritage of American civilization, and

(iii) blacks were presumed to harbor deep animosity against whites for the cruelties of slavery and therefore their incorporation was perceived to be an invitation to revenge, a risk not to be taken by the new republic (Jordan 1977, p. 542-51 as cited by Sawyer, 1992, p. 19).

In the case of the spread of Christianity, it appears to be one of the key reasons for the establishment of the ACS. As a result, the first emissaries of the ACS were given some form of theological trainings (Sawyer, 1992). As a matter of fact, the early leaders of Liberia are largely of religious training and deeply rooted in Christianity. The declaration of independence at the Providence Baptist Church and naming the piece of land on which the settlers landed 'Providence Island' are not mere coincidence. They reflect the Christianising mission of the ACS. Finally, the pursuit of commercial interest is manifest in the White Governors or Agents of the ACS commercial dealings and the freed slaves demand to control their own affairs, and subsequent declaration of independence. In other words, everyone wanted a piece of the trading opportunities the return to Africa opened up. In this regard, Sawyer (1992, p. 69) contended that "the ACS, despite its professed intention to establish a settlement of freeholders, deliberately sought locations at strategic trading points." When put in the context of Jean-Paul Sartre's contention that to gauge the reality of colonialism one should see how the colonists are shaped into new markets (Sartre, 1964), then this is no surprise.

This is the basis upon which Liberia was founded. The importance of this historical legacy to Liberia's contemporary political challenges is that it demonstrates the extent to which Liberia is tied to the US political social order. The political elites now (the descendants of the free slaves and acculturated indigenous people) are enframed in the US political conception of government, in particular when it is observed the pioneers who declared Liberia's independence in 1847 were not only largely uneducated, but disciplined into the culture of the US. For example, there was a law in the Southern State of the US at a point in time that "prohibited people from teaching black slaves to read" (Sartre, 1964, p. 47). Therefore, it may not be a surprise today that virtually everything in Liberia seems to reflect the culture of the US as learned by the freed slaves, including the constitution that espouses a republican form of government. However, it should be borne in mind that literatures on Liberia as being colonized are limited. This is either because of the misconception that Liberia was never colonized (Gunther, 1953) or due to fear of antagonizing the US, the colonizer or both.

4.40 Liberia Republican Government

Liberia is a unitary sovereign state with a Republican form of government like the US. The government has three branches, the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. In theory or constitutionally, these are supposed to be co-equals for checks and balances and effective

governing of the state (Article 3, Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, 1986). In practice, however, the Executive is more powerful than the other two branches in Liberia. Thus, there is the constant criticism of 'imperial' or 'absolutist' executive (Prempeh, 2007; Fombad and Nwauche, 2012). Such a practice is common across postcolonial Africa, including Liberia such that the spread of constitutional democracy contemporarily has not been able to restrain executive powers. In the words of Prempeh, "progress towards constitutionalism remains hostage to persistent presidential imperialism" (Prempeh, 2007). Power is highly centralized (Zanker, 2014).

As was discussed above, the constitution gives the President enormous power such that he/she even appoints, amongst others, local officials as low as county superintendent, development superintendent, land commissioner, city mayor, county AIDE Camp to the president and notary publics. Further, all the appointees serve at the pleasure of the President (Articles 54, 55 and 56a, Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, 1986). According to a former Liberian Senator, Blamo Nelson, the President's power to appoint more than 3,450 officials of government has made the Presidency imperial (Daily Observer, 2016). Although the appointments are with the consent of the Senate, more often than not, the Senate concurs or just rubber stamps the President's appointments.

These appointed officials, often times do not see themselves as being answerable to elected officials like clan and town Chiefs who are direct representatives of the people of forest communities. On the contrary, these appointed officials would rather answer a boss far away in the Capital, Monrovia than a local chief. The behavior by appointed officials towards the chiefs may not be unconnected to the constitutional provision that gives the President the power to remove an elected chief (see Article 55b, Constitution of Liberia, 1986). Therefore, it seems chiefs feel they have lost their political and cultural relevance amongst the villagers (Zanker, 2014). The officials of the FDA that often have very closed ties to the President similarly do not see themselves accountable to the traditional rulers of the people. The loyalty lies in the Capital where the appointing powers lies.

Liberia has been described as 'a country with a history of political clientelism' (Ellis, 2007, p. 110). Sungbeh aptly describes Liberia's political situation thus:

The country we know today as Liberia... needs serious reform because of the way the government and all of its functions are structured and poorly managed. That is because the current political system that grants absolute power to the President of Liberia is archaic, unsustainable, anti-development, and anti-progress and anti-everything that the people of Liberia stand for, because *it is a sick system that transforms a sitting president into God who must be celebrated, flattered, worshipped and feared* (Sungbeh, 2019, emphasis added).

The REDD+ implementation in Liberia would definitely be challenged by such political system. However, the criticisms of the political system as above are largely Africanist or 'neopatrimonial'. They fail to appreciate the historical context of these political challenges, in particular, the historical reasons for the existence of an over bearing executive. They overlook the deep historical roots of the country's republican form of government, in particular, how it was practically imposed on the country through the ACS by the US, the country's historical power. As a matter of fact, the US did not only impose its form of government on Liberia but has consistently ensured Liberia remains within the US orbit of influence, even if that meant acquiescing authoritarian regimes (Kieh, 2012). The US has consistently protected its interest in Liberia through what is referred to as a 'special relationship' between the two countries (Mitman, 2021; Dunn, 2012; Dunn, 2009; Dunn and Tarr, 1988) since 1862 when the "American policy makers receive information that Liberia was rich in minerals" (Kieh, 2012, 169). Thus, the failures of Liberia governments, especially the overbearing executive, cannot be separated from its historical roots with the US. Those studies that ignore the past, according to Kieh, are ignoring the critical role of the overarching global tapestry - the world capitalist system [the US in this case] - in contributing to the causes of Africa's [Liberia's] problems (Kieh, 2012, p. 165). This is particularly critical bearing in mind that, governments in Liberia are essentially "client regimes of the US" that, even at times, "American economic aid was designed to compensate its client Liberian regimes for serving its interests" (Kieh, 2012, p.174).

The forgoing has shown Liberia's political administration is rooted in and is a reflection of the political administration of its colonial past with the United States. This history cannot be divorced from Liberia's contemporary political culture. The political elites of Liberia are acculturated into such political culture. As Kieh argues, "Liberians are socialized to believe that the dependent relationship between the core [the US] and the periphery [Liberia] is the natural order of things" (Kieh,1992, p.87). This culture and socialization are best personified by Liberia's 18th President, William V. S. Tubman.

4.50 The discourse of neopatrimonialism and Liberia: The case of Tubmanism

Of all presidents of Liberia to date, William V.S. Tubman seems to exemplify the 'big man' syndrome the most. There was no difference between Tubman and Liberia during his 27 years rule. In the words of Tuan Wreh, "The birth of the Tubman era saw political bossism at its zenith" (Wreh, 1976, p.3). Individuals and institutions of government were at his will and pleasure. Gunther observed that "Mr. Tubman mostly ruled by means of patronage exactly as

a President in the United States may rule” (Gunther, 1955, p. 857). Tubman created an informal network of informers, the Public Relations Officers (PRO) whose main duty was to spy on ordinary citizens and opponents, both real and imagined (Clapham, 1982p. 81; Wreh, 1976, p.27; Boley, 1983, p. 66). In return, the PRO received monthly pay [though not official civil servants]. An estimated \$800,000.00 yearly of the public fund was drained by the PRO (Wreh, 1976, p. 27). Therefore, the PRO system was a parallel institution of government which was employed to serve Tubman’s private and personal interests, and thereby ensure total and complete control of state power. It basically helped in making Liberia become what Jeremy Levitt sees as “transforming Liberia’s state apparatus from a True Whig Oligarchic [the ruling party] democracy into a ‘popular’ Tubmanist autocracy” (Levitt, 2005, p. 185). It is under such circumstances that John Gunther, upon arrival in Liberia for the first time, enquired “what ran Liberia?” The answer was universal, “Tubman” (Gunther, 1955, p. 850). The clearest manifestation of Tubman’s running Liberia and being equated to Liberia at the time is the observance of his date of birth, November 29 as a national holiday (Boley, 1983, p. 67; Ciment, 2013, p.190).

Tubman ascended to the presidency in 1944 and died in office 1971 at a London clinic (Ciment, 2013). Prior to his reign, Liberia had a semblance of democratic governance, albeit, quasi. Elections were held regularly at four-year intervals among rival political parties. Also, the president’s term of office was limited to eight years (Clower et al, 1966). However, all that changed in 1951 after Tubman amended the constitution to succeed himself for another four-year term. In 1955, Mr. Tubman again removed the four-year one term succession. He thereby ensured indefinite succession of himself (Gunther, 1955). Mr. Tubman also effectively turned Liberia into a one-party state by ensuring all oppositions were dismantled (Clower et al, 1966; 11). As Boley puts it, “any opposition, real or imagined, was mercilessly crushed in a manner characteristic of Tubmanism” (Boley, 1983; p. 66).

Tubman’s personalization of state power is not in dispute. However, what most commentaries fail to take into account is how Tubman was enabled by western powers, especially the US. Western powers provided Tubman the financial and political backing to sustain his PROs (Kieh, 2012). In this regard, Werker and Pritchett argue that “the economic structure of the economy supported a complex and targeted patronage system that kept Tubman in power” (Werker and Pritchett, 2018, p. 44). Politically, for example, Tubman opposed communism and espoused total allegiance to capitalism. He branded opponents communists and threw them into prison (Wreh, 1976; 28). Internationally, he provided the bulwark against radical newly independent regimes on the African continent. Dunn and Tarr described Tubman’s position following Ghana’s independence in 1957 as follows: “for Liberia [Tubman as

president], the decolonization of Africa was not to mean the radical transformations envisaged by Nkrumah, but formal, legal independence with reliance on “mother countries” [U.S, U.K, Germany, etc.] to set the pace culturally, economically, and politically” (Dunn and Tarr, 1988, p. 179). Dunn and Tarr noted further that “the support of a U.S. in the throes of the cold war was there to sustain him [Tubman] along such anti socialism and communism lines” (Dunn and Tarr, 1988, p. 179). “Tubman was part of a coterie of US cold war surrogates” (Dunn, 2009, p. 31). The national budget under Tubman jumped from \$1.0million in 1944 to \$52.0million 1971 (Clapham, 1982, p. 80). During the same period, foreign investments in mining, forestry and service industries from Europe and the US rose such that exports rose from \$9.5million to \$252million (Clapham, 1982). This was a result of Tubman’s Open-Door Policy - the encouragement, under generous tax concessions and minimal control, of investment by multinational companies (Clapham, 1982).

The support of Western powers to Tubman led to the entrenchment of the culture of personalization of the state that pervades Liberia today. His ‘Open-Door Policy’ ensured money from western investments while his ‘Unification Policy’ – a policy meant to bring indigenous people into the hinterland into close political relationship with the settlers along the coast of Liberia – ensured his patrimonial control over the citizens and country. In Christopher Clapham’s words, “the Open-Door Policy existed in order to make the money, the Unification Policy in order to spend it” (Clapham, 1982, p.80). Tubman succeeded because his rule largely served Western political and economic interests. He was directly or indirectly enabled or ignored by the West provided his behaviors advanced western interests or did not threaten them. This is better captured by Kieh who argues that “foreign investment in Liberia is not intended for the purpose of promoting domestic development. On the contrary, it has other goals: [including] to keep Liberia within the global framework of capitalism, and to prevent it from pursuing a non-capitalist path to development” (Kieh, 1992, p. 51). Despite Tubman’s successor Tolbert appearing to turn towards the Eastern Block later, he still enjoyed the US support in one form or the other (Dunn and Tarr, 19988). Even Tolbert’s successor, Samuel Doe, despite is brutal human rights record and ascendancy to the Presidency through a bloody military coup that killed Tolbert, received the highest amount of US aid ever in the country’s history at the time - an estimated \$500million (Dunn, 2009). This should not be a surprise since “the United States was not interested in whether its client regimes in Liberia used its aid package to help improve the material conditions of the members of the subaltern classes. Instead, the United States’ cardinal goal was to ensure that its neo-colonial regimes in Liberia served its interests” (Kieh (2012, p.175). Figure 4 shows the channel through which the US exerts its influence over Liberia.

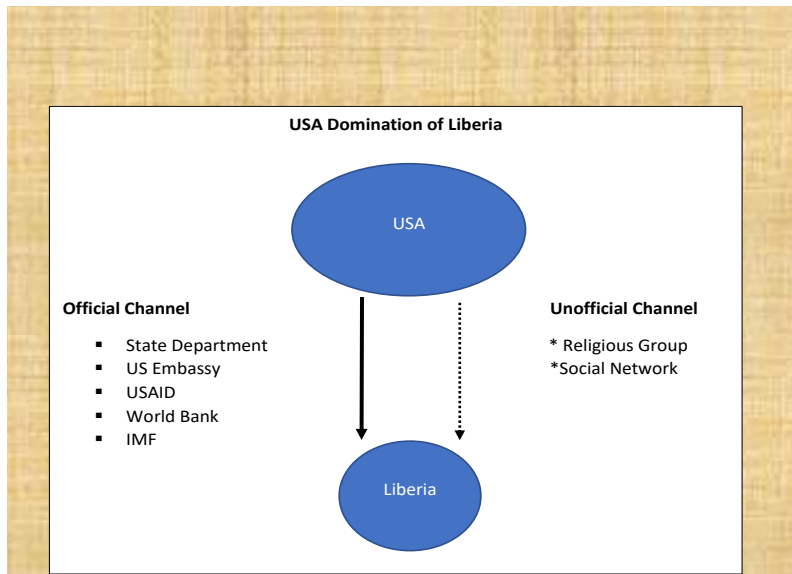


Figure 4: *US Influence over Liberia Politics*

Source: Author's Diagram

- Note:**
1. Circle size - unequal power relationships
 2. Bold Arrow - source of official decisions
 3. Dotted Arrow – source of unofficial decisions

The US even went as far as certifying Samuel Doe's rigging of the 1985 general and presidential elections and pressuring the opposition, in particular, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to accept the result and take up the senate seat she had won during the elections. Sirleaf describes the US pressure as follows: "Even the U.S. State Department wanted me to take the seat, urging me and others to 'get on board'. We were told to just trust the United States as far as Doe was concerned; everything would be fine if we just went along" (Sirleaf, 2009, p. 137).

From the foregoing, and while Tubman and patrimonialism seem to be cultural to contemporary politics in Liberia, this is because it is copied, enabled and sustained by the West, in particular the US political and economic interests. The political elites' behavior in Liberia can therefore not be divorced from Washington's actions or inactions notwithstanding the so-call sovereignty of Liberia. This is all the more so when the relationship that obtains is between "a major power and a near mini-state" (Dunn and Tarr, 1988, p.170). Therefore, to overcome such political culture requires appreciating the role the West, especially the US, plays in Liberia's affairs.

4.60 Liberia Political Culture

The political culture of Liberia – the over centralization of power in the executive that often personalizes power for their own interest – has implications for REDD+. The REDD+, especially the ‘Readiness’ phase requires putting in place the right institutions for effective implementation. At this phase, the forest communities are required to be consulted and involved in the decision making. In other words, the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of the host communities must be obtained prior to the forest being reserved for REDD+ activities. However, the over centralization of power in the executive makes this difficult. As was discussed above in Section 4.40, the powers of the President are expansive, and difficult to check by the other two branches- Legislature and Judiciary. As a result, the Executive would likely impose its will on forest communities through the FDA. To make matters worse, every President that comes to power often appoints the FDA Managing Director that is accountable to him or her. Thus, the lack of continuity in policy issues from one government to the other is common.

In discussion with the REDD+ experts, the lack of continuity in government is perceived as one of the major challenges to REDD+ implementation. As a result, there appears a lack of ownership of the project by the government. In this regard, one of the experts thinks the new government seems to see the project as that of its predecessor, and therefore, shows little interest in it or wants to change everything, including personnel while another thought “every change in government seems to bring change in personnel and policy”² (Interviews, ER5, 15/08/ 2019; ER12, 8/11/ 2019; ER6, 16/08/ 2019; ER12, 8/11/ 2019; Appendix 1). For example, I was informed that a procurement component of the REDD+ project could not proceed because the procurement expert, an expatriate, had left the country, and the REDD+ Implementation Unit could not get a replacement as the new government was still in the process of settling in. The new government, I was told, appears more interested in hiring its own people, notwithstanding merit and competence (Interviews, ER12, 8/11/ 2019; ER6, 16/08/ 2019; Appendix 1).

Another prominent feature is the lack of coordination, understanding or policy confusion amongst state institutions, in particular with regard to the REDD+ project (Interviews, ER3, 13/08/ 2019; ER13, 8/11/ 2019; ER5, 15/08/ 2019; Appendix 1). Every institution seems interested in advancing its own interests, especially as may be sanctioned by or is of interest to the President. For example, Atty Roland T. Lepol, Program Manager and Lawyer, REDD+

² It is interesting to note that the Executive Director of the EPA at the time of the field work was dismissed, essentially for political reasons, by the President in August 2020 (Dodoo, 2020).

Implementation Unit, FDA stated, “recently, I was in a meeting where our colleagues from the Ministry of Mines and Energy, were saying studies are being done, and there are huge kimberlites under places that we claimed to be Protected Areas” (Interview, ER9, 19/08/2019; Appendix 1). He thinks the “different sectors, ministries and agencies are pushing their own agenda and competing as to what we do with the land, so as to generate revenue and support government.” This is a situation that is currently playing out in Blei Community, Gba and Zor Clan on the borders with the East Nimba Nature Reserve. The Ministry of Mines and Energy granted Class- A mining exploration license to Solway Mining Inc., a Russian-Liberian owned company within four community forest areas which were already set aside for conservation by the FDA (Sections 5.3 and 6.5, Liberia Mining Law 2000; Sendolo, 2020; Giahvue, 2020). Besides conflict between conservation and mining (commercial activity), there appears conflict between the mining law and the community rights law in terms of ownership of land and resources. I shall explore this issue further in chapter seven which examines the question of property rights. For now, on the issue of conservation versus mining, the Ministry of Mines and Energy seems to be winning the battle, especially with regard to revenue generation. It appears the Government, as represented by the president, seems inclined to side with the mining sector by virtue of the award of a mining exploration license despite the reservation of the forest for conservation. An example of this is the award of the Solway Mining Inc in the Blei Community in the East Nimba Nature Reserve Area referenced above. This outcome is no surprise considering that mining, a primary source of revenue for the GOL, is likely, at least in the short-term, to provide the needed funding to sustain the President’s client base (Central Bank of Liberia, 2020).

As was discussed above, the Liberia constitution, modelled on the United States’ constitution, creates an all-powerful President. Therefore, the political culture seems personalized. However, such culture is rooted in Liberia’s colonial past and is sustained by Liberia’s neocolonial environment. In other words, the largely neopatrimonial description of Liberia by most scholars and development agencies appears not to recognize the broader context within which Liberia REDD+ is being implemented. In particular, Liberia is part of a global order dominated by neoliberalism, the most recent phase of modern capitalism (Dumenil and Levy, 2011, which mainly prioritizes profit over the people [the environment in this case] (Chomsky, 1999). The political and economic decisions of the dominant players in the neoliberal global economic environment have a larger impact on the political culture in Liberia than the actions of the political elites nationally (Kieh, 2012). This issue is explored further in the next chapter on economic challenges to REDD+ in Liberia. In this respect, a broader consideration of the external context of REDD+ implementation in Liberia, especially when it appears the revenue

from the export of the resources, including timbers sustains the neopatrimonial behavior of the political elites, is critical. The issue of revenue is discussed in detail in the next chapter

To appreciate the challenge overcentralization of power poses to REDD+ in Liberia, the structure of local government in Liberia needs to be understood. This is necessary because the forest communities are under local government administration.

4.70 Local Government in Liberia

The forest communities of Liberia are largely the rural parts of the country. They are the interior or hinterland of the country. They are usually some miles from a county's provisional headquarter. The country is divided into fifteen counties as shown in Figure 5 below.



Figure 5: Political Map of Liberia

Source: www.africanstar.org

Each county is under the control of a superintendent appointed by the President. The counties are subdivided into districts comprising chiefdoms, clans and towns. Figure 6 shows the flow of power in the local government structure of the Country. The President sits at the top of the hierarchy with the town chief at the bottom (Republic of Liberia Act Creating the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1982). To ensure absolute control over the towns, the constitution gives the President the power to remove a chief despite the chief being elected by his people (See Article 56b, Republic of Liberia Constitution, 1986). As has been discussed earlier, the presidential appointees do not see themselves accountable to the local people they govern.



Figure 6: Liberia Local Government Hierarchy - A Top-Down Power Relations

Source: Author's Diagram

In the succeeding paragraphs, I will show how these features of Liberia's postcolonial structure of power are rooted not in some African tradition, as implied or argued by the Africanist scholars, but rather, in the colonial structures of power, especially the United States republican form of government.

Prior to the settlers' arrival, the region which became Liberia was not a blank slate, but was composed of well-structured African societies as part of West Africa (Canton, 1965; Equiano, 1789). They had functional traditional governance structures rooted in the collective social and historical experience of the subregion (Sawyer, 1992, p. 50; Moran, 2006; p. 31; see also here Mamdani 1996, p. 45 on traditional chieftainship in the pre-conquest period with the one under colonial rule). For example, the Mel- and Mende speaking peoples of Western and North Central Liberia has the 'Poro' Society as the ultimate source of legitimacy. This was the highest authority amongst the people in these areas notwithstanding the subsequent attempts to impose western style government by settlers. In this regard, Sawyer argues that the "Poro Authority protected the values of the patrilineage that gave meaning to the social order and guarded against any arbitrariness of the secular authority" (Sawyer, 1992, p. 50), especially against what d'Azevedo sees as a "tendency of chiefs to construct around themselves a bureaucratic administrative apparatus staffed with non-kin clients who serve to insulate them from the elders of their descent groups"(d'Azevedo 1962a:514 cited by Sawyer, 1992, p. 50).

Similarly, the Kwa speaking groups of South Eastern Liberia has a political organization based on the principle of age-set relationships rather than hierarchical controls as the Mel- and Mende groups. Decision-making authority was largely vested in a council of elders, which is no different from that exercised by the elders constituting the Poro Authority (Sawyer, 1992). Thus, the highest decision-making authority amongst the Kwa speaking people was “a collection of lineage heads together with males of certain age-sets and where necessary, representatives of certain women’s age-sets” (Sawyer, 1992, p. 51 referencing McEvoy1971:153-71; Davis, 1975; Hayden, 1971:72).

Liberia’s pre-colonial traditional society appears to have been disrupted, and in its place was the imposition of the settlers’ US view of government. The colonists, the ACS and settlers’ successors, basically introduced what, in the words of Mamdani, is “decentralized despotism”- the creation of a native authority comprising a hierarchy of chiefs subject to only one higher authority, the colonial authority stationed in the administrative district or capital (Mamdani, 1996, p. 52-53). In this regard, the local government administrative structure is as shown in Figure 6 above. The President is at the top with a Minister of Internal Affairs beneath him. At the county level is the superintendent while the district commissioner oversees a district within the county. A paramount chief oversees a chiefdom within the district while a clan chief heads a clan in the district. At the bottom of the hierarchy is the town chief who heads the town or village, the smallest unit within the local government structure. This structure is purely colonial and was imposed by the dominant settlers’ administration that ruled the country. Notwithstanding this colonial administrative structure, the rural indigenous communities have maintained their traditional government system where consensus and communalism amongst the villagers remains central in decision-making. Traditional authorities, specifically the secret or ‘Bush’ societies, are so entrenched in rural Liberia, and decisions are based on wide consultations in such societies despite the imposition of US Western government structures. As a matter of fact, the highest decisions in those communities are made within those societies.

The central government recognizes the strength of these societies to the extent even presidents actively court traditional leaders within those societies to gain their support. In some instances, some presidents joined the traditional society to secure their power and control over the people (Ellis, 2007). The decisions from those societies enjoy more legitimacy in the eyes of the villages than orders from the central government through appointed local officials.

The collective decision-making practice amongst villages was evident during the field study of this research. As a result, the chiefs assembled all the elders, including women and youths for

the interviews, eventhough the arrangements were made through the chiefs of the towns. The residents are only informed of the coming of a visitor to discuss the protection of the forest and participation was voluntary. The pictures below are evidence of the visits in this regard.



Villagers of Falie Town, Lake Piso Multipurpose Reserve Area, Grand Cape County, Liberia



Villagers of Kpalan Town, Lake Piso Multipurpose Nature Reserve, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia



Latia Village, Lake Piso Multipurpose Nature Reserve Area, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia



Elders and youths of Zor Tapah, East Nimba Nature Reserve, Nimaba County, Liberia



Villagers of Geipa, East Nimba Nature Reserve, Nimba County, Liberia

From the pre-colonial traditional societies and current traditional decision-making practices amongst the forest communities, it appears the modern local government structure, as well as the REDD+ scheme, are essentially a foreign form of social order. They embody specifically western governance values aimed at disciplining, and incorporating the communities into the broader global capitalist economy. The issue of incorporation into the global capitalist economy is discussed in detailed in the next chapter on economic challenges to REDD+ in Liberia. For now, the point being argued is that the form of government introduced by the colonial administration is alien to the indigenous form of decision-making which is based on rule by consensus. From the arrival of the settlers and the creation of Liberia's first parish council - the first local government institution in Liberia in 1864 to control the affairs of the indigenous peoples through the Department of the Interior in 1927; the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Urban Reconstruction in 1971, and Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1982 to now, these administrative structures appear as deliberate efforts to bring the indigenous people in line with the political practices of the West, specifically the US. The universe to which the settlers, and now political elites of Liberia aspire is that practiced by the US. The Local Government Act of 2018 further re-enforced this western social order. Its claim of wanting to decentralize government to the local people could be seen as nothing, but an attempt to infiltrate, penetrate and structure the forest communities in ways that grant easy

access to capital to exploit the country's forest resources (Satre, 1964; Ferguson, 2009; Foucault, 1984. For example, Section 2.15h (Chiefdom Administration) reads:

Paramount, Clan and General Town Chiefs shall continue to play the traditional roles in their respective local customs, cultures and traditions; provided however, that those customs, cultures and traditions are supportive of the peace and development, and are not inconsistent with the Constitution and laws of the country. Cultural and traditional institutions, practices and governance shall fall under the jurisdiction of the Minister responsible for local government. There shall be a Chiefdom Administration constituted as follows: Advisory Council, Paramount Chief, Chiefdom Clerk and Chiefdom Office Assistant/Messenger.

This is more like the legacy of colonialism, which in the words of Mamdani, is basically 'decentralized despotism' (Mamdani, 1996, p. 37). Section 2.15h seems to essentially organize the villages in ways that ensures it is incorporated into the dominant global capitalist economic order. Thus, one could surmise that the so-called governance reforms, including the Land Authority Act, Governance Commission, Local Government Act, Community Right Laws (all sponsored by western donors) are practically re-engineering the social structure of the country. This becomes more apparent in the case of Liberia that people 'slavishly imitate America' on virtually everything (Fahnbulleh, 1979, p. 370). The words of Kieh aptly sums up the political quandary REDD+ faces in Liberia when he borrowed Gunder Frank's (1966) "development and underdevelopment nexus" that, "the development of the United States and the underdevelopment of Liberia were part of the same dialectical process" (Kieh, 2012, p. 171).

4.80 Conclusion

There appears general consensus from the field visits that REDD+ implementation in Liberia could contribute to GHG reduction, support biodiversity, provide budget support to the national government and income to forest communities. However, the majority of respondents think for that to happen, political challenges such as over centralization of executive power and lack of trust in government by forest communities need to be addressed. These challenges were found to be part of the country's political culture which is rooted in its colonial past, and sustained by neocolonialism now.

Liberia is one of the most described countries in neopatrimonial or Africanist terms - fragile state, weak state, corrupt country and poor. Nonetheless, I contend that these descriptors are a result of the country's colonial past, and today's neocolonialism. It is the West support to the

country's political elites which enables the leaders' bad behaviors. In other words, the presidents or political elites are basically conduits to the country's resources by western interests, in particular the U.S., which wields enormous influence over the country.

The next chapter - The Economic Challenges to REDD+ in Liberia shows how neocolonialism sustains the Liberia political challenges, and remains the main challenge to REDD+ in particular, and the Paris Agreement in general.

Chapter 5: Economic Challenges to REDD+ Implementation in Liberia

5.0 Introduction

Liberia faces enormous economic challenges. The various economic indicators point to a country in dire financial straits (Kamara, 2020; Sirleaf, 2017, Appendix 7; Jackson, 2018; Republic of Liberia National Budgets 2013-2018; The Central Bank of Liberia cited by Trendingeconomics.com; Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Service, 2017). The Government of Liberia finds it difficult to meet the wage bill of civil servants, and to provide basic social services to the general population. As a result of these challenges, the citizens struggle daily to survive. This situation was clearly visible during the field work of this study. Before delving into these issues, three abnormal periods that are outliers in the country's economic history need to be flagged.

The periods are the 14 years civil crisis (1989-2003); Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Outbreak (2013-2014), and the current global COVID-19 pandemic (2019-to-date). These three events have disproportionately decimated the country's economy (Radalet, 2007; Werker and Prichett, 2018; Sirleaf, 2017, Appendix 6; BBC News, 2021). While these events negatively impacted the country's economy, even if they had not occurred, this would not have changed the entrenched plantation economic model of the country. The structure of the country's economy remains the provision of raw materials to the industrialized economies, West and East alike, while importing consumables. This has been the country's economic model long before independence in 1847 (Guannu, 2010, p. 54; Thomas, 1984; Mamdani, 1984; Nkrumah, 1965). It is also important to note that reliable economic data, especially on the forest sector, are hard to come by in Liberia. They are scarce and fragmented. This situation is further compounded by 14 years of civil war which destroyed every institutional archive ("World Bank, Liberia Country Forest Note, 2018, p.1; Lomax, 2008, p. 5; USAID, 2015, p. 14). Despite these limitations, the empirical and anecdotal evidence as compiled in this chapter, evidence the challenging economic environment in Liberia.

To discuss this economic environment, in particular the challenge it poses to REDD+, the chapter firstly considers why forest communities prefer commercial logging over conservation. The perspectives of the interviewees in this regard are considered. The harsh livelihood conditions in forest communities are drawn upon to better contextualize why logging is more attractive to forest communities. Secondly, I look at the low prioritization accorded to environment protection in the country's national budget. Thereafter, the contemporary economy of the country through a historical lens is next. This demonstrates that the economic challenges the country faces now are a by-product of the colonial 'plantation' economic mode

of production. This mode of production is extractive and naturally remains inherently colonial. Finally, Liberia's economic position in the dominant global capitalist's economic order against a backdrop of the country's persistent public debt, and high rate of unemployment is considered. This better contextualizes the economic challenges posed to REDD+ implementation in Liberia especially situating the challenges within the global economy.

5.10 Difficult Livelihood Conditions in Forest Communities - The Interviewees' Perspective

The economic challenges confronting Liberia are numerous. However, this study focuses on the difficult livelihood conditions of forest communities to the extent they opt for commercial logging over conservation, and the lack of priority for environmental protection in the national budget. Economically, these were the issues that the interviewees think constitute the main challenges to REDD+ in Liberia.

The Logging Challenge

In the view of the National Coordinator for REDD+ in Liberia, the success of REDD+ boils down to "What REDD+ can counter offer" to forest communities compared to logging (Interview, ER7, 19/08/2019, Appendix 1). Thus, he argues:

You talked to communities they say ooh yes, we want to do REDD+. We want to do REDD+. But then the expectation is that REDD+ will bring immediate benefits. And, so the expectation is how do you manage community expectation taking into consideration the long road before the country is ready for REDD+ activities? So, those are just some of the few challenges that we faced. Say for example, the logging concessions will tell the communities we will build your roads; we will give you bridges to get to your community. Therefore, in that case, it is not only hiring the community members to work for the logging concession, but the logging concessions are also providing social services – the construction of roads leading to the community; the repair of bridges leading to the communities, and so forth. And mind you, when those bridges and roads are built and repaired, the communities also have access to markets. In that way, the communities can get involved in farming. They also get involved with the logging concessions, that is, they are employed; their kids are employed amongst others. What does REDD+ have to offer? In the language that we speak in our office now is, "*what does REDD+ have to counteroffer versus the logging*" (Interview, ER7, 19/08/2019, Appendix 1).

The acknowledgement of the need for REDD+ to counter-offer services provided by logging companies seems to reflect the harsh living conditions in those communities. The communities are in desperate need of basic services to live decent lives. For example, the residents in one of the villages expressed such needs by stating:

The FDA have not been able to pay the ECO Assistants [Community volunteers who guard against intrusion into the forest] their honorarium for the past two years. Everything is just the same way. An example is the bridges that you drove over to come here [See Pictures 1 and 2 below]. Whenever the bridge spoils, we have to look for logs to fix it without contribution from the FDA. By this action, the FDA has broken all of the social benefits they have promised us. Therefore, what we want the FDA to do is to honor the Agreement and see reason to know that we, the villagers are humans who live on the forest. Since we can no longer go into the forest, the FDA should find something for us to live on to be relaxed. As you know, we cannot challenge the Government (Interviews, V4 and V5, 11/2/2020, Appendix 1).



Picture 1 Log/plank Bridges enroute to/from Geipa Town, Nimba County



Picture 2: Plank Bridge to/from Geipa Town, Nimba County

The challenge of lack of basic services and feeling abandoned by the government is across every village visited. For example, in the village of Latia, Lake Piso Multipurpose Use Reserve Protected Area, I observed the only hand pump for safe drinking water is damaged as seen in Picture 3. The residents depend on the nearby Lake Piso in Pictures 4 and 5 below for drinking water. Picture 6 is the abandoned signboard of the Piso Conservatory Forum in Latia village.



Picture 3: Damaged Hand Pump in Latia Town, Lake Piso Multipurpose Use Reserve Protected Area, Grand Cape Mount County



Picture 4: *Nearby Lake Piso where villagers of Latia Community fetch water*



Picture 5: *Nearby Lake Piso, Latia Town where villagers fetch drinking water*



Picture 6: Abandoned Piso Conservatory Forum Sign Board, Latia Town

In sum, Picture 7 encapsulates the struggles villagers face to survive in forest communities. The situation is so dire to the extent that even children have to help their parents for survival.



Picture 7: Children in Falie Town helping to patch gari (farrenous) made from cassava for food



Picture 8: *The Researcher with a bowl of the patched gari purchased for 50.00 Liberian Dollars or 0.30 United States Cents from the villagers, Falie Town, Lake Piso Multipurpose Reserve Use Reserve Area*

These challenging livelihood conditions in forest communities make commercial forestry attractive to the villagers. In the view of the World Bank Liberia Country Office Environmental Specialist, commercial forestry is dominating the forest land scape of the country compared to conservation and community forestry. He is therefore calling for some form of equilibrium:

You know the FDA is using the 3Cs approach - commercial, conservation and community for forest management. But the challenge is how do they balance the 3Cs? In addition, Liberia is also looking at the 4th C which is carbon. But for the 3Cs now, there has to be some equilibrium. However, as we speak to you, commercial is leading the way. There is huge amount of the forest being given to FMCs [forest management contracts], you know. Even those being given or signed for community forest agreements, all of those are going for commercial instead of conservation. Yes, many of them. So how do we balance that? So, that is the issue there. That is a challenge there, balancing the 3Cs, and the issue of reaching the community as it relates to their current livelihood is still a challenge (Interview, ER12, 8/11/2019, Appendix 1).

Documents analyzed from the FDA Commercial Forestry Department appear to support claims that commercial forestry is dominating conservation. As at 26 August 2020, 1.7million ha of forest was contracted out. Of this, 705,670 ha is through Community Forest Management Assembly (CFMA). Table 2 shows forest contracts awards to commercial logging activities. Appendix 8 contains the contracts, including names of companies, and the region of the country the award is located. Figure 7 below is also further confirmation of this trend.

Contract Type	Total Approved (Hectare)	% Active	% Inactive
Community Forest Management Assembly (CFMA)	705,670	58.67%	41.33%
TIMBER SALE CONTRACT (TSC)	30,000	50%	50%
FOREST PLANTATIONS	1,826.6	100%	0%
FOREST MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS(FMC)	1,008,185	88.43%	11.57%
TOTAL	1,745,681.6		

Table 2: Forest Contract Awards as at 26/8/2020

Source: Commercial Department, Forestry Development Authority, Republic of Liberia

In addition to forest contracts awarded by communities to commercial logging companies, the national government also grants large concessions to palm oil companies. For examples, the Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL) has 220,000 ha; Sime Darby has 311,187 ha, and SIFCA has 8,800 ha of concession areas (African Development Bank, 2012; Front Page Africa, 2017; MacDougall, 2016; Friends of the Earth International, XX; Environmental Justice Atlas, 2014).

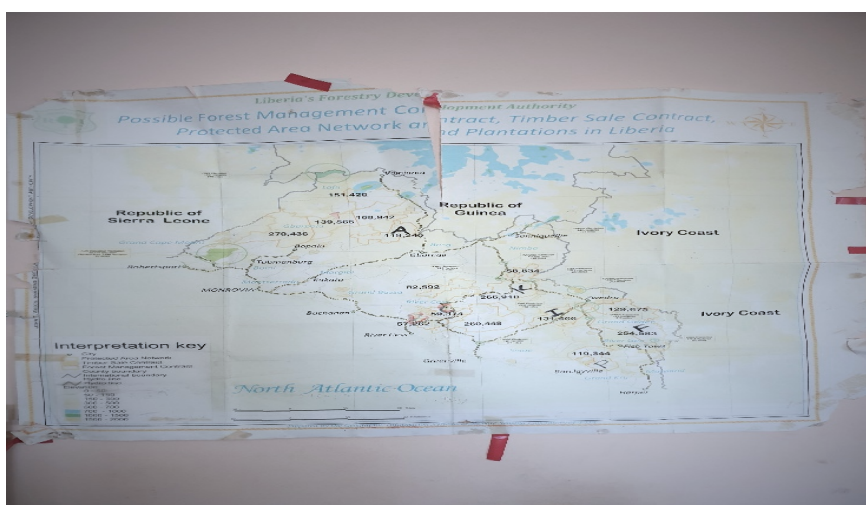


Figure 7: Locations of Possible Forest and Plantation Contracts in Liberia

Source: Commercial Department, Forestry Development Authority

The reasons for the attractiveness of logging to both communities and government is simple: logging provides immediate and tangible benefits to the villagers. The Deputy Director for Conservation International thinks:

Forest dependent communities are interested in immediate benefits. They see companies involved in logging as a way to benefit immediately from the forest” (Interview, ER7 Interview, 19/08/2019. Appendix 1).

In recognition of the challenge logging poses to REDD+, the National Coordinator for REDD+ explained that the REDD+ Implementation Unit, the independent donor funded unit overseeing the implementation of the Liberia REDD+ Project, is considering how logging could be used as an entry point for REDD+, especially since REDD+ is not anti – forestry (FCPF Readiness Fund: Liberia REDD+ Annual Progress Report – July 2018). Hence, the Coordinator argues:

Mind you, REDD+ does not speak against logging. What REDD+ speaks against is the footprint that is being left by logging. So, how can we minimize the footprint? How can communities benefit from logging activities if communities get involve in logging activities? How can those communities benefit more than the investors? Because what is happening now is, more of what comes from the forest is for the investors. So, if under community forestry, you have community forming cooperatives, and we have the resources under REDD+ to be able to bring in a company, to say, ‘help us manage this forest for this community’. So, the logging company is going to be paid for management services. They are no longer going to take the forest as theirs. So, those are some of the smooth entry points that we are trying to find into REDD+. But I will tell you, it is a challenge (Interview, ER7, 19/08/2019, Appendix 1).

Similar views were expressed by the former Deputy Executive Director of the Environmental Protection Agency. He thinks “Liberia has elevated REDD+ to a level where people believe that REDD+ is not a system or mechanism to stop logging. It is not a mechanism to prevent community from engaging or entering the forest. Therefore, Liberia has clarified the role of REDD+, and how important it is to keep forest standing” (Interview, ER3 on 13/08/2019; Appendix 1). He therefore thinks:

We [Liberia] can do a small-scale sustainable logging programme, but we [Liberia] should rely heavily on the REDD+. We have been engaged in logging for far too long and yet we don’t have coal tar road [paved road] leading to any logging community. So, can you say you are using it [logging] as a reproducible capital? No. So, I don’t subscribe to it [logging] (Interview, ER3 on 13/08/2019, Appendix 1).

In spite of the reservation on logging by the former Deputy Executive Director of the EPA, logging remains the foremost challenge to REDD+. The preference for logging by the Government of Liberia, and the forest communities is because of the revenue being generated to support the national budget on the one hand, and on the other, the communities' quest for basic services like school, clinics and safe drinking water. Nonetheless, this does not translate to support for the protection of the environment generally, and conservation in particular, in the country's national budget.

5.20 Low national priority of environmental protection

The lack of counterpart funding in the country's national budget to support environmental protection programmes generally, and REDD+ in particular, is further compounding the challenge logging poses to REDD+ in Liberia. This issue is of concern to experts and focus groups alike. For example, the Executive Director of the EPA at the time of the field visit, lamented the lack of allocation in the national budget to the EPA and the FDA. He sees it as one of the main challenges to REDD+ in Liberia. He thinks "the main challenge would be how to integrate it [REDD+] fully into our national development plan, especially we need to now see a demonstration by our government in terms of budgeting, that is, adding appropriation of resources toward it [REDD+]". He contends that, "we [the EPA and FDA] are not looking for extra budget. We are looking at, for example, in the Forest Reform Law, 2006, it talks about certain amount of money going to the FDA for conservation.³ If that money goes to the FDA for conservation, it will push the REDD+ process" (Interview, ER6, 16/08/2019, Appendix 1). Senior students of the Department of Agriculture, University of Liberia express similar concerns. The students stated emphatically that conservation is not a priority in the national budget. Therefore, for them, it constitutes one of the main challenges to REDD+. In their own words, "there is little budgetary allocation to the issue of conservation in Liberia". As a result, they think, "more awareness is not being done, and because of that, there is limited research in these areas [climate change for example]." Therefore, they insist, "if we are to solve these

³ Section 14.2 (Forestry Fee), Subsection (e) of the National Forestry Reform Law of 2006 states "the Government shall allocate and distribute fees collected annually pursuant to this Section as follows: (i) Ten percent of stumpage fees to support operational costs for the Protected Forest Areas Network established by Chapter 9 of this Law; (ii) Thirty percent of land rental fees to communities entitled to benefit sharing under Forest Resources Licenses; thirty percent of land rental fees to Counties; and forty percent of land rental fees to the Ministry of Finance to hold as part of the general revenues of the Republic in accordance with Section 7 of the Reform Tax Code; and (iii) Ten percent of Forest Product fees to support operational costs for the Protected Forest Areas Network established by Chapter 9 of this Law.

However, the Government has not been honouring Section 14.2 (e). The Government is struggling to remit money to both the FDA for the Protected Area Network, and the communities. For example, the Government has been indebted to the communities in the amount of \$3million since 2017 according to the National Benefit Sharing Board (Frontpage Africa, 16 March 2021).

problems [issues like climate change], we must first identify them. It is only through scientific research that we can identify the problems associated with these issues.” Thus, in their view, the “lack of budgetary allocation or finance issue is one of the major challenges facing the implementation of the REDD+ in Liberia” (Interviews, SR1, SR2, SR3, SR4, SR5 and SR6, 14/08/2019, Appendix 1).

Along the same lines, one of the country’s foremost environmental experts, and the UNFCCC Focal Person for the country, Assistant Professor Benjamin Karmorh puts the lack of budgetary support for REDD+ at the top of the list of challenges to the programme. He thinks “inadequate funding for the REDD+ process, without funds from the Norway,” is a serious issue (Interview, ER1 on 12/08/2019, Appendix 1). The former Deputy Executive Director of the EPA also agrees the lack of support is an Issue for the EPA. Making specific reference to why the REDD+ Technical Working Group (RTWG) was inactive, he explains one of the two reasons as “due to the lack of funding” (Interview, ER3 on 13/08/2019, Appendix 1). This lack cannot be attributed to the donors since they are the ones funding the Liberia Forest Sector Project, including the REDD+, except that, according to the National REDD+ Coordinator, the REDD+ ‘Readiness’ phase does not have funds for alternative livelihoods (Interview, ER7, 19/08/2019, Appendix 1). Therefore, the claim by the former Deputy Executive Director of the EPA could only be referring to the lack of funding from the Government of Liberia. Hence, his assertion that, “as a government, we haven’t done a lot, even under the REDD+ program” (Interview, ER3 on 13/08/2019, Appendix 1).

The Ministry of Finance Annual Development Assistance Report shows that the country is dependent on funds from donors to support environmental programmes. For example, it is reported in the *Fiscal Year 2015/2016 Annual Development Assistance Report* that 18% or \$128million foreign aid went to the energy and environment sector while 29% or \$204million went to health (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning Annual Development Assistance Report, 2016). It is important to note that the Liberia Forest Sector Project and the REDD+ project are all donor funded projects (The World Bank, 2020).

Donor funding takes one of two forms: direct budgetary support or indirect budgetary support. For direct budgetary support, the fund is sent directly to the account of the agency of government implementing the project. Such funds are captured in the national budget of the entity. In the case of indirect budgetary support or off budget support, which is by far the most preferred means donors support projects in Liberia (as contained in the *Fiscal Year 2015/2016 Annual Development Assistance Report*), the funds are largely managed by implementing partners like the World Bank, UNDP, USAID amongst others. The Partners directly undertake

the procurement for works and execute the project directly. Every project has three players – owner/requestor (country), donor (multilateral or bilateral country providing the fund) and partner (World Bank or entity managing the fund on behalf of the donor country). In the case of REDD+, the World Bank Country Office manages the funds and disburses allotments based on request from the REDD+ Implementing Unit in line with the original project proposal. The project implementing entities (PIEs), including the FDA, EPA and LISGIS engaged in one REDD+ activity or the other, are funded through RIU. In other words, procurement and financing of the activity goes through RIU.

The low budgetary allocation to the EPA in the national budget supports the views that funding for environmental programmes is lacking. Table 4 below shows the low priority of the EPA in the national budget. The EPA relies heavily on donor support to undertake environmental projects. For examples, in 2013, \$820,000 (Liberia National Budget 2013/14) was allocated on EPA related off-budget donor funded projects. Similarly, Table 4 has \$200,000.00 allocated for donor's support in 2015/16. Off-budget, as was indicated, means the partners make the intervention directly without going through a ministry or agency. Therefore, the capture of \$200,000.00 in the EPA's budget in 2015/16 seems more like a strategy by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) to justify why the national government is not providing funds from its own resources to fund environmental projects. This demonstrates further how environmental projects are largely left to donors.

The national budget generally has two main components - recurring and non-recurring expenditure. The recurring expenditure covers wages and salaries and goods and services while the non-recurrent expenditure covers public sector investment projects (PSIP). In terms of priority, it does not matter which ministry or agency is being looked at, recurring expenditure takes a large portion of the budget. For example, Figure 8 below shows that between 2013 and 2019, an average of \$501million or 84% of the national budget went toward recurring expenditure while 16% to non-recurring expenditure. See also Table 3 below for additional details. Consequently, the national priority is the paying of wages and salaries of civil servants and procuring goods and services needed to do government business. Such is the priority of wages and salaries that the present Government risk the use of donors' projects funds at the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) to pay employees, which according to the FrontPage Africa Newspaper, "government officials think is more important than development", since in their view, "not doing so would impact the country stability and cause further economic decline" (Front Page Africa Editorial, 15 April 2019).

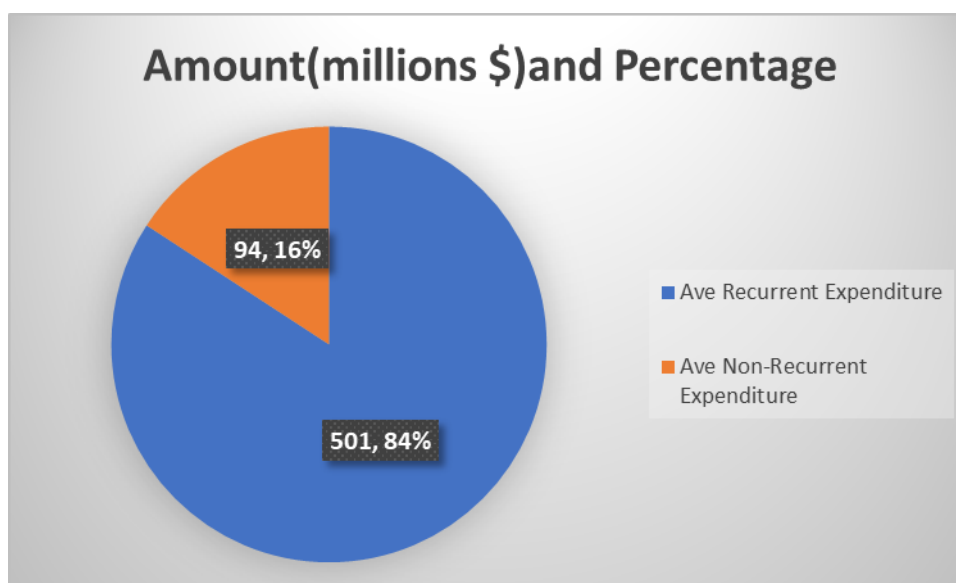


Figure 8: Average Allocation of Liberia National Budget (2013-2019)

Source: Republic of Liberia Ministry of Finance and Development Planning National Budgets for Fiscal Years 2013— 2019

FISCAL PERIOD	National Budget	Recurrent Expenditure	Non- Recurrent Expenditure	% Recurrent Expenditure of National Budget	% of Non- Recurrent Expenditure of National Budget
	In millions of USD	In millions of USD	In millions of USD	Percentage	Percentage
2013/14	\$582.90	\$482.30	\$100.60	82.74%	17.26%
2014/15	\$635.20	\$526.00	\$109.20	82.81%	17.19%
2015/16	\$622.70	\$515.90	\$106.80	82.85%	17.15%
2016/17	\$600.20	\$487.20	\$113.00	81.17%	18.83%
2017/18	\$563.50	\$508.20	\$55.30	90.19%	9.81%
2018/19	\$570.10	\$488.70	\$81.40	85.72%	14.28%
Cummulative Total (6yrs)	\$3,574.60	\$3,008.30	\$566.30	84.16%	15.84%
Ave	\$595.77	\$501.38	\$94.38	84.16%	15.84%

Table 3: Recurrent and Non-recurrent Liberia National Budget Allocation between 2013-2019

Source: Ministry of Finance and Development Planning Liberia National Budgets for Fiscal Years 2013/14-2018/2019

When national priority of the budget is based on allocation to ministries and agencies, the Ministries of Health, Education and Public Works are top. However, for this study, the focus is on ministries relevant to the environment generally, and the forest sector in particular,

compared to the top political leadership of the Government of Liberia - the National Legislature, Presidency and Vice Presidency. The choice of these three spending entities is because they cater to a smaller number of individuals administratively compared to the EPA and FDA whose activities impact a larger section of the population. Figure 9 shows that the National Legislature, the Presidency and Vice Presidency received higher budgetary allotments than the agencies impacting the environment and forest sector. When the average amounts are considered as a percentage of the budget over the period, the Legislature, Presidency and Vice Presidency receive 6%, 2% and 1.6% respectively compared to 0.9% and 0.3% for the FDA and EPA over the same period. The significance of this is that the national budget is spent more on items for personal benefits than on things for the good of the larger population. It is interesting to note that there are just 103 Legislature, 1 President and 1 Vice President notwithstanding the general staff, and yet they take a very large chunk of the budget compared to entities that impact thousands of the population.

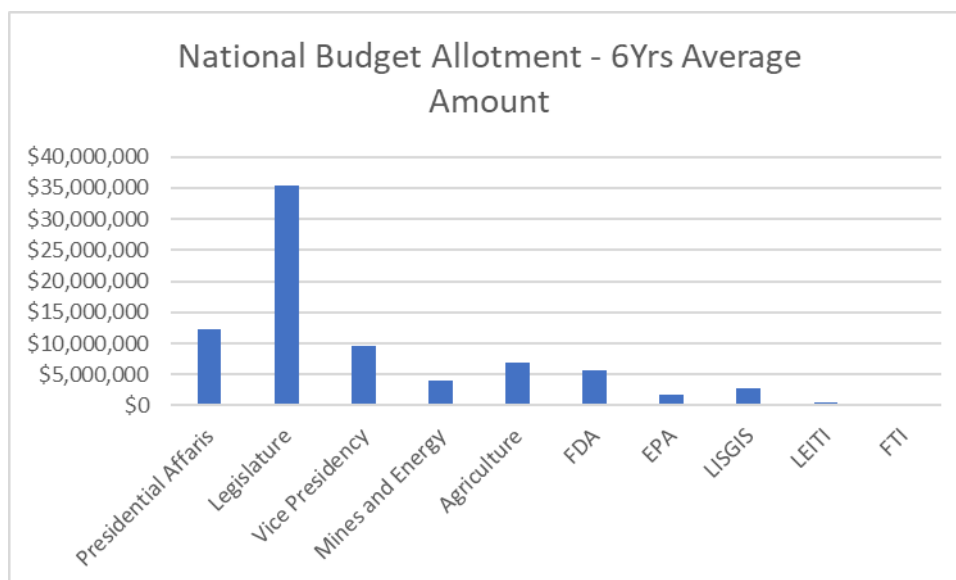


Figure 9: National Budget Allotment of Selected Spending Entity

Source: Liberia National Budget 2013/14-2018/19, Ministry of Finance and Development Planning

Allocation to agencies at times appears tied to the revenue generated by the agency or ministry. There are a few autonomous agencies that generate substantial revenue. These include the Liberia Maritime Authority, National Port Authority, Liberia Petroleum Refining Company, Forestry Development Authority and Liberia Telecommunication Authority (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning National Budgets, 2013/14). While the FDA is a good revenue generator, unfortunately, the EPA is not. This could be one of the reasons for the low budgetary allocation to the EPA. Nevertheless, an agency's ability to generate revenue may

not necessarily be the basis of budgetary allocation because some ministries, though not a revenue generator, get large allotment. This issue is explored no further since revenue generation is not the focus here, even though the Country's overall revenue base is narrow.

The administration department generally takes the larger share of all ministries and agencies budget. This should be expected given wages and salaries, and goods and services fall under this department. I use the budget of the FDA to demonstrate this. The choice of the FDA is because: (i) the FDA's average allotment goes exclusively to compensation and goods and services. For instance, between 2013/14 - 2016/17, an average of 73% of FDA total allocation went towards staff compensation, and 12% to goods and services. There was no allocation to any environmental project as shown in Table 4 below. Further, the FDA has a department for conservation. In other words, the FDA's allotment in the national budget funds no project. In this context, Figure 10 shows only 15% of the FDA budget goes to the Conservation Department compared to 43% for Administration and Management. Appendix 9 has additional details on the priorities of the budget for the Forestry Development Authority. The use of the allotment to the conservation department solely for compensation, and goods and services further compounds the low allocation to environmental issues in the national budget.

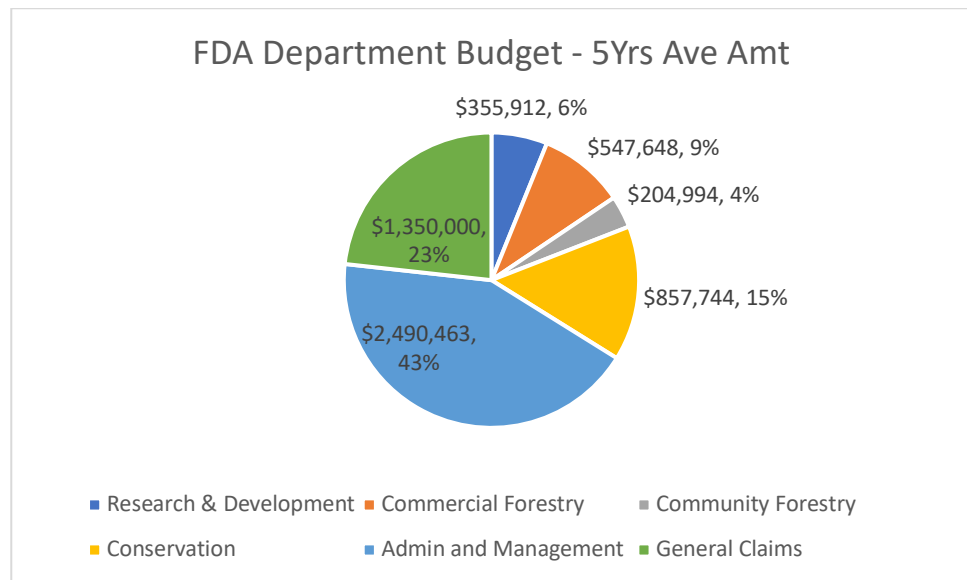


Figure 10: FDA Department Budget-Five Years Average Amount

Source: National Budget of Liberia (2014-2019), Ministry of Finance and Development Planning

In comparison, the EPA of other countries budget for specific environmental project, no matter how small the amount. For them, the counter-part funding was important in spite of donor funds. The key point here is the capture of an environmental project and not depending solely on donors' funds like in the case of Liberia. For example, the Ministry of the Environment in Nigeria allotted \$150,000.00 to climate change mitigation projects in 2018 from a total budget of \$2.8million (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2018 Approval Bill).

The lack of priority to environmental issues in the national budget seems to reflect how small and tight the national revenue envelope is - an average of \$595 million annually (see Table 3 above). Therefore, the often-low budgetary appropriation to the EPA and the FDA may be a reflection of this. The national budget allocation (the \$595million) is a reflection of the national revenue purse, inclusive of grants and loans. Were grants and loans to be deducted, the core revenue purse - revenue generated from export and import taxes, averages \$400million annually (Republic of Liberia National Budget, 2013/14 - 2018/19). If the \$400million is compared to a national need of \$1.0 billion average national demand, which represents ministries and agencies initial budget requests to the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) prior to compilation of a single national budget to submit to the National Legislature for approval, the deficit is \$600million (i.e., \$1.0 billion - \$400 million).

Liberia National Budget Allocation to the Environment Protection Agency									
ITEM	Fiscal Year 2013/2014(US\$)	% of Fiscal Year 13/14	Fiscal Year 2014/15(US\$)	% of Fiscal Year 14/15	Fiscal Year 2015/2016 (US\$)	% of Fiscal Year 15/16	Fiscal Year 2016/17	% of Fiscal Year 16/17	Ave
Revenue	\$585,967,00 0.00	-	\$660,236,000.0 0	-	\$622,743,42 0.00	-	\$600,204,00 0.00	-	\$617m
EPA Total Allocation	\$1,204,592. 00	0.20 %	\$1,139,677.00	0.17 %	\$1,508,877.0 0	0.24%	\$2,322,682. 00	0.38%	0.24%
EPA Compensation *	\$944,800.00	78%*	\$994,800.00	87%*	\$1,174,572.0 0	78%*	\$1,185,268. 00	51%*	73.5%
EPA Goods/Service s*	\$209,792.00	17%*	\$144,877.00	13%*	\$150,305.00	10%*	\$177,507.00	8%*	12%
EPA Fixed Capital Consumption/ Transport Equipment	0	-	0	-	\$84,000.00	6%*	106,000.00	5%*	
Grant	0	-	0	-	\$100,000.00	7%*	853,907.00	37%*	
Off Budget Donor Funded Projects	-	-	-	-	\$200,000.00	13%*	0	-	
*Percentage of EPA Total Allocation as derived by this study from data in the national budget.									

Table 4: Liberia National Budget Allocation to the Environment Protection Agency

Source: Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), Republic of Liberia

It also appears that the lack of budgetary support for conservation generally, and REDD+ in particular, is linked to the lack of deeper understanding both amongst policy makers and communities on the long-term benefits that REDD+ could provide to protecting the environment, especially when benefits from REDD+ shall be accessed long into the future. Thus, policy makers and communities seem more focused on immediate short-term benefits. As a result, the environmental protection issue, specifically the REDD+ are not at the top of the national agenda. This seems to also speak to the issue of lack of understanding of local

conditions during the conception, and design stage of the REDD+ project. In this respect, the issue of knowledge generation without better understating of local thinking on the concept may be an issue with REDD+. This is the backdrop against which the following observations were made by the former Executive Director and CEO of the EPA, and the Deputy Executive Director of Conservation International (CI). For the EPA former Executive Director, he states:

I hope that by the time we can implement actionable works, people would begin to see multiple benefits that REDD+ brings to the country and the economic value that it adds to the economy. Because at this point, people see it as something abstract. Some people at policy level still don't see it. 'Aaaaah... everyday, you say we must not cut our trees, what are we getting from it? What are we going to lose if we cut it?' I like to switch the question around. What have we gained from cutting all of these trees? Watershed management. Still, right now in Liberia, we boast of abundance of water, but our watershed would continually remain vulnerable if we cleared the trees along the belts/the routes and overtime, some of the rivers will dry. And once the rivers dried, the soil loses nutritional content. And you are talking about land degradation right there. That would lead into, that is, we may not have desert but savanna areas. I like to look at what we gain rather than what we lose or what we are not getting. So, those are some of the challenges. At the high policy level, it is still a challenge. The information is there, but the understanding is still lacking (ER4. Appendix 1).

For his part, especially when it comes to residents of forest communities understanding the benefits REDD+ brings, the Deputy Executive Director of CI thinks:

Even with the national forestry law, there isn't much publicity on it. Since REDD+ is going to focus on the land owner, the local community, they need to understand the different aspects of it [of REDD+]. For now, they do not. They do not understand at which phase do they access the money from REDD+. It is only we that sit in Monrovia, the academia, researchers and politicians who know that until you can complete the three phases [readiness, demonstration and implementation phases], you cannot run a full fledge REDD+ project, and cannot access money. So, during regional consultations, every time the community people will tell us, "You talk too much, when will we see the money?" "You talk too much, when will we see the money?" It took us time to explain to them that, there is no difference between REDD+ and sustainable forest management. It is just about sustainable forest management but the jargon is different, so big and complex that it gives us difficulty explaining to them" (ER10, Appendix 1).

The experts' views on the lack of budgetary support from the government to environmental programmes aligns with the villagers' view that there has been no support from the FDA after the NGO turned over the alternative livelihood projects to raise pigs and cane rats despite numerous requests through the FDA Biodiversity Coordinator (Interviews, V4 and V5, 11/2/2020, Appendix 1). The abject poverty across the villages and absence of basic social services like schools/trade training centres, safe drinking water, better roads and bridges and health centres further confirms the attractiveness of logging to the forest communities, and the lack of priority to forest conservation by the government.

This section shows livelihoods for forest community, preference for commercial logging and lack of budgetary appropriation for environmental protection generally, and REDD+ in particular, are the main economic challenges to REDD+ in Liberia. Despite the progress made by Liberia towards the REDD+ 'Readiness' phase thus far, the field work found that it may be difficult for Liberia to complete the 'Readiness' phase if these issues are not addressed. I will return to this shortly in Section 5.30 when I discuss how these challenges, especially commercial logging is linked to the dominant global capitalist system. Firstly, however, I need to discuss the colonial nature of the Liberia economy because the preference for logging by Liberia is rooted in this legacy. In other words, I show how Liberia's contemporary economic challenges are rooted in the country's colonial past, and perpetuated by today's neo-colonial environment (Nkrumah, 1965; Mamdani, 1984). Therefore, any effective solution to addressing the economic challenges pose to the REDD+ in Liberia has to extend to the broader context of the global neoliberal capitalist economy that is fuelling the economic conditions countries like Liberia, in particular forest communities, are confronting.

5.30 Historicizing the economy of Liberia

The Liberia economy remains colonial in structure – a largely plantation economy that is dependent on the export of raw materials and import of consumer and capital goods from abroad (Kieh, 1992, p.12; Jackson, 2019, p. 272; Clower et al, 1966, pp. 30, 31). Further, the country is trapped in high public debt (commonly called 'legacy' debt) dating years back. In addition, unemployment remains high amid a shrinking national revenue base. These issues are discussed in the next sections.

The Liberia Colonial Economy - Plantation Economy

Liberia appears birthed in economic hardship and trapped in debt from independence. For example, Frank Chalk observed in 1967 that "the Liberian Government had teetered on the

verge of bankruptcy several times since the eighteen sixties, when Liberia's export trade in coffee and other tropical products had seriously declined" (Chalk, 1967, p.12).

Liberia still largely trades in few primary commodities today (USAID, 2015; Central Bank of Liberia, 2020). While the number of commodities may have marginally increased, the structure of the economy, from colonial times to now, has not changed. Before the arrival of the US based Firestone Natural Rubber Company in 1926, the first major foreign direct investment (FDI) in Liberia, the country traded in a handful of local products. Clower et al (1966, p. 25) describe the Liberian economy then as "little more than a collection of poor and isolated farming and trading communities situated along the Atlantic coastline". For instance, the colonists [all from coastal towns of Cape Montserado, Buchanan, Sinoe and Cape Palmas] in 1826 traded in two items only, wood and ivory which fetched \$30,000.00 that year. Similarly, the colonists made \$88,000.00 primarily from export of rice, palm oil, ivory, gold, shells and dye-wood to the USA in 1831 (Jackson, 2019). The founders of Liberia made trade with the USA and Europe central to their nation building to the extent that cloth, cattle and carving formed part of items traded from the interior to the coast (Guannu, 2010, p. 45). According to one of Liberia's leading economists and author of *Rich Land Poor Country: The Paradox of Poverty in Liberia*, Samuel P. Jackson, such was the pursuit of commerce by the colonists [Americo-Liberians founders of Liberia] that, George W. Brown, a chronicler of Liberia's Economic history, bemoaned what he saw as the "materialisation of the attractive prospects offered by commerce caused Liberians to lose sight of the fundamental economic need for mechanical and manufacturing industries in the country" (Brown, 1941, p. 133 cited by Jackson, 2019, pp. 142-143). This is still the case now. 90% of goods consumed locally are imported and traded by foreign merchants (Jackson, 2019, pp. 31-32). This situation further reinforces the fact that the Liberia economy is rooted in its colonial past.

Historically, Liberia's position within the global capitalist's system has been to supply raw materials to industries in the developed world and import consumer and capital goods. According to Clive Y. Thomas, the dominant capitalist centre countries, are not only economically dominating the peripheral capitalist societies like Liberia, but continue to "ensure those areas of commodity production needed to service the metropolitan power were "free" [quasi sovereignty] so that they could be organized to satisfy these needs" (Thomas, 1984, p. 29). Mamdani (1984, p. 8) shares similar view arguing that countries like Liberia are "satellite economies nurtured to act as conveyor belt for the imperialist network". While such position is unfortunate for any country to find itself, it is the reality of what Sankaran Krishna calls the "unequal global order we now find ourselves in", and which he thinks mainstream International Relations (IR) abstraction - the desire of the IR discipline to engage in theory-building rather

than in descriptive historical analysis— fails to take into account (Krishna, 2001, p. 401). I think the presence of the US based Firestone Natural Rubber Company in Liberia is a classic example of this situation.

The arrival of Firestone 1926 further cemented the colonial economy, except that this time, it was on a larger scale through a single commodity – rubber. This led to an explosion in private rubber farms by the settlers or freed slaves despite their aversion to plantations because of their historical experience with slavery in the USA (Jackson, 2019; Boley, 1983). In some instances, officials of government served as lawyers to Firestone (for examples two former presidents, Arthur Barclay and William V. S. Tubman), and provided transport services (at higher than market prices) to the company (Jackson, 2019). This effectively made these settlers local ‘agents of a foreign capital’ or ‘compradors’ (Mamdani, 1984, p.17; Nkrumah, 1970, pp. 11,12). As a result, the plantation economy today was birthed with rubber as the mainstay, both in terms of revenue to government, and employment outside government until 1951 when the first mining concession, Bethlehem Steel of the US started operations (Guannu, 2010, p.56).

The transition to a plantation economy by the settlers appears not to have been much of a struggle. Jackson contends that “coming mostly from a slave background in the United States, it would not be unreasonable that the settlers would seek to transplant the same model of economic development from their intimate association with the plantation economy in the country of their birth” (Jackson, 2019, p.176). The growth in rubber plantations gave rise to the dispossession of indigenes of their lands, forced recruitment of indigenes to supply the labour needed for Firestone and private farms owned by officials of government, and labour abuses (Jackson, 2019; Boley, 1983, pp.41- 43). For example, the Firestone 99 years concession agreement was for a 1.0 million acres of land and a commitment by the Government of Liberia to provide 300,000 labourers, according to Jackson, “even if it meant forcing indigenes to work for starvation wages the company offered” (Jackson, 2019, pp. 218-219; Boley, 1983). The Government of Liberia seems to have had no option as it was financially constrained and indebted to Firestone.

In terms of historical time lines, the colonial economy of Liberia could be divided into three periods as shown in Table 5 below. The defining feature of this economy, no matter the period, is the export of primary commodities to service developed economies. Also, particularly revealing for this study is, the decimation of rice export, the country’s staple food, after the arrival of Firestone. The arrival of Firestone resulted in the importation of the American parboiled rice, PS-480 to feed its large labour force of mostly indigenous Liberians uprooted

from their villages/farms (Mitman, 2021; McCoskey, 2011). A sample of the Firestone imported US Parboiled rice is shown in Figure 11.

The importation of the American parboiled rice has had two main consequences for the Liberian economy. Firstly, Liberia is now dependent on rice imports, subsidized by the Government of Liberia by around \$200million annually (CNFA, 2020). Secondly, the population see the locally produced rice, derogatorily referred to as ‘country rice’, as inferior to the parboiled rice or ‘Uncle Ben Rice’. While it is paradoxical that a country like Liberia with large fertile soil for rice production, and a small population of 4.5 million has to rely on rice importation to feed its population, this unfortunately further confirms the fact that the structure of the Liberian economy is to serve the external dominant global capitalist market (Sartre, 1964). This aligns with Clive Y. Thomas view that, the colonial economy’s structure was “what was produced domestically was exported while what was consumed domestically was imported” (Thomas, 1984, p. 13). This situation morphed into neo-colonialism (Nkrumah, 1965) which is being perpetuated by neoliberalism now (Johnston, 2004, p. 443).

Period	Commodity Export
1822-1925	Wood, Ivory, Rice, Palm Oil, Gold, Shell
1926- 1950	*Rubber
1951-Present	Rubber, Iron Ore, Timber, Gold, Diamond, Palm Oil

*The arrival of Firestone in 1926 killed off all other trades as settlers engaged in private rubber farms.

Table 5: Liberia Traded Commodities by Periods



Figure 11: Firestone Issued Rice to the Laborers of the Company

Note: While the Firestone issued rice is given to employees at subsidized price and is not to be sold, it can be found on the local market for \$50 per 100lbs bag as shown in this picture compared to \$35 for other imported white rice.

Considering the central role Firestone played in the colonisation of the Liberian economy, it is important to briefly discuss the genesis of Firestone in Liberia. This is particularly critical considering that rubber is a strategic national security commodity to the economy of the United States of America. In 1919, the US rubber industry had 447 individual firms, employed 160,000 workers and produced goods value \$1.1 billion (Chalk, 1965 p. 14 citing U.S. Department of Commerce Year Book, 1929, p.476). Thus, the understanding of Firestone's entry into Liberia should shed more light on how the structure of the Liberian economy is to serve the dominant global capitalist market.

Firestone- A Strategic National Interest to the US

Prior to the Firestone concession in Liberia, Great Britain dominated the global rubber market, including holding shares in the Monrovia Rubber Company 1894. The Monrovia Rubber Company changed to the Liberia Rubber Corporation in 1906 (Guannu, 2010). As of 1922, Britain controlled 80% of global rubber supply while the United States consumed 70% (Boley, 1983). Britain's monopoly, especially its Stevenson's Plan that aimed to reduce by 75% global rubber supply to boost price, was concerning to Mr. Harvey S. Firestone, a US national and owner of a tyre company in Akron, Ohio. Mr Firestone considered the Stevenson's Plan as "a threat to the industry's supply of rubber" (Chalk, 1967, p. 16). As a result, Mr. Firestone who was seen as the "maverick of the big four rubber companies" in the USA - the United States

Rubber Company, B. F. Goodrich Company, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company and Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, that together produced 55% of rubber products sold in the USA (Chalk, 1967, pp.14, 15), with the backing of the US Government, sought an alternative source of rubber supply to the British. This search led to the signing of the Firestone rubber concession agreement with Liberia in 1925. To cement the agreement and further secure its interest in Liberia, Firestone provided the Government of Liberia a \$5.0million loan through its subsidiary, the Finance Corporation of America (Boley, 1983; Chalk, 1967). The importance of the Firestone Agreement to the US economic interest generally, and private capitalists' interest in particular, appears best captured in Mr. Firestone's declaration to the 69th Congress of the US after the signing:

If America is to attain any degree of independence in its source of supply of rubber as well as other materials which are now in the hands of foreign monopoly, our government must give proper encouragement to capital and must assure the industries interested that it will lend its utmost assistance in protecting our investment. (*Hearings before the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, House of Representatives, 69th Congress, First Session, p. 254 cited by Boley, 1983, p.41*).

The Firestone Agreement was not only a private commercial initiative, but also a strategic move by the US, through private capital, to protect its economy, specifically the auto industry. The Agreement did not only cement the dual structure of the country's economy but has also inserted Liberia firmly into the dominant global capitalist economy. This situation has not changed since the arrival of Firestone to now (See also the Republic of Liberia 'Agenda for Transformation' (AfT), 2013, p. 58; 'Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)', 2018; USAID, 2015; p.10).

The country remains trapped in this 'dual economy' structure despite the recognition by successive governments that such a structure cannot support the country's long-term development goals (Republic of Liberia 'Aft', 2013; Republic of Liberia 'PAPD', 2018; Tolbert, 1971). For example, the late President William R. Tolbert, Jr. in his first address to the First Session of the Forty-Seventh Legislature in December 1971 stated "the reduction in growth rate is due primarily to the narrow-based structure of the economy which is dependent upon primary exports, all of which are subject to significant fluctuation of prices on the world market" (Tolbert, 1971, p.73). This statement was made against the backdrop of the decline in the country's GDP compared to previous years. Similarly, former President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's Agenda for Transformation asserts "a major challenge for Liberia is to avoid growing its gross domestic product (GDP) primarily through mineral exports from enclaves that do not offer improvement for everyday livelihood" (Republic of Liberia Agenda for Transformation, 2013,

p. 58). The current President, George Manneh Weah 'Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development' also contends that "Liberia has not found a successful pathway from high level of dependence on natural resource exports and foreign assistance for the large inflows of U.S. dollars it needs for food and fuel imports" (Republic of Liberia 'Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, 2018, p. 15). Notwithstanding these acknowledgments, the dual structure of the country's economy remains (Central Bank of Liberia, 2020). This situation is not new.

Robert W. Clower et al in their seminal work 1966, *Growth without development: An economic survey of Liberia* recognized the dual structure of the Liberia economy. Thus, they wrote:

"The dependency of Liberia on external trade, although markedly greater than for most other underdeveloped countries, is in keeping with a familiar pattern. *Foreign investment in underdeveloped areas is typically focused first on extractive and large-scale plantation industries producing for export markets*, and on wholesale distribution of imports (petroleum, motor vehicles, construction equipment, and so on). ... Investment in Liberia by foreigners has been concentrated mainly in rubber, iron ore, and timber – all produced for export. Domestic incomes generated by these investments – insofar as they are used to make current purchases – are spent largely on imported foods and manufactured goods" (Clower et al, 1966, pp. 29-30, emphasis added).

The revealing aspect of Clower et al's analysis of the Liberian economy for this study is that, the foreign investors decide the type of production mode and which underdeveloped areas [in Liberia] to focus. Further, it recognises revenue generated is largely spent on the importation of "manufactured goods". Sadly, this is the structure of the country's economy within the dominant global capitalist economy. For the foreign investors that exploit the resources, Liberia's place in the global supply chain is to provide raw materials (primary commodities like rubber, iron ore and timber) and to serve as a market for imported goods. This fundamentally colonial or neo-colonial structure of the economy of the country (Sartre, 1964, p. 43; Thomas, 1984, p.13) is the only mode of production that makes Liberia profitable to investors within the dominant global capitalist economy. Unfortunately, this is to the disadvantage of countries like Liberia as was already discussed. However, the successive governments in Liberia have failed to break out of this dual economy structure. As a result, the country remains stuck in this age-old cyclical economic model. Figure 12 depicts such economic model which structure puts the Liberian economy within the global capitalists' market. At this juncture, it would be in order to briefly discuss two contemporary periods during which this dual economy structure appears to have enjoyed a boom in the country.

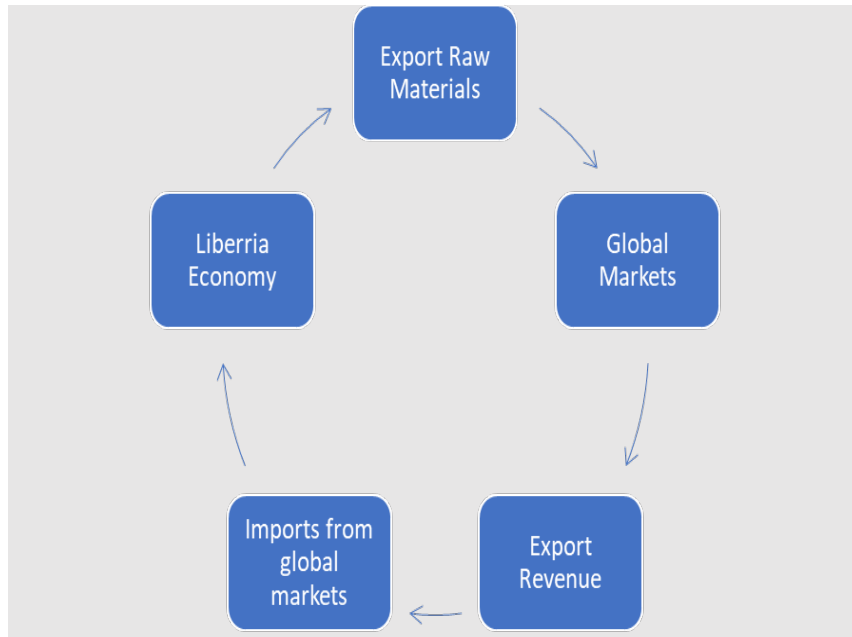


Figure 12: Liberia economy in the global capitalist system

Source: Author's Illustration

5.40 Period of Boom under the Dual Structure Economy

Except 1926 when the Firestone Rubber Company entered Liberia, the next periods that appear to characterize huge foreign direct investments for the country were 1955-1960 (hereafter Period 1), and 2006-2013 (hereafter Period 2). Period 1, which follows World War II witnessed a boom in iron ore production. Clower et al referred to this as the period of “ore rush” (Clower et al, 1966, p. 35). During this period, a significant portion of foreign investment went to iron ore. For example, 80% of the \$75million annual private foreign capital flowing into the country in early 1960s went to ore ventures (Clower et al, 1966). For Period 2, Liberia attracted up to 68 Foreign concessions cutting across mining, forestry, plantations, and hydro carbon. The Government of Liberia put the value of the attracted foreign investment at \$16.00billion eventhough only \$4.2billion was actually operationalized (Sirleaf, 2017, See Appendix 3). Interestingly, a review of these 68 concession agreements by an international audit firm, More Stephens, found only two to be compliant with the laws of the country (Hirsch, 2013). The criticism of the forest sector in the audit report is significant for this study. In this regard, Hirsch writes that, Chloe Fussell of the international NGO Global Witness expressed her alarm to the effect that “some of the most damning material in the report concerns logging permits that cover one quarter of the country and were given out illegally” (See also Rochow et al, 2006 ‘*The Liberia Forest concession review: lessons for the restoration of the rule of law in Africa*’ on the destruction of the forest.) Simply put, the concessions benefited the investors more than the country. While the lack of compliance is beyond the scope of this research, I

like to note that the country's precarious economic situation has often led the leaders to mortgage the resources of the country. The country is not in a position of strength to negotiate on how its resources are exploited. Similarly, this precarious economic situation could be one of the reasons the country continuously resorts to debt to meet its national needs. This aligns with the overall contention of this research that major decisions on how the country's natural resources, including timber are exploited, happen outside the country.

5.50 Liberia's Debt Crisis

As was indicated from the start of this chapter, Liberia has been plagued with debt since its founding. This situation has not changed since the Firestone loan of 1926. The Firestone loan reflected Liberia's dire economic condition and threat to Liberia's territory by colonial powers, France and Britain. Firestone took advantage of this precarious financial condition to secure the Agreement with the Government of Liberia in 1926 for its rubber plantation (Jackson, 2019, p. 218). While Liberia's dire financial condition was a factor in the Firestone loan, Johnston argued that "the Government's aim was to secure the nation's borders from French and British encroachment (Johnston, 1967, p. 12). For the purpose of this study however, I limit the discussion to Liberia's persistent dire financial condition.

Liberia's perennial precarious financial condition keeps leading the country to seek loans (foreign and domestic) to survive. The turn to what Kieh calls "extensive external borrowing" (Kieh, 1992, p. 52) is often the government's preferred choice to address budget deficits. This situation has turned the country into a nation of debt dating as far back as the 1800s. For example, a \$500,000 loan from banks in the United Kingdom was said to have been one of the causes for the deposing of President Edwin J. Roye in 1871 since he negotiated the loan (Guannu, 2010, p. 18; Jackson, 2019, pp. 187-188). Jackson suggests that Harvey Firestone was well aware of Liberia's insecure financial situation and therefore put forward the issue of a loan while negotiating his concession agreement. Jackson asserts:

Harvey Firestone was not a genius, but he came upon officials who were desperate to extricate their country from the financial bind that had characterized circumstances in the country for nearly two decades since the loan of 1906 (Jackson, 2019, p. 218).

The shaky financial condition of Liberia prior to the Firestone loan dates back to the foreign banker's loans of 1906 and 1912. The terms of the foreign bankers' loan placed the control of Liberia's customs revenue in foreign hands (Johnston, 1967, p.12). As of this research, Liberia's total debt stock stood at \$1.6billion (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2019). What is most striking about this high debt stock is that Liberia has just benefitted from

a \$4.6 billion debt cancellation in 2010 by the IMF and World Bank. Nonetheless, the country's relapsed into high debt should be seen in the context of the high cost to service the debt annually from a narrow revenue base against a high national need. For example, in 2013/14, the FDA allotted \$5million to service debt or claims from a \$8.8.0 million total budget allotment. Thus, the FDA was left with \$3.8. million for operations (See Appendix 8). From the foregoing, the country is left with no choice other than to keep borrowing bilaterally and multilaterally from neo-liberal institutions like the World Bank and IMF.

In summary, Liberia is a debt prone country. This debt cannot be divorced from the dual structure economy that continues to serve outside interests. The debt crisis is further compounded by the country's high unemployment.

5.60 Liberia High Unemployment

Liberia is confronted with very high unemployment levels, especially amongst the youths. The rate of unemployment is estimated at 35%, if the informal sector is included, and above 70%, if the informal sector is excluded (Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Service, 2017). Unfortunately, the dominant extractive economy has not been able to create enough jobs to absorb the huge unemployed work force across the country. The rural areas where more than 70% of the population resides, are the most affected in terms of joblessness. The field study found that the issue of jobs for the youths of forest communities was one of the major concerns expressed. It revealed the provision of jobs and basic services by logging companies has been the main attraction to commercial logging across forest communities. Therefore, high unemployment poses a major challenge to REDD+ in Liberia generally, and across forest communities in particular (Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; V3 and V4, 11/2/2020, Appendix 1).

By way of summation, the Liberian economy is dual in structure, dependent on the export of raw materials and the importation of manufactured goods. This dependent cyclical structure has been the case since colonization. This has made the country to be at the mercy of outside market forces within the dominant global capitalist economy. The country remains trapped in debt and high unemployment, in particular in rural areas where forest communities reside. Thus, the main challenges faced by REDD+ may not be within Liberia but outside within the global capitalist economy where the demand for the country's timbers rests (Thomas, 1984, p.30). This is what determines the extent to which forest communities and the government pursue commercial logging activities. (USAID, 2020; World Bank: Liberia Country Forest Note, 2018). The fundamental neoliberal prescription of supply and demand for timber in the market place controls the rate at which deforestation occurs in countries like Liberia.

5.70 Challenge to REDD+

The economic problems of Liberia seem to pose serious challenges to the implementation of REDD+. The issue of high unemployment, high national debt and recurrent budget and balance of payment deficits strain the government's ability to meet the huge national needs. The core national revenue is too small, an average of \$400million (MFDP National Budgets, 2013/14 – 2018/19) to meet basic needs of the population let alone meet the country's various development plans. As a result, the government resorts to the sale of the country's natural resources, including iron ore and timber, to raise revenue to fund the national budget. Similarly, the ordinary citizens also resort to every conceivable means, including the use of child labour to crush rocks with their bare hands and youths engaging in pit sawing of timbers for daily survival (USAID, 2015). However, whenever the threat to the country's forests is being discussed, it is these survival activities of the ordinary people that appear to be blamed the most.

The government and NGOs often single out subsistence shifting cultivation, pit sawing and charcoal production as key drivers of deforestation (Acworth, 2019; FDA/LTS Final Report, 2016; Republic of Liberia National REDD+ Strategy, 2016). In fact, this is the dominant narrative. For instance, the FDA/LTS Final Report on the Liberia National REDD+ Strategy estimates 20% of forest land that was lost between 2000 and 2014 was principally caused by pit sawing, charcoal production and shifting agriculture (Forestry Development Authority/LTS Final Report, 2016). Large commercial logging and plantations are either deliberately ignored or referred to in passing. The narrative is often positive for the plantations despite the fact that large swathes of the country's forest are being felled by them. For example, the Liberia Country Forest Note and National REDD+ Strategy estimate that 35% of the country's forest (i.e. Forest Management Contracts 24%; Palm Oil Concessions 5%; Community Forest Agreements 2% and Timber Sale Contracts 3% and Rubber 1%) is affected by logging and plantation agriculture as shown in Figure 13 below (Republic of Liberia/Forestry Development Authority National REDD+ Strategy 2016, p. 9; World Bank Liberia: Country Forest Note, 2018, p. 8). This compares to 45% for 'small-scale commercial and subsistence land uses' or 'Non-designated land' (forest land not formerly designated by the Government of Liberia for specific commercial or conservation purposes), that includes the "almost wholly informal (untaxed and unregulated) shifting agriculture, chainsaw milling (pit sawing), charcoal production, small-scale and artisanal mining, firewood gathering and the extraction of non-timber forest products" (Republic of Liberia National REDD+ Strategy 2016, pp. 9, 10).

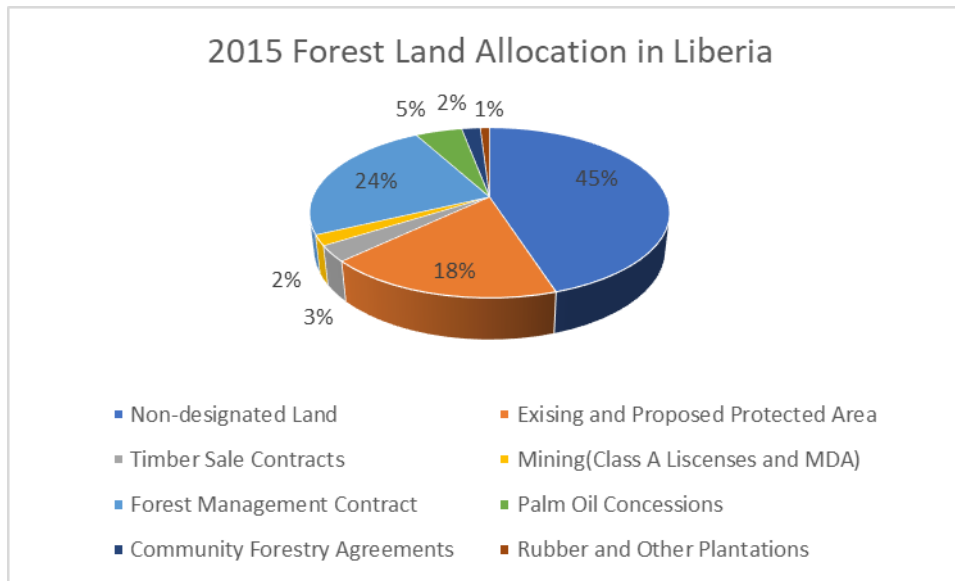


Figure 13: Allocation of Forest Land in Liberia

Source: Liberia Forest Note, 2018 citing Metria and Geoville 2016

On the surface, the 45% seems to indicate that the small-scale commercial and subsistence land uses or informal livelihood activities are the main drivers of deforestation in the country. However, a critical analysis points to commercial logging and plantation agriculture because the small-scale commercial and subsistence land uses include logging and plantation agriculture by private land owners despite the Government of Liberia not designating the forest. For example, through the Private Use Permit (PUP) scheme abuse in 2012, companies were able to circumvent the country's stringent National Forest Law 2006 to get new logging contracts that cover 40% of the country's forests and almost half of Liberia's best intact forests (Hirsch, 2013; Global Witness, 2012). The PUP scheme allows private landowners to enter into logging contracts with companies for timbers on their land. Further, based on anecdotal evidence, coupled with the lack of capacity of the Forestry Development Authority to police the forest, it is difficult to track the legal and illegal timber activities taken place. Thus, timber products from the small-scale commercial and subsistence land uses in parts of the country are often taken across the borders into neighbouring countries and not brought to Monrovia, the capital where some semblance of proper record keeping may exist (USAID, 2020). This suggests that the actual percentage of the forest being affected by commercial logging activities is larger than the 35% in Figure 13. The gap in data could be due to fragmentation and, opaque accounting by the FDA. Thus, the estimates for commercial logging and plantation agriculture may well be above the 35% in Figure 13 especially taken into account that instances like the PUP could stay be ongoing (Global Witness, 2012).

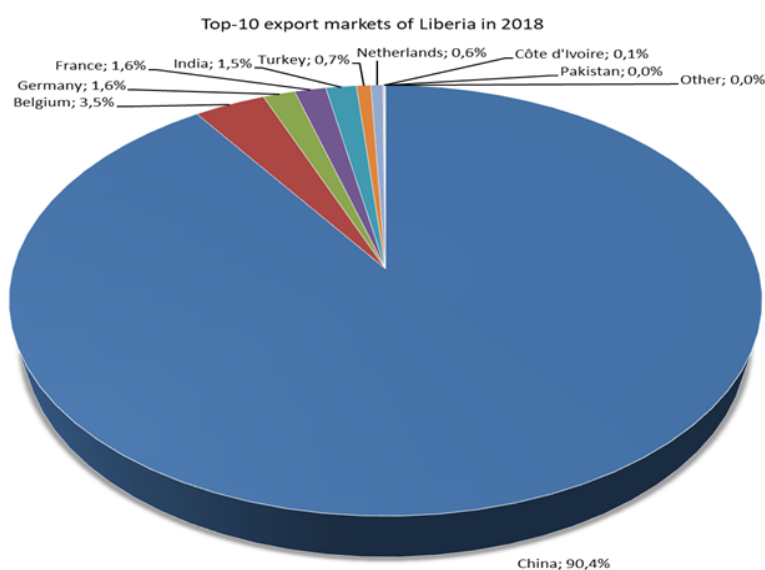
The ascription of the high rate of deforestation to charcoal production, chain saw, and shifting cultivation could therefore be due to the failure of the FDA to capture, probably intentionally, the numerous commercial logging activities (legal and illegal) taking place in in the non-designated land area. Nonetheless, this still does not negate the fact that commercial logging and plantation agriculture remains the major culprit for the high rate of deforestation in Liberia, especially taken into consideration the domestic urban plank/lumber market (See Figure 14), and charcoal production (USAID, 2015, pp. 15, 16).



Figure 14: Monrovia Iron Factory Plank or Saw Timber Market

In spite of this reality, whenever the issue of deforestation and degradation of the forest is being discussed relative to concessions, the focus is usually on job creation and revenue generation. This is the basis upon which concessions such as that between the Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL) palm oil plantation company and the villagers of Butaw Town, Sinoe County Liberia was entered (Front Page Africa, 2017). The degradation of the environment is downplayed or the concessionaire is portrayed as environmentally responsible, and is credited with incorporating sustainability in their operations. The Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade Licensing Scheme (FLEGT) of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between the EU and Liberia which aims to certify that timber products entering the EU were acquired legally and sustainably is another case in point (Article 3, Liberia – EU Voluntary Partnership Agreement, 2011 (EU FLEGT Facility, 2020). The VPA is portrayed as ensuring timbers entering the EU market from Liberia are legitimately sourced. However, this does dispute the fact that the trade in timber globally is a major contributor to deforestation activities in Liberia.

Figure 15 below shows the top ten export destinations for Liberia timbers in 2018. While 90% goes to China, 7.5% went to Europe. Therefore, it does not matter whether the timbers are sourced legally as the VPA. The core issue is the exploitation of the timbers, legally or illegally, is contributing to the destruction of the forest. In this regard, it seems the VPA cares less about the destruction than to guarantee the supply of choice timbers to the EU. Tragically, while harvesting the 'choice' timber for markets such as the EU, the roads built to enter the forest for the best timber species unwittingly open up the forest to other users that are more interested in the less exotic species of timbers (USAID, 2015). Further, and along the lines of ensuring constant supply of timbers to the EU market, it is interesting to note that France, an EU country, played a major role in the pillaging of Liberia's forest during the country's civil war years (1989-2003). France even went as far as opposing a UN Resolution that sought to impose timber sanction on Liberia not until France guarantees supply of timber to the French market (Johnston, 2004). From the foregoing, the main challenge to REDD+ appears to be the demand for the country's timber in the global market place.



Source: ITC (2020) Main markets, in terms of export value, for the product '44 Wood and articles of wood, wood charcoal' exported by Liberia in 2018

Figure 15: Top-10 Export Markets for Liberia Timber in 2018

Given the foregoing context, the general positive portrayal of concessions activities while largely blaming the forest communities for the deforestation is faulty. The country's drive to rebuild the civil war destroyed homes in urban centres like Monrovia, Buchanan and Robertspport using timbers from the forest, and the export of timbers to meet demand abroad in the global capitalist economy are the key drivers for the exploitation of the forest resources in Liberia. As is shown in Table 2.0 above, 1.745million ha of the country's forests is awarded

to commercial logging activities. Such is the commercialization of the forest, especially timber amid a dire national economic situation, including high national debt and unemployment, that forest communities find commercial logging attractive. The field study found that forest residents see commercial logging as providing immediate benefits like schools, roads, health clinics and employments compared to conservation (Interviews ER4, 14/08/2019; ER5, 15/08/2019; ER10, 20/08/2019; ER11, 22/08/2019; V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/2/2020, Appendix 1). Thus, the challenge to REDD+ is how to counter-offer to the forest communities what the logging companies are offering (Interview ER7, 9/08/2019; Appendix 1).

These commercial loggings, through community forestry, do not include the large concessions in palm and mining activities that seem to be the single largest source of land use in the country. The FDA/LTS Final Report on the development of Liberia National REDD+ Strategy estimates that 37% of forested land is contained in concession area, and that more than 150,000 ha is expected to be cleared in the next decade (FDA/LTS Final Report, 2016). These activities are amongst the primary sources of revenue to the national budget. The forest and plantation concessions are for export to meet international demand. The country being a highly indebted poor country that is desperate to provide basic social services to the population is dependent on revenue from the sale of the natural resources on the global market. This therefore makes the country powerless to stop deforestation.

Neoliberalism, the current phase of global capitalism (see Chapter 3 for the discussion of neoliberalism for this study), provides the liberal environment for trade in the country's timber. The REDD+, a neoliberal concept and construct itself, operates under the principles of neoliberalism. Private property right, free market and free trade, as the core principles upon which neoliberalism rests, provide investors free choices (Harvey, 2005; Dumenil and Levy, 2011; von Mises, 2002). These choices are largely driven by profits. This underpins the global timber trade. Therefore, the demand for timber products in the global market from where the government gets its revenue, determines the extent to which timber will continue to be harvested in countries like Liberia. Thus, to address the problem of deforestation in countries like Liberia, the demand-side should be the focus. To focus on forest communities' survival activities, one would be missing the main source of the problem. Countries like Liberia have no control over the global supply chain of forest products. Therefore, for carbon sequestration to work effectively as per instruments like the Paris Agreement, this may require addressing the drivers of deforestation in the dominant global capitalist economy. The desperate economic conditions of countries like Liberia make them both dependent and vulnerable to capitalists' exploitation of the forest. It is only through the free movement of capital, made

possible by neoliberal economic policies, that commercial logging companies and plantation agriculture companies can exploit Liberia's timbers for export. For example, it is reported that three Dutch banks provided finance to companies engaged in deforestation in Liberia (Daily Observer, 2021). Figure 16 depicts how the country's leading independent newspaper; the Daily Observer captured the story on its front page.



Figure 16: Liberia Daily Observer Newspaper Headlines on Foreign Banks link to Deforestation

Source: Daily Observer 2021

The field work's finding that forest communities in Liberia largely prefer commercial logging to conservation is additional proof that the market, local or international for forest products, determines the rate at which deforestation is taking place in Liberia. As such, the market constitutes one of the main challenges to REDD+ in Liberia.

5.80 Conclusion

The economic challenges facing Liberia are daunting. The unemployment rate is high, national debt is unsustainable, revenue base is narrowed and there is perennial budget and trade deficits. As a result, the Government of Liberia is constantly without funds, and finds it difficult to provide basic social services to the population. The government often turns to the sale of natural resources, including iron ore and timber to raise the needed revenue. This resource exploitation, despite the country's dire financial situation, is largely to meet the demand for timber in the dominant global capitalist economy. This is the main source of the environmental degradation and deforestation in countries like Liberia.

However, when blame is being apportioned for deforestation in Liberia, activities such as shifting cultivation, pit sawing and charcoal production are usually singled out as the main cause of the problem (Republic of Liberia National REDD+ Strategy, 2016). Notwithstanding this dominant narrative, the study found that the main source of Liberia's deforestation remains the demand for the country's timber products in urban centres domestically, and the external

global markets internationally. As a result, commercial logging activities, either at the community level or national level, is preferred to conservation. Further, the research reveals the structure of the global capitalist system makes countries like Liberia powerless to dictate how their natural resources are exploited. In some instances, the investor has what Dambisa Moyo argues is “price-setting powers” (Moyo, 2012, p.4). The country’s colonial economy, and neo-colonial environment now have further compounded the economic challenges.

The study therefore concludes that to address the issue of climate change, through the Paris Agreement generally, and REDD+ in particular, would require looking to the demand-side in the dominant global capitalist economy, and not primarily to survival activities of villagers in forest communities. At the moment, the REDD+ problem-solving approach as discussed in chapter 3, focuses on the livelihood activities of the forest communities, including shifting cultivation, charcoal production and pit sawing with no realistic alternative livelihood. This is a central dilemma to REDD+. This fundamental social challenge to REDD+ implementation in Liberia seems rooted in the structural poverty and harsh livelihood conditions endured by villagers in forest communities in Liberia, especially as it concerns land ownership and social relationship with the forest. The next chapter critically analyses the historical and contemporary production of such social conditions which are the result of the country’s colonial past, and the present dominant global neoliberal economic environment.

Chapter 6: Social and Structural Challenges to REDD+ in Liberia

6.0 Introduction

One of the things require within Liberia in order for Liberia to complete the 'readiness' phase of REDD+ is that forest communities change their current livelihood practices like shifting cultivation, slash and burn farming and charcoal production (Liberia National REDD+ Strategy, 2016)

This chapter examines the challenges to the implementation of REDD+ in Liberia arising from the social conditions of forest communities. The starting point is the accounts by residents of forest communities on their experiences to date with REDD+ implementation. This entails a concrete description and emphasis on the livelihoods and living conditions of the villagers in the rural forest areas visited for the research, and in particular, their reliance on the forest. Such conditions are described, in the discourse of development of which REDD+ is part, as conditions of poverty, or even extreme poverty. After a brief critical consideration of this ahistorical techno-discourse, the chapter moves to provide a broader account which historicises these conditions.

Before delving into these issues, it is important to state now that it is difficult to delineate between structural and social conditions in Liberia. The structural conditions, especially the political and economic, often give rise to the social conditions. This is specifically the case for poverty and bad roads in Liberia. These conditions have political, economic and social underpinnings and effects, and therefore could have also been discussed in the political and economic chapters. However, the choice to consider these issues in this chapter better contextualizes the livelihood challenges of the forest communities, especially the historical development of these conditions that are now structural to the Liberia state or, in the words of Sawyer, 'the Liberian social order' (Sawyer, 1992; p.2). In other words, this chapter lays bare the extremely challenging living conditions of the rural forest communities in Liberia. Therefore, it is better placed to serve as a reflection of the poverty and national neglect in the country generally and rural forest communities in particular.

6.10 Villagers' Accounts on REDD+ Implementation

In interviews with villagers in the five forest regions visited for this research, a consistent theme was the living conditions of residents which made complying with the expectations of REDD+ very difficult. For the villagers, living is a struggle daily, and the forest is their only source of livelihood. For example, a resident in one of the villages explained:

We have forest reserve. But people are hitting it from all sides. Sometimes we make noise to stop them. Yet, when you stopped the villagers and there is nothing for the people to do, the person will still go back to cutting the forest because there is nothing here for the people to live by (Interviews, V1, V2 and V2, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).

Another villager concurring with his colleague lamented further: “we are suffering. Some of us used to produce charcoal, but now we are not doing it” (Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1). A comment by a youth leader in one of the villages appears to better capture the plight and difficult living conditions of the villagers in general:

I am a citizen of Liberia born in this town. My father died 2005. When my father died, he left nine children. At that time, I was a child. I am the fifth born. Since the death of my father, we are unable to support ourselves due to financial constraints. I make a living by fishing in the Lake Piso and working hard in the bush. In addition, my mother that you see seated there, is the chairlady of this town. She is unable to support the nine of us. The challenge she has is that, her current partner has his own family and cannot support us in addition to his own. Some of us have been trying as children to fend for ourselves (Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).

The story of constant struggle is the same in every village visited during the field study. The residents kept expressing similar hardship as that explained by the youth leader above. For instance, the village chief in one of the villages lamented their living condition by talking about the abandoned health clinic, damaged school building and lack of public latrines and safe drinking water. He therefore requested help pleading:

Our clinic is at foundation level. It needs to be completed. If you want to see it, we can take you there. Our school building needs renovation. There is also no public toilet and no safe drinking water for the town (Interviews, V2; 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).

A villager buttressed the chief: “yes, I think our town chief has said it all. The school is damaged. Our children are suffering.” Another went further saying: “since REDD+ said we should not cut the forest; we should not cut the mangrove; then we need empowerment. At least, REDD+ should empower us to do communal farming like a small cassava farm” (Interviews, V2; 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).

The residents of another village bemoaned similar conditions. They said they survived on making cassava farms and fishing in the lake. They explained their plight thus: “we fish in the lake and we make cassava farm. You know, as you can see, the area is completely sandy. If

you want to make rice farm, that is only possible if you go into the swamp.” (Interviews, V3, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).

For the villages in the East Nimba Nature Reserve, the story of hardship remains the same.

Villagers expressed their plight through a parable that likened the forest to a breast-feeding mother that wants to wean her baby off her breast without providing a candy or sweet as substitute. Therefore, for them: “the FDA came and took them off the breast and abandoned them without a biscuit or sweet candy”. As a result, they are suffering (Interviews, V4 and V5, 11/02/2020; Appendix 1).

The poverty or hardship being experienced by villagers was also recognized by other interviewees. They think poverty is one of the major challenges to REDD+ in Liberia. For example, one of the respondents in the students focus group contends “what I have always argued on has to do with poverty. Poverty is one of the major threats to conservation” (Interview, SR5, 14/08/2019, Appendix 1). Another student shares similar views. He argues:

“As I told you earlier, the people hugely depend on the forest for sustainability. So, do you know the major thing that is happening in Liberia now? I can tell anybody without hesitation that every car within Liberia now carries charcoal. Yes. Charcoal production because it is poverty driven. That is the country we find ourselves now. Yes. So now, one of the major challenges that is serving as a blockage to conservation or REDD+ issue is poverty. When poverty is alleviated, you will see that more people will have areas set aside for conservation. ... So, the number one challenge is poverty” (Interview, SR2, 14/08/2019; Appendix 1).

Such are the conditions of extreme poverty in forest communities in Liberia that, the thought of alternative livelihoods other than reliance on the forest seems remote to forest communities.

6.20 The Lack of Alternative Livelihood

The majority of the interviewees were of the view that, if REDD+ is to complete the ‘Readiness’ Phase in Liberia it has to first address the issue of alternate livelihoods. This is an issue which every village visited was emphatic about. The number one recurring theme from one village to the other in the Lake Piso Multipurpose Nature Reserve area was the issue of alternative livelihood. The villagers kept asking how does the Government expect them to survive without an alternative livelihood? In one of the villages for example, the Clan Chief describes instructions to villagers by the FDA that they should stop cutting the forest without providing a tenable alternative livelihood as follows:

Since you told us we should not go into the bush to do all these things, and stopped us from doing other things, mainly the cutting of the mangrove wood that we used to cut and carried down to Robertsport [the administrative capital of Ground Cape Mount County], you are yet to provide other means to help us. Whenever we went to sell this wood, as soon as we arrived Robertsport, the fish sellers rush to us and buy it' [the mangrove wood which is said to be harder and good for charcoal]. But now, you have put stop to us. However, what we are suggesting from our end is that, it will be better you have a trade school here for our children to learn some skills to live by. Also, you should empower our women to do some business. In addition, you should organize communal farms for us as a group to make larger farms that we can survive on. (Interview, V1, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).

The words of the Clan Chief were echoed by the other villagers. A female elder asked a number of rhetorical questions to buttress the Clan Chief:

My question is, FDA is saying 'we shouldn't cut wood and we should not fish in the Lake, and should not cut any rubber stick in the bush'. Now, our clan chief is saying all these things to you people. Therefore, what we are trying to tell you people is exactly what our Clan Chief has said. We are really facing problems. We are facing hardship. Amid all this struggle to survive, the FDA is saying we should not go into the forest and lake to pit saw or fishing. How will we survive in our community? How will we send our children to school? How will we wear clothes? How will we eat? So, my question to you people is, "what will the FDA do for us to put stop to all these activities?" (Interview, V1, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).

For her part, one of the leaders of the women wondered if the FDA and the Government of Liberia are serious about the villagers abiding by law - the Protected Forest Area Regulations and Prohibitions (Section 9.10, Liberia Forest Reform Law, 2006). She stated villagers are prepared to be arrested since they will not abide by the law in the absence of an alternative livelihood from the Government. She said, as a widow with many children, the forest and lake are her only source of livelihood. She explained the challenge of fending for her children and herself:

I am an elder in this Clan. I want to begin by asking, the law the FDA is telling us, does the FDA actually want us to abide by this law? Sometimes they come and tell us, "You should not do this"; "You should not do that." We sit down and wait for them and abide by the law, but they do not come back. For me, I have lot of children. If I named them here [give the exact number], you people will run away because they are plenty. They are in abundance. I am also a widow. The father of my children is not alive. Who will give them food? I have to go into the bush [forest]. And sometimes, the children go into the bush. They are grown-ups now. Some are men and women. They are on their own. Who will feed them and who will do all those things for them? I struggled on my own and sent some of them to school. They went there and some of them stopped at the high school level and dropped out. I think three of them are present here. They are just here passing around because there is no money. Things are getting tougher now and the 'Pro-Poor people' [the current Weah-led Government] has made it worst. So, we are all sitting down now suffering. With all these children, the FDA says we should not

go into the bush again? I think we are just tied up now and there is nothing for us to do. We understand what the FDA says. However, it is difficult to follow. We cannot go by that law because how will we survive? “So, we are there [in the forest] now doing that work. Therefore, the FDA should try its best as Government agent to come to our aid. If not, all these laws FDA is putting in place, we will not go by it [Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).

Similarly, but in respect of laws not to catch fish breeders in the lake, the elder also lamented the hardships in the absence of alternative livelihood:

FDA says we should not kill the small, small fish [breeders] in the water, and those small fish are the ones that are easy to catch. You encircled them and cached them easily. You then sell some to buy some of your ‘pro-poor’ [cheap] things to bring and cook to eat. But you go now, they [the breeders] are hard to see. Sometimes ago, the FDA came and burnt all the fishing nets with tiny holes. We were told those nets would be replaced with nets with bigger holes. However, we are yet to see that happened. For now, the FDA is only bringing lot of hardship on us. They are not helping us. Let them do something. If FDA don’t do it now, I think we will go against the law. Maybe the Government itself will come and hold [arrest] us now [Interviews, V1, V2 and V3 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).

Picture 9 shows the nets and canoes villagers use to fish in the lake or transport sick patients to Robertsport which is on the opposite end of the lake to where the village is located.



Picture 9: Kpalan Villagers and Researcher posed for photo at the Lake Piso

The youth leader in one of the villages made it clear he survives from charcoal burning and gave an ultimatum, the end of the year 2019, to the government to address their livelihood concerns else he was going to resume burning his charcoal from the high forest:

As for me, I am one of the 'coal burners' [charcoal producer]. But for the past two years now, I cannot burn coal because of these people [Forestry Development Authority]. They said we should put stop to the burning of coal in the bush. But since that time, we cannot get nothing. And for me, the thing I want to tell you is, "if this year [2019] ends and FDA does not do something, then the forest that I am holding [preserving], I am going to bring it down and burn my coal. Because that is the stick [timber] they called 'iron coal' [hard wood coal]. And I am going to do it immediately because that is what I live by. You can't say I must stop it and then you can't do something for me. 'Where you tied a goat, that is where it eats' [a traditional adage meaning a person earns his/her livelihood where he/she is confined]. You can't say leave this thing while that is what our people have been living by. And then they born us and we are living by that also. But if the FDA says we must put stop to it, we agreed to do it. Nevertheless, the FDA needs to do something for us. What our leader has said is, the FDA should bring trade school so our people can live by it. The FDA should also empower our women. But if not, I am going to brush my forest and then burn coal (Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).

Picture 10 shows a picture of youths seated on charcoal being taking to Monrovia for sale. It was taken as the researcher returned from the field work in the Lake Piso Multipurpose Reserve Area. This picture suggests the threat by the youth leader in one of the villages that he would return to the forest to burn charcoal if the FDA does not address their livelihood concerns should not be taken lightly.



Picture 10: Charcoal transport to Monrovia, along the Monrovia – Bomi Highway that leads to the Lake Piso Multipurpose Reserve Area

Residents of within the Lake Piso Multipurpose Use Reserve Protected Area, and the East Nimba Nature Reserve Protect Area expressed similar views. For instance, a resident in one

of the villages asked the chief, “if REDD+ wants us to keep our forest, what will REDD+ do for us?”. The question arose out of the chief’s report to the residents on a REDD+ workshop the chief attended. The chief had told them that, “REDD+ says you should not cut the mangrove”. In response, they emphatically told the chief, “Yes, we will not cut the mangrove. However, what will REDD+ do for us now because it is the mangrove, we cut to earn our living” (Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1)? In one of the other villages, a resident puts their livelihood concerns thus:

For me, what I want the REDD+ to do for us is to empower us. Our children are going to school and it is the lake and the forest that we depend on to support them. Since the FDA says we should leave the forest and the lake, then let the FDA help us. If FDA can give us something to be doing to help ourselves and our children, it will be alright. But for us to just leave the forest and leave the lake with nothing to do, it will strain us to provide livelihood for our children. Therefore, we are begging the REDD+. Let them help the women to establish little business to help our children (Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).



Picture 11: Sign Board of the Lake Piso Multipurpose Use Reserve Protected Area along the Monrovia -Bomi Highway, Western Liberia

In villages in the East Nimba Nature Reserve, residents expressed the same concerns about livelihood. They think their livelihood concerns could be addressed if some form of education, including trade, is provided. In their view, this will help to reduce the pressure on the forest:

For us, one of the most important things here is education. We want scholarships for our kids to go and learn. Because if these children go and learn, they will be able to win bread for the family. They will be able to feed their parents and other people. As such, there will not be much pressure on the forest (Interviews, V4 and V5, 11/2/2020, Appendix 1).

For them, the forest is more than just timber products:

The forest used to be where we go and collect basic things like walnut and other non-timber forest products. These are things that we benefited from the forest but are no longer benefiting from because of the protected status of the forest. This should lead the FDA to ensure that there is some compensation since we have lost this source of livelihood. However, the FDA is not doing that (Interviews, V4 and V5, 11/2/2020, Appendix 1).

The livelihood issue in the towns visited seems the same in every forest community across the country. For example, a respondent from the students focus group narrated his experience during an internship program with Conservation International (CI) in 2018. This happened in the towns of Pynanman and Yarnpon in Sinoe County, and Yegba Town in Rivercess County:

We were able to get the views of the people relating to how they could be able to keep their mangrove. They gave us some information. And that is, they hugely depend on the mangrove for fishing; for energy to cut and sell as firewood or charcoal; and to do other things to sustain themselves. So, if we prevented them from entering the mangrove to use, how will they survive? (Interview, SR2, 14/08/2019, Appendix 1).

Experts have also recognized the importance of alternative livelihood to REDD+ achieving the 'Readiness' Phase in Liberia. For example, the National Coordinator for REDD+ referenced his grandmother's concerns to show how critical livelihood concerns are for forest communities. He said whenever he tries to convince her on the importance of preserving the forest, she would argue:

Saah, the forest is our supermarket. The forest is our clinic. The forest is our regular day market where we go to get our proteins. And now you are talking about conservation. You are talking about us preserving the forest? My question to you is, how can we live while we are protecting the forest to be ready for REDD+? (Interview, ER7, 19/08/2019, Appendix 1)

Like his grandmother, he explained, villagers always asked "how were they going to incorporate their livelihood activities into the REDD+ project?" The Senior Technical Officer for Land Use, Liberia Land Authority also highlighted how important the livelihood concern is for villagers. He thinks "for the villagers, there is a more pressing demand of just having food to eat, and just meeting the daily demands of taking care of their families and themselves regularly" (Interview, ER5, 15/08/2019, Appendix 1). The Environmental Specialist, World Bank Country Office Liberia, is of the view the term conservation or sustainable forest management would mean nothing to forests communities if it cannot address the livelihood concerns of the communities. Therefore, he argues that, while it is good to develop policy

documents such as REDD+ Strategy, Feedback and Grievance Redress Mechanism, SESA, National Forest Definition, National Forest Inventory, Safeguards Information System, Liberia Land Cover and Forest Mapping, Living Standard Measurement Study and Liberia Forest Atlas (Liberia's REDD+ Annual Progress Report-July 2018), it is also important for the documents to be translated into practical benefits for the communities. Thus, he argues:

So, all these policy documents have been developed. But then, how do these documents translate into practical benefits for the communities? Because, if you tell the man, 'Sustainably manage your forest', the man wants to eat; his children have to go to school; he needs basic services, basic infrastructure. So, that is where the REDD+ has been lagging (Interview, ER12, 8/11/2019, Appendix 1).

Therefore, he contends that sustainable forest management or conservation is about balance that ensures the pressing needs of forest communities are addressed. From his perspective, this is possible provided answers to some basic questions are sought:

How can community people benefit in terms of livelihood to sway them away from too much shifting cultivation? How do you address the issue of community signing forests contracts with third parties that benefit more while they benefit less? How do we model the entire forestry sector so that everybody benefits? Government gains some revenue; community people benefit from the basic social infrastructure; their livelihoods are taken care of and so forth. That is the balance that is still lacking (Interview, ER12, 8/11/2019, Appendix 1).

Finding answers to such questions may require what the Livelihood and Governance Coordinator of Fauna and Flora International (FFI) suggests, "the community should firstly be made to see the importance of REDD+". An importance which, for him, means understanding that "some of them [communities] refer to the forests as their supermarket. Therefore, the REDD+ needs to demonstrate tangible benefits in the lives of villagers daily to get them to relinquish ownership over the land, a land where all of their livelihood activities come from," (Interview, ER14, 10/2/2020, Appendix 1). This has not gone unnoticed by the government and donors.

6.30 The Recognition of the Importance of Alternative Livelihood

The importance of alternative livelihood for forest communities is captured in the Liberia Forest Reform Law, 2006. Section 9.10 (c) states "the Authority [FDA] shall, in collaboration with local communities, non-governmental organizations, and interested international organizations, undertake efforts to provide alternative livelihoods for communities adversely affected by the establishment or maintenance of Protected Forest Areas." The REDD+ Implementation Unit

and other NGOs have recognized how critical this issue is to villages and to the overall success of REDD+. Therefore, alternative livelihoods appears to be under serious consideration. For instance, the CEO, Community Development Initiative (CDI), a national NGO engaged in REDD+ awareness activities within the Lake Piso Multipurpose Use Reserve Protected Area states:

The challenges are numerous. But specifically, among all, we can say, to be practical, if you stopped somebody from cutting down the forest, you must have alternative measures. So, the REDD+ is thinking in that direction. Some kind of livelihood opportunities should be visible. And what they intend to do, and what strategy they intend to put in place, we still do not know the details. But we have said in our report, over and over that look, if you are asking someone to stop using the forest; if you want to say, this is the best way you can use the forest; 'you can eat some and leave some'; then we need to find a way to be able to provide some kind of assistance for these people that they will not continue to use the forest over and over. (Interview, ER11, 22/08/2019, Appendix 1).

The National Coordinator for REDD+ in Liberia corroborates the CEO of CDI on plans to provide alternative livelihood for forest communities. He explained plans are now underway to ask Norway, a major donor to the Liberia Forest Sector Project⁴ (see also chapter 2: Aim and Origin of REDD+) to release part of the funds for such alternative livelihood activities now instead of waiting for the 'Result-base' phase of REDD+. He says the pitch to Norway is to the effect that:

For us, as a country, what we are trying to do in order to begin implementing REDD+, in the actual context of REDD+, is we are going to start negotiating with Norway, once we come up with our initial baseline, to give us some funding that we can use to work with communities to be able to set up communities' cooperatives (Interview, ER7, 19/08/2019, Appendix 1).

This request is predicated on the fact that the initial \$37.5million funds for the Liberia Forest Sector Project is aimed at building the regulatory and institutional capacity for REDD+ in Liberia (The World Bank, 2020). In other words, the REDD+ Readiness Phase is more about building Liberia's institutional and technical capacity to accurately measure the carbon to be

⁴ The Liberia Forest Sector Project is a Norway \$37.50million funded project to preserve Liberia's Forest. The project aims to improve management of, and increase benefit-sharing in, targeted forest landscapes. The project first two components are: 1) to strengthen regulatory and institutional arrangements for the implementation of REDD through financing technical assistance (TA), consultants, and non-consultant services, goods, works, trainings and workshops, and operational costs needed to reform and harmonize existing legal regime and to strengthen institutional and professional capacities for improved management of forest landscapes; and 2) to strengthen capacity for management of targeted forest landscapes through financing of TA, works, goods, training and workshops, subprojects, and operational costs for land use planning, conservation, community forestry, sustainable agroforestry, and forest management to support local communities and their organizations within the targeted landscapes to improve the sustainable management and conservation of natural resources and improve the economic and social benefits derived from them (The World Bank, 2020).

sequestered from the preserved forest. Therefore, the issue of livelihood is not taken into account in the 'Readiness' Phase.

In recognition of the importance of alternative livelihood to forest communities, some INGOs have started taking steps now to address the issue. For example, Conservation International (CI), through the 'CI-GEF' Project *'Improve sustainability of mangrove forests and coastal mangrove areas in Liberia through protection, planning and livelihood creation – building blocks towards Liberia's marine and coastal protected areas'* (CI GEF Project 2016), conducted a two week survey in ten communities along the coastal belt of Sinoe and Rivercess counties, South Eastern Liberia to understand the communities' livelihood activities and explore alternatives (UNDP, 2019). According to one of the students focus group respondents who took part in this project, the survey team concluded that alternative livelihood programs were needed to reduce pressure on the forest. In his own words, "it was unanimously concluded that Conservation International directs some livelihood programs to the communities for the people to have alternative means to relieve tension on the mangrove" (Interview, SR2, 14/08/2019, Appendix 1). Other NGOs have also provided pig farming and cane rat breeding to Zor Tapa Town in support of alternative livelihoods. However, these programmes are not performing as envisaged for lack of funding. As a result, the villagers said they are disappointed with the management of the project. They explained:

Once they have asked us to leave the forest, we are looking up to them. Eventhough, they have not fulfilled their promises, we are still looking up to them. For example, when we were first asked to leave the forest, they brought pig raising. And then, they use to support us by bringing food for the pigs. But certain time came, maybe because of lack of funding, they handed over the responsibility of feeding the pigs to us. Unfortunately, the pigs are not used to the kinds of basic food we are giving them. Therefore, the pigs are dying. So, it is making it difficult for the alternative livelihood of having pigs in return for other bush meat that is becoming scarce" (Interview, V4, 11/2/2020, Appendix 1).

Another case in point is that of cane rat or what we called ground hog. The cane rat was brought here, it was being raised. They recruited people from the town to take care of the cane rat, at least through compensation. But certain time came, they stopped the compensation. Those that were taking care of the cane rat were not being compensated. So, they have lost the trust and the energy to continue feeding the cane rat. And besides, there is no food for the cane rat. So, the project is not effective as it should be (Interview, V4, 11/2/2020, Appendix 1).

The villagers' concern about lack of support for alternative livelihood shows how challenging this issue is:

The NGOs that brought these things have all left. So, there is no one around to be approaching on the livelihood concern for the town. However, whenever the Biodiversity Coordinator of the Protected Area visits, we tell him what is unfolding. But when he leaves, there is no result. Therefore, it almost looks like nothing is happening. (Interview, V4, 11/2/2020, Appendix 1).

Before concluding, with specific reference to the issue of alternative livelihood, it is important to note that Fauna and Flora International, the organization piloting the only REDD+ project in Liberia, the proposed Wonegizi Protected Area, Lofa County, Northern Liberia, as of this research, is taking this issue seriously, especially when 70% of Liberia forest communities household depend on forest products for consumption and/or for sale (Nthara and Srivastava, 2020). Fauna and Flora International is engaged in '*farmer field school*' to teach new farming methods to the villagers within the proposed area. Villagers are taught 'conservation' agriculture where they do not do burning but much of merging/meshing to protect the soil quality. Also, the FFI is undertaking a '*participatory market system development*' (PMSD) that involves working with actors within a particular value chain to identify huge income potential for a particular product. As a result, FFI has identified honey production as one of such products. Thus, honey will be produced through bee farming/beekeeping and not the traditional method of harvesting honey where the tree is felled and fire set under the honey comb. Something that could put the forest at risk of starting a bush fire. Lastly, the FFI is teaching villagers new harvesting methods for bush pepper. As such, villagers are expected not to cut the rope [surface root] on which the pepper grows, but instead, cultivate the bush pepper on a piece of land to reduce the pressure on the forest (Interview, ER14, 10/2/2020, Appendix 1). Perhaps, this might work but other similar ventures have been started and then stalled once the NGO ran out of funds or simply went away like the cane rat case above (Interview, V4, 11/2/2020, Appendix 1).

The critical challenge of livelihood across the population in general and forest communities in particular, such that alternative livelihood is difficult to pursue, is primarily linked to Liberia structural poverty that is rooted in the country history. Before exploring this issue, I firstly discuss briefly the ahistorical and technocratic character of the international discourse on 'poverty'.

6.40 The International Discourse on Poverty

Poverty is generally defined as 'the lack of adequate income' (Sachs, 2015, p.30). The income is measured in dollar terms using the World Bank's 'dollar a day' head count (Baker, 2016, p.351). This definition is commonly employed for purposes of international comparisons of

income poverty. As of 2020, the dollar value of the international poverty line was \$1.90 a day (The World Bank, 2020). A person is considered extremely poor if their income or livelihood a day is below this 'dollar a day' value. In other words, someone is considered poor if that person's daily income cannot provide a proper diet or home. The UN similarly measures poverty in terms of income poverty. In this regard, the UN looks at the person's ability to meet a minimum number of calories or to have a minimum level of income to satisfy his/her needs. The minimum level is defined by a poverty line below which a person is considered poor if the income or calories fall below this line (The UN 2020). However, international organizations, including the World Bank and UN, are employing an expanded definition as promoted by Amartya Sen (Baker, 2016). From this perspective:

"Poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of participation in decision-making" (The United Nations Ending Poverty, 2020).

The conditions saw by the researcher during the field visit, and that described by the villagers in the forest communities fits the UN definition of poverty and the expanded definition offered above. This definition seems to be generally accepted across policy areas and academics, and has been used in previous REDD+ studies (Peskett et al, 2008; Westholm and Kokko, 2011; Djahini-Afawoubo and Couchoro, 2020; REDD Net, 2010).

A similar pattern is observable in scholarly accounts. While these acknowledge, usually in passing, the role of the global context, they often see the problem as largely a result of internal factors, such as bad governance, weak institutions and corruption. In other words, an Africanist lens of analysis is employed (See chapter 4 above). Noticeably, there is no reference to the colonial and post-colonial environments (Hegre, Ostby and Raleigh, 2009; Backiny-Yetna et al, 2012). Surprisingly, they wrongly conclude, and as a large majority of educated Liberians believe, that Liberia was never colonized (The World Bank, 1975). This study departs from this approach and adopts a critical lens. It examines the role played by the colonial experiment in creating Liberia's structural poverty today, and how the post-colonial or neo-colonial environment keeps reinforcing these conditions. This is vitally important because development interventions often have instrumental outcomes or effects that are highly political, or in the words of Ferguson, "turns out to be an exercise of power" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 255), despite the 'techno-politics' (Mitchell, 2002) or 'anti-politics machine' of the global development apparatus to poverty. Thus, the lack of consensus on the causes of poverty, and

political parties viewing the causes of poverty differently, depending on political ideology, are understandable.

There are two broad schools of thought generally on the cause of poverty. They are the behavioural and Structural school of thoughts. Those that subscribe to the behavioural view argued poverty is a result of social and behavioural deficiencies in individuals which make them less viable economically within society generally (Jordan, 2004). This behavioural view is in turn reinforced by the culture poverty view or culture poverty thesis, which contends the individual creates, sustains and transmits to future generations a culture that reinforces the various social and behavioural deficiencies, especially where the poverty has been persistent in certain areas for a long time (Jordan, 2004; Leuven, 2018). The structural view on the other hand, argues that poverty generally is a result of structural factors embedded in the economy and/or several interrelated institutional environments, including race, class, gender, ethnicity, rural location, that favour certain groups over others (Jordan, 2004). The structures include the political, economic and social facet of the society with a specific values and ideologies (Leuven, 2018).

For this study, I adopt the structural view for two reasons. Firstly, it allows me to go beyond the technical definition of poverty to explore the historical, political, economic and socio-economic causes, including those external to Liberia. Secondly, poverty in Liberia is more a result of the political, economic and social structures that have privileged the political elites over ordinary people, especially given that this privileged position is a result of external influences and backings. This is discussed in detailed in Chapter Four. The privileging of the urban centres over the interior/hinterland (The World Bank, 1975) is rooted in the country's colonial past. In sum, the structural view is critical, and allows the probing of the past and the broader context of structural poverty in Liberia's forest communities. It does not adopt the behavioural problem-solving approach that seeks to absolve historical factors, in particular, the colonial role in the structural poverty in forest communities. It takes the broader global context as a point of reference rather than largely blaming factors internal to the country. This is the lens that helps one to appreciate why poverty is extreme in rural Liberia.

6.50 Extreme Poverty in Rural Liberia

While enroute to the villages in the East Nimba Nature Reserve, this researcher noticed citizens crushing rocks with bare hands in the Mount Barclay Community, just three miles from Monrovia, the Capital of Liberia. Pictures 12 contain these activities. This underscores the excruciating struggles rural residents go through to earn their livelihood daily. Thus, it was no

surprise when the villagers lamented their plight as discussed in Sections 6.10 and 6.20 above.



Pictures 12: Citizens Crushing Rocks with bare hands to Survive

The field study revealed the extreme level of poverty confronting the forest communities. In the villages visited, families are barely surviving. They find it hard to feed, clothe or send their kids to school, provided there is a school in the village or in a nearby village. Where schools exist, there is no teaching materials like chalks and text books; pupils sit on mud floors and teachers go unpaid for months. Some children in rag clothes roamed the villages barefooted. Health centres are virtually non-existent, and if one exists, it lacks the most basic of medical supplies for primary health care. The dire living conditions could be heard in the voices of the villagers during focus groups discussions. They faced daily struggles to eke out a living. The conditions in the villages are not a surprise considering that the rural areas have long borne the brunt of poverty in the country (Republic of Liberia, Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2008). The dire living conditions could be seen amongst kids of school going ages who should be in school at that time of the day, but were labouring on different jobs to assist the parents to sustain the family. For example, kids in Latia Village, Lake Piso Multipurpose Use Nature Reserve were seen helping out to process grand cassava before patching it to produce gari to feed the family, and for sale to earn some little income as in shown in Pictures 13 and 14 below.



Picture 13: Children in Latia Village helping their parents to grind cassava to produce gari for sustenance



Picture 14: Children in Latia Village assisting to patch the gari for sustenance

6.60 Liberia's Structural Poverty

The definition of poverty in Section 6.40 above originates from institutions of the global development apparatus and is framed technically to be politically neutral or apolitical. This technical framing of the definition of poverty has led commentators like Timothy Mitchell to argue that such definitions view countries as objects of development that are just that - an object, out there, not part of the study but external to it. Thus, for him, the discourse of international development “constitutes itself in this way as an expertise and intelligence that

stands completely apart from the country and the people it describes” (Mitchell, 2002, p. 210). Ferguson also shares a similar view. He argues that “by uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to sufferings of powerless and oppressed people, the hegemonic problematic of “development” is the principal means through which the question of poverty is de-politicized” (Ferguson, 1994, p. 256). In proceeding this way, Mitchell thinks such knowledge ignores the importance of a larger structure of empire in making possible the domestic arrangements (Mitchell, 2002, p.7). The discussion of poverty in Liberia is often considered in apolitical terms. The thorny political questions, in particular, how such conditions are being created and sustained in the country, are usually avoided. Therefore, the discussion of poverty in Liberia is largely ahistorical as it aims to avoid political issues. The furthest documents referencing political issues go is to blame bad governance by the political elites since founding of the Republic 1847 (The Republic of Liberia ‘Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development’, 2018; ‘Agenda for Transformation and Development’, 2013; IMF ‘Liberia: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2008’; the World Bank ‘Liberia Growth with Development’, 1975; Final Report of the TRC, 2008; the World Bank ‘From Growth to Development: Priorities for Sustainably Reducing Poverty and Achieving Middle-Income Status by 2030: Systematic Country Diagnostic’, 2018). These policy papers that are often financed by donor institutions continue to ignore the broader external context in creating these conditions (Mitchell, 2002).

In contrast to the apolitical definition, I employ the structural definition which gives me the opportunity to historize the country’s poverty.

Although Liberia is a resource rich country (Jackson, 2019), the general population has historically and contemporarily not benefitted equitably from the resources. The ordinary citizens, especially in the rural areas and urban slums, are still largely left out of dividends accruing from the natural resources of the country (Republic of Liberia Systemic Country Diagnostic, 2018; Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2008; The World Bank, 1975). The rural areas, in particular, disproportionately lack basic social services like schools, clinics and roads, and live mainly on subsistence farming. This marginalization of the rural population from sharing in the benefits of the country’s resources is structural, and a by-product of the country’s colonial past.

Structurally, the first colonial legacy is the privileging of the settlers over the indigenous inhabitants of the country by the Independence Constitution of 1847. Rights and privileges in the constitution were assigned to the settlers or freed slaves from the US only. In this respect, Article 1, paragraph two of the 1847 Constitution starts with the phrase, “therefore, we the

people of the Commonwealth of Liberia” (Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, 1847). The Commonwealth of Liberia comprised the Settlers’ coastal settlements of Virginia-Caldwell (on Cape Mesurado in present day Monrovia), Sinoe and Bassa. Later in 1857, the Maryland colony joined the other three settlements (Boley, 1983, pp. 17-21). The indigenous people in the hinterland or interior of Liberia were not taken into consideration. As a result, the marginalization of the rural areas from the founding of the state was constitutionally institutionalised. Even though the settlers declared independence from the American Colonisation Society, they inherited and maintained the policies and institutions used by the ACS to govern the Commonwealth (Cement, 2013). The Final Report of the 2008 Truth and Reconciliation Commission captured such state of affairs thus:

Once the black settlers declared independence from the ACS in 1847, and assumed control over the settlement now referred to as Liberia, they continued the ACS’s problematic policies, particularly with respect to the annexation of native lands. (Republic of Liberia Final Report of the TRC, 2008, p. 67).

The Settlers, in addition to maintaining the ACS colonial governing institutions and policies, and replicating the US constitution (Boley, 1983), had a pre-conceived mindset about the indigenous inhabitants they met in Liberia. The indigenes were seen as heathens along a barbarous coast like the rest of Africa. Thus, the mission of the ACS, as continued by ‘settlers-colonists’, was “to civilize the indigenous inhabitants into Western ways, especially the Christian faith” (Boley, 1983, p. 25). The Final Report of the TRC also referenced this stating:

The new settlement was anti-slavery, pro-trade, predominantly Christian and highly centralized; whereas, most coastal native groups were pro-slavery, commercial tradesman, non-Christian and lived under decentralized authority structures (Republic of Liberia Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2008, p. 66).

Therefore, rural Liberia where the indigenes live was largely viewed as occupied by savages, and marginalized politically, economically and socially. The hinterland was only good as a source for cheap labour for settlers’ homes, private rubber farms and rubber plantations like Firestone. In this respect, John Gunther observed in 1955 that “almost everybody [the settler aristocrats] has a patch of land” (Gunther, 1955, p. 860). As a result, the primary value of the hinterland was to supply the needed natural resources to support a national budget controlled by the capital, Monrovia.

This historical reality has endured to the present, constituting what Sawyer calls, “the development of the Liberian social order” (Sawyer, 1992, p. 8) that has largely institutionalized

poverty. It is this historically structured social order which denies the rural forest communities visited for this research – Kpalan, Latia, Falie, Zortarpa and Geipa - health centres, schools, feeder roads and participation in decision-making that affects their lives (Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/2/2020; Appendix 1). This is a poverty that Sawyer argues cannot be addressed in a social order nested in “the rigid structures of a unitary, hierarchical constitutional order” (Sawyer, 1992, p.4). This social order continues to deny rural forest communities basic social services, including public toilets and pipe borne drinking water. The prevailing conditions are so dire that Moran observes, “in rural Liberia, a locked outdoor house, a latrine sometimes perched above a water source, constructed (if it was a truly “modern” development project) out of cement blocks, was a source of pride and a hopeful promise of more development to come” (Moran, 2006, p.126). Moran noted that such latrines, which were mainly for demonstration of development, had stout doors securely locked with large padlocks and were for the use of the chief and important visiting dignitaries only. The majority of the villagers, Moran observed, had to be content to use the bush to relieve themselves. Sadly, for the villagers, Moran asserts, “to have such an amenity available for visiting dignitaries was a symbol of the integration of the village into the Liberian state, a link to the promise of the national development for all” (Moran, p.126). Unfortunately, however, these forest communities remain trapped in extreme poverty in the midst of plenty natural resources, including timber, diamond and gold in a country whose founding social order has largely shut them out of any meaningful development.

Further, and considering that the settlers’ creation of the ‘Liberian social order’ is based on western modernization, in particular the introduction of capitalism in rural forest communities, it amounted to what Arturo Escobar referred to as “massive poverty in the modern sense” (Escobar, 1995, p.22). He contends that such levels of poverty appeared “only when the spread of the market economy broke down community ties and deprived millions of people from access to land, water, and other resources” (Escobar, 1995, p. 22). This has been the case with rural forest communities in Liberia. Rural villages are deprived of the most basic of social services, including health clinics; safe drinking water; schools; motorable feeder roads and public toilets (Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/02/2020; Appendix 1). Liberia’s forest communities have continued to endure this historical deprivation which, to use the words of Arturo Escobar, is “the modernization of poverty that not only signified the rupture of vernacular relations but also the setting in of new mechanisms of control” (Escobar, 1995, p.22). Such control is best exemplified through the concentration of power in the executive branch of the state in the ‘Liberian social order’ (Sawyer, 1992).

The second structural legacy of the country's past is the concentration of power in the executive. As was discussed in Chapter 4, *'Political Challenges to REDD+ in Liberia'*, power is concentrated at the centre, specifically the Presidency. Many commentators have recognised the effects of this situation. For example, the Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) in identifying reasons for the country's 14 years civil war states "political power was concentrated in Monrovia and primarily at the level of the Presidency" (Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2008, p. 16). This political structure creates an all-powerful presidency that decides virtually everything from resource distribution to political appointments. Liberia's former President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf described it as "our history of Monrovia dominated government", which she thought the national consultation that led to the crafting the Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy departed from (Liberia PRS, 2008, P. 16). The Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy may have succinctly summed up the country's structural poverty when trying to identify root causes of the country's civil war:

The origins of the conflict can be traced to two broad factors. First, significant portions of society were systematically excluded and marginalized from institutions of political governance and access to key economic assets. The founding constitution was designed for the needs of the settler population, with less consideration and involvement of the indigenous people. In the early days, land and property rights of the majority of Liberians were severely limited. Later, marginalization was perpetuated by the urban-based policies of successive administrations (Republic of Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2008, p.14).

The Country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report made similar observation:

Americo-Liberian domination over the Liberian political and economic spheres in the post ACS era disenfranchised native Liberians that sought to participate in government and the private sector. Settler hegemony, based primarily out of fear that if they provided equal opportunity to indigenous Liberians that they would be ousted from power, deeply poisoned relations between native and settler Liberians. Indeed, describing native Liberians as 'citizens' was generous, as the Republic of Liberia did not consider them citizens but rather subject until the Barclay government eradicated legal discrimination in 1904, 57 years later (Republic of Liberia Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2008, p. 69).

There have been numerous efforts to reform the governance structure in the country. For example, the 2018 Local Government Act sought to decentralize government. Nonetheless, the Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy's observation remains accurate then and now. The various reform initiatives have largely not been successful at ending the power control of the presidency over the rural areas. All local government officials in the Act, including county superintendents, district commissioners, clan, paramount and town chiefs are answerable to

the President through the Minister of Internal Affairs, and “hold their offices at the pleasure of the President” (Articles 54, 55 and 56, Constitution of Liberia, 1986; The Local Government Act 2018). The reform initiatives could best be likened to what Mahmood Mamdani called “a hierarchy of chief” or “decentralized despotism” (Mamdani, 1996, p. 52) as bequeathed to the settlers or political elites by the ACS at independence in 1847. In this context, policies aimed at decentralizing power or unifying the population such as the Unification Policy of former President Tubman (Boley, 1983, pp. 64, 65) could be seen as efforts by the executive branch of government to ensure total control over the rural areas. The issue of political control is discussed in detailed in Chapter Four. Such control has consistently resulted in denying the villagers the needed basic services since they had no say in the exploitation of their forests and how funds generated were distributed.

Structural poverty in Liberia is more pronounced in the economic sector of the country. The plantation economic model practiced by Liberia (see Chapter Five on Economic Challenges to REDD+ in Liberia), basically extracts resources, specifically timbers in this case, from the rural areas without benefits to the communities. This has led to the abject poverty seen in the villages during the field study. Unfortunately, the forest community preference for commercial logging has not been able to address this structural poverty. The structure of the economy channels all revenue to a consolidated account at the Central Bank of Liberia (Republic of Liberia Consolidated Tax Amendments Act of 2011). Thereafter, it is distributed through a national budgetary process in which communities play no part. Even though the national budget requires legislative consideration and approval, the elected representatives have less leverage over the budget unless they are in good standing with the Executive Branch of Government, specifically the Presidency that formulates the draft national budget.

Therefore, while in theory the constitution gives the three branches of government equal power (Article 3, 1986 Constitution), in practice, the Executive is more powerful. Further, even were the communities to be allocated a portion of the revenue, as in the County Development Fund (CDF) in the Budget, and Social Development Fund (SDF) through payments from companies doing business in the communities (FCI, XX), the fund is never disbursed to the communities or if disbursed, it is hijacked by local officials or elected representatives charged with managing the Fund. An example of this is the \$1.8 million SDF for 12 projects in Bong County of which only one is completed, and 12 abandoned for lack of funds despite the disbursement of the needed funds (Lomax, 2021). Similarly, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning has failed to remit \$3.0million SDF to Grand Bassa County in 2019 (Front Page Africa, 2019), and the General Auditing Commission (GAC) of Liberia reported \$800,000.00 unaccounted for in the Nimba County Development Fund (Karmo, 2021). It is important to note that the East

Nimba Nature Reserve is based in Nimba, and straddles the concession area of Arcelor Mittal Liberia Mining Company, a huge contributor to the SDF. In short, the all-powerful executive, brought over from the colonial past of the country, has remained ever present in the affairs of the country and is one of the main causes of the extreme poverty in forest communities. It marginalizes forest communities through the lack of good health centres, safe drinking water; public toilets; schools and nutrition. Further, the dire social neglect becomes starker due to the lack of access to provincial towns and markets because of deplorable roads. The bad state of the roads reflects largely the total disregard of the dire social conditions in rural forest communities by the central government which is sustained from sale of the forest resources through multinational companies (Interviews, V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/02/2020; Appendix 1). Pictures 15 - 20 and – 21 - 27 show examples of bad roads endured by forest communities in Liberia.



Picture 15: Abandoned SDF project, Baryata Bridge Project, Gbarlorkpala, Kokoyah District, Bong County, Liberia

Source/photo credit: Selma Lomax, Front Page Africa, 2021



Picture 16: *The Researcher on the Ganta – Sanniquellie-Yekepa, the East Nimba Nature Reserve, Northern Liberia in February 2020).*



Picture 17: *Collapsed Section of the Ganta -Sanniquellie-Yekepa Road (little dry in February 2020)*



Picture 18: Road grading work on section of the Ganta-Sanniquellie - Yekepa Road in February 2020



Picture 19: Ganta - Sanniquellie -Yekepa (East Nimba Nature Reserve) during the rainy season.
Photo credit: Ishmael F. Menkor -October 9, 2019.



Picture 20: Bad Road to Kpalan Village, Lake Piso Multipurpose Use Reserve Area (Unmotorable during raining season)

It would be difficult to better appreciate rural forest communities' dire social conditions without discussing the neglect of the roads. The bad roads symbolize the general exclusion of the forest communities from benefitting from the national resources and in particular reinforces the social isolation of the rural forest communities. Therefore, it is important to show additional pictures of bad roads in rural Liberia beyond the areas visited. This should help one to appreciate the magnitude of the hardship in the country, especially the extreme poverty rural forest communities are enduring. These bad roads and bridges explain how isolated the forest communities are from all forms of basic services including clinics and schools. In addition, the bad roads reinforced the historical neglect of the rural population since the founding of the country. During the raining season in Liberia, April to November, the rural communities are virtually cut off from urban market centres, and struggle to get the most basic of things to survive. Pictures 21 - 27 below show the state of sections of the Liberia major national highway, the Ganta to Harper Road during the raining season. Interestingly, this is the country's longest and most important highway, the 510 miles Monrovia - Harper Highway. Figure 17 below shows this country's major national highway which is part of the West African Transcontinental Road Network. As was stated, forest communities lack of access to basic social services like health centres, safe drinking water, public toilets, and public schools; and other daily necessities is exacerbated by the bad national road networks. The terrible state of the national highway only means feeder farm-to-market roads off the main roads are non-existent or totally impassable. Villagers have to walk hundreds of miles to get to the main road to access basic services. As a result, the forest communities are denied these social services

because it is challenging to walk hundreds of miles to access these services, if available, in relatively larger towns along the major national roads.



Figure 17: Liberia's main national highway as indicated by the bolder light brown line.

This is part of the West Africa Transcontinental Road Network to Cote D'Ivoire in the East and Sierra Leone in West⁵

Source: Worldometer

The Ganta-Tapita Road is the continuation of the Monrovia to Ganta (paved road, also see Figure 17 above) to the South Eastern Counties of Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Sinoe and Maryland. The deplorable state of this road, which is the main road artery connecting the South East to Central and Western Liberia, means feeder roads off this main road to forest communities are worse. Except in few instances where logging companies create access to take away their logs, these communities are totally forgotten. This has been the history of neglect and poverty in Liberia, a neglect that was instituted by the country colonial past and is sustained by the neo-colonial environment now.

⁵ The bolder light brown line shows Liberia's major and longest highway (510miles) runs from Monrovia (the nations capital up to Gbarnga (central Liberia) where it forks out towards Lofa County (North-North Liberia) and Ganta, Nimba County (North - Central Liberia). From Ganta, which is the focus of sections of bad roads in this section (as shown in the Figures 33 -6.20 below), it goes down to Tapita, Nimba County through to Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County, and on to Fish Town, River Gee Country down to Harper, Maryland County (South-East Liberia). From Ganta to Fish Town and further down to Karloken, Maryland County is unpaved. From Monrovia to Ganta is paved. The unpaved road has been so since independence1847. However, some road pavement works, as of this research, are ongoing from an African Development Bank loan along some sections of the this road.



Picture 21: Stranded vehicles and passengers along the Ganta-Tapita Road corridor between North-Central Liberia town of Ganta, Nimba County towards Harper, South Eastern Liberia

Photos Credit (Figures 33-39): Bobby Allison, Photo Journalist, Office of the Speaker, Republic of Liberia; 18/07/2018.



Picture 22: Stranded vehicles and passengers along the Ganta-Tapita Road



Picture 23: Stranded motorcyclist, Ganta-Tapita Road



Picture 24: Stranded Vehicles, Ganta-Tapita Road



Picture 25: Stranded Liberia National Police Escort Vehicle, Ganta-Tapita Road



Picture 26: Stranded Staff of the Speakers' Office, Republic of Liberia



Picture 27: Bobby Allison/ Photo Journalist/-18/7/2018 who is credited for the pictures (21-27)

The roads leading to forest communities are primarily for ensuring logging companies transport their timbers with no social benefit to the people. It is important to note that the 2007 introduction of Liberia's' County Development Fund and Social Development Funds are aimed at ensuring revenue for companies' operations remain in the community (Front Page Africa, 2020). Nonetheless, as was indicated above, the CDF and SDF have been plagued with allegations of mismanagement. They have not been able to address the historical structural neglect of the rural areas, especially forest communities or stop exploitation of the forest resources to the exclusion of the host communities.

The neglect and isolation of forest communities as demonstrated by bad roads leading to the hinterland of the country underscores a fundamental structural issue which is poverty. This, like the issue of livelihood, poses a serious challenge to REDD+.

6.70 Challenge to REDD+

Arguably, if Liberia completes the 'Readiness' Phase of REDD+, and progresses to the 'Result-based' Phase where forest communities begin to earn income from carbon traded from the forests, it may help in reducing the structural poverty in the country generally, and in particular the forest communities. In this respect, any benefit sharing scheme of the REDD+ in Liberia is assumed to work, and that benefits accrued are reaching the targeted forest communities. However, as was discussed in section 6.4 above, forest communities are largely

marginalized and denied benefits from their resources as a result of the country's structural condition. The inherited colonial governance structure allows the Monrovia-based central government, and its local political representatives to hijack whatever benefit is realized from the exploitation of the forest products, specifically timber in rural communities. Therefore, any future benefit-sharing from REDD+ income in Liberia may face a steep challenge since it has to go through the same network of the colonial institutions that continue to deny forest communities from benefiting from their forest resources.

Paradoxically, the forest communities in their quests to survive daily and to have access to basic services like clinics, safe drinking water, schools and good roads are largely turning to the same neo-colonial economic model, especially commercial logging. For example, through Community Forestry Management Assembly, 30 logging contracts estimated at 705,670ha of forest were signed with private companies/Individuals. As a result, the Environmental Specialist at the World Bank Country Office in Liberia thinks commercial logging is dominating the forest landscape of the country compared to conservation (Interviews, ER7, 19/08/2019; ER10, 20/08/2019; ER12, 8/11/2019; Appendix 1). See also Chapter Five on Economic Challenges to REDD+ for more details on the dominance of commercial logging of the forest landscape. Tragically, the rush towards commercial logging by forest communities is inscribed in the *Community Rights Law 2009* of the country. Section 6 grants forest communities the rights to engage in small to large scale commercial contracts for timber products. This has sadly become the preferred use of the forest to conservation by forest communities with no tangible benefits. In this regard, as was stated earlier, the former Deputy Executive Director of the EPA argues that commercial logging has never benefited the forest communities despite the long period the country has been engaged in it (Interview, ER3, 13/08/2019, Appendix 1). In other words, despite this exploitation of the forests, the forest communities remain trapped in the structural poverty of the country amid the continued demand, and sale of their forests domestically and internationally.

Unfortunately, as Simone Lovera-Bilderbeek observed, "the REDD+ regime would not contribute to reducing poverty because poverty alleviation is not part of the objective of REDD+" (Lovera-Bilderbeek, 2019). This observation is corroborated by this research when the National REDD+ Coordinator said, "we are approaching donors to request funding for livelihood activities in forest communities as that is not part of the current 'Readiness' phase that Liberia is currently engaged in" (Interview, ER7, 19/08/2019, Appendix 1).

6.80 Conclusion

The rural forest communities in Liberia generally, and in particular villages visited during this study, live in extreme poverty (V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/2/2020, Appendix 1). They lack the most basic of social services like safe drinking water, health clinics, schools and motorable roads. They largely survive on subsistence farming, shifting cultivation, charcoal production and indiscriminate fishing in the Lake Piso. They are marginalized from the central government, and are not benefitting from the exploitation of their forest resources. These conditions are structural to the Liberian state and 'social order', and are rooted in the country's past and sustained by the country's neo-colonial environment now. As a result, alternative livelihood options are non-existent. This has not only made it difficult for forest communities to abide by Section 9.10 - Protected Area Regulations and Prohibitions of the Liberia Forest Reform Law 2006, but also presents a challenge to REDD+. Therefore, for Liberia to complete the 'Readiness' phase of REDD+, it has to address the issue of alternative livelihood now. Unfortunately, this appears more difficult because forest communities prefer, for now, commercial forestry over conservation. In other words, at the time of writing, commercial forestry and plantation agriculture poses the main challenge to REDD+ in Liberia. The Community Rights Law 2009 and Land Rights Act 2018 that gave the villagers the right over how they use their forest lands have paradoxically made commercial forestry attractive to forest communities. This is discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

The next chapter explores the question of property rights. This is important considering that the indigenous understandings and practices of property rights/ownership in forest communities of Liberia are not aligned with the neoliberal understanding as in REDD+. This reveals the deep contradictions which emerge from the implementation of a neoliberal programme in postcolonial settings like Liberia.

Part III: Private Property: The Foundation of [Neo] liberal Policy

“The program of [neo] liberalism, therefore, if condensed into a single word, would have to read: *property*, that is, private ownership of the means of production (for in regard to commodities ready for consumption, private ownership is a matter of course and is not disputed even by the socialists and communists). All the other demands of [neo] liberalism result from this fundamental demand.”

Ludwig von Mises (2002, p.19)

Chapter 7: Contrasting Philosophies of Landed Property Rights in Liberia

7.0 Introduction

The political, economic and social challenges to REDD+ in Liberia reveal a central issue is natural resource management, specifically the use of the forest to combat deforestation and environmental degradation generally, and climate change in particular. The Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' project aims to set up institutions that would make carbon tradable in the future. Without any meaningful alternative livelihood options to forest communities, the REDD+ hopes villagers would change their current ways of living - predominantly shifting cultivation, slash and burn farming, charcoal production and pit sawing. However, this is extremely challenging as the political, economic, social and structural challenges show in the last three chapters. This is further compounded by the dominant private property rights that makes the commodification of land and resources possible since the landgrab by the American Colonization Society in 1821. The numerous public land laws since 1847 to 1973 only further reinforce private property rights, in one form or the other, while downplaying communal property rights of the indigenous people, except the 2009 Community Rights Law and the 2018 Land Rights Law.

To appreciate the challenge brought about by the introduction of an alien land philosophy in the Liberian society, this chapter explores how the question of property ownership, the foundation of all neoliberal policies (as Ludwig von Mises posits in the opening quote to this part of the thesis), and reveals the deep contradictions which emerged from the implementation of a neoliberal programme in postcolonial settings. Firstly, it discusses the villagers' claims to the land based on how long they have been living in the villages. This is followed by the changing property laws of Liberia between 1821 and 2018. The indigenous philosophy of land ownership in Liberia is discussed next. Finally, the challenge of property rights to REDD+ in Liberia is discussed. This shows that, despite the dominance of private property rights in landownership, indigenous communal ownership remains entrenched. Further, it brings to the fore the paradox and contradiction in the neoliberal REDD+ scheme such that freeholders of private property appear more inclined to commercialize the forest instead of protecting it. In contrast, the indigenous communal landownership and institutions seem to be more REDD+ friendly.

Significantly, this chapter demonstrates that the American Colonization Society's landgrab action of 1821 introduced a foreign understanding of land ownership - private property rights in pre-colonial Liberia.

7.10 Villagers' claim to the land

The ownership of Land has always played an important role in the formation of the Liberian state since 1821. As Chapter Four documents, the piece of land that the first batch of settlers to arrive in present day Liberia acquired was with a gun pointed to the head of an indigenous king. Therefore, it should be no surprise that individuals, and communities in Liberia often make every effort to erase any doubt about the ownership of a piece of land. This is usually done through a display of a title deed or oral testament of when the land was acquired or first settled. For forest communities, where land is largely transferred from generation to generation communally without a written title deed, the villagers laid their claims through oral testament. This was the case with the five villages visited during the field visit of this study. For the three villages within the Lake Piso Multipurpose Use Reserve Protected Area, Kpalan and Falie claimed "we have been living here for more than 60 years". The villagers in Latia claimed "the village is very old." To show how old it was, one of the villagers said, "when I was born, I met this village here. And I was born 1957". Another villager added, "Yes. Also, when I was born, I met this village. And I was born 1972" (Interviews, V1 and V2 and V3, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1). The two villages within the East Nimba Nature Reserve Protected Area, Zortapa and Geipa asserted their claims to the land in a similar manner. In Zortapa, the villagers claimed they have been living on the land since 1916. The villagers of Geipa claimed "the town was established in 1960" (Interviews, V5 and V6, 11/02/2020, Appendix 1).

Based on the time frame the villagers arrived on the land, each village is estimated to be more than half a century old. On average, each village has existed for a minimum of 72 years. The average number of years seems to align across the country. A large majority of forest communities in the country have been in existence for more than half a century. This is something that the drafter of the 2018 Land Rights Law may have recognized. As a result, the Law grants ownership of customary land to villagers if they have lived on it for "a minimum of 50 years" (Article 32(3)(ii), Land Rights Act, 2018⁶). However, it should be noted that the

⁶ The Land Rights Law 2018 states in Article 32(3) that "the acquisition and ownership of customary land by a community is established by one or more of the following:

- i. The Customary Land, prior to the Effective Date of this Act, was deeded to the Community;
- ii. The Land is considered to be Customary Land by common and long-standing understanding among members of the Community. This includes Land that has been used or possessed exclusively or continuously by the Community or some of its members for socio-cultural and economic purposes for a minimum period of fifty (50) years as can be established by oral testimonies or members of the Community and members of neighbouring Communities.
- iii. The use or claim of possession of the Land by the Community through historical activities and ties are: (i) acknowledged by some or all neighbouring Communities; and/or (ii) recognized by

villages visited are part of a larger clan or tribal group, the Mande-speaking group that settled Northern Liberia long before the arrival of the settlers in 1822 (Moran, 2006; Wily, 2007). The 72 years on average is just an indication of when these villages, as part of the larger group, were allowed to settle in that area by the larger clan.

The indigenous people have a very strong bond to the land. Such is the bond that, in some instances, villagers refused to leave the land during the 14 years Liberian civil war (1989 - 2003). This was the case in Kpalan Town. The Dean Elder of Kpalan Town, Ben Sheriff claimed that they refused to leave their village despite threats of death from rebel fighters roaming the country-side. He asserts:

“My name is Ben Sheriff. The Dean Elder here. Our old people have passed away, but now we are the ones left here in this town. We were here before the Hitler War [World War II 1939-1945]. Our little children are many here with us. Things are very, very difficult for now. Our people live here. Our main work is farming. Even during the war, we only engaged in farming. We did not run away during the war time. Because, during the war time, if we were to leave from here, the Mandingo Soldiers [Rebels of the United Liberation Movement for Democracy – ULIMO rebel faction], would have entered our town. They would have even burnt most of the houses. *Even, I who is sitting here, my mother that born me, this is our house. She was killed right in front this house. And they burnt the roof on top of it, but yet still, we did not leave. Because this is our town [land] [my emphasis].* We were here before the Hitler War in 1942. So, we cannot leave from here. We have been living in the bush for a long period of time” (Interview, V1, 9/11/2019, Appendix 1).

Similarly, the arrival of the settlers in 1822 and the introduction of western private property rights since then has not been successful in uprooting the indigenous people from their lands or dismantling customary land practice (Brown, D. 2017). On the contrary, the changing property laws appear to have only sharpened the contradictions in land ownership in the country. In the view of Brottem and Unruh, the laws which cannot legislate customary land tenure out of existence have only set up contentious relationships between the state and rural inhabitants in Liberia (Brottem and Unruh, 2009, p. 999). A mapping of the key moments in the property laws of Liberia helps to reveal these tensions.

7.20 Changing Property Laws in Liberia

Before mapping the key moments in Liberia property laws, specifically landed property, ‘the root of private property’ (Agbosu, 2000, p. 8), a brief explanation of how private property is generally understood in the literature would be in order. This is necessary because the private

rules of customary practices as can be established by oral testimonies of members or the Community and members of neighbouring Communities.

property laws introduced by the settlers is contrary to how the indigenous people understand property rights.

According to Waldron, in a private property system, a rule is laid down that, in the case of each object, the individual is to determine how the object shall be used and by whom. The individual decision is to be upheld by the society as final (Waldron, 1988, p.39). Thus, the establishment of property rights, specifically landed property rights in this case, are central to market transactions. It is the foundation of the dominant global capitalist economy. The 'private ownership of the means of production [land in this case] was prerequisite in capitalist development' (Agbosu, 2000, p.2). Patrick McAuslan shares this view saying 'land titling is seen as an important component of moves towards private land ownership and free market in land' (McAuslan, 2015, p. 348). This form of land ownership is the basis of the settlers' landgrab in 1821 and subsequent land laws in Liberia. It is also the basis of the REDD+ scheme. Thus, the land ownership or title in forest communities in Liberia needs to be certified based on such private land ownership practice. Without this, the REDD+, a neoliberal concept (Prakash et al, 2021), may not manage to pass the 'Readiness' phase in Liberia, let alone reach the 'Investment' phase - the stage where sequestered carbon is tradable for profits to investors and owners of the forest. Therefore, the establishment of the land ownership rights of the forest communities in Liberia has to be the first order of business during the REDD+ 'Implementation' phase.

Policy experts and scholars are in general agreement on the need to ensure forest communities' title to the land. For example, Matt Sommerville, the Chief of Party of USAID's Tenure and Global Climate Change Program posits "in order for investment to flow, property rights must be clear and secure" (Sommerville, 2013). In this context therefore, and for forests communities in particular, Charlotte Streck thinks "the right to sell 'carbon' follows the property or community management rights over the land and forest or the right to enjoy their benefits, e.g., timber or non-timber products" (Streck, 2020). The continuously changing land laws of Liberia since the 1821 landgrab and the subsequent arrival of the settlers in 1822 are largely along the lines of private property rights.

Current Land Law and Practice

In 2018, Liberia enacted into law the Land Rights Act. It represents the most far-reaching land law yet in the Republic, with 72 Articles spread across 19 Chapters. By this law, the proof of ownership of a piece of land is evidenced by a Deed that: i) is executed by the legitimate owner or owners; ii) is duly probated and registered in keeping with the law controlling, and iii) shows legitimate chain of titles (Chapter 3, Article 9.1, Land Rights Law, 2018). This allows

the owner to enjoy such rights as stated in Article 5.1: the rights to possess; the rights to use; and the rights to transfer singly or jointly by sale, devise, gift or otherwise. Article 5.2 further grants the owner the right to restrict the exercise of any of the rights listed in Article 5.1 of the Law. However, for a land owner to enjoy the rights stated in Article 5.1, the owner must ensure the registration of the land. If not, Article 11.1 states 'no title or interest in land shall be enforceable unless such title or interest is duly registered in keeping with law'.

The only limitation on the rights of the owner is on mineral resources on or below the surface of the land (Article 5.3) which belongs to the Republic. This is in line with Article 22(b) of the Liberia constitution which 'states the ownership does not extend to any mineral resources on or beneath any land' (The Republic of Liberia Constitution, 1986). With respect to forest land, the National Forestry Reform Law 2006 re-enforced the state ownership of the resources on the Land (National Forestry Reform Law, 2006). While the constitution specifically talks about mineral resources, the State still lays claim to forest resources, specifically the timbers (Smyle, 2012, p.5). This may be due to the fact that the Republic exercises eminent domain over all natural resources on or beneath the land of the Republic, including in the seabed (Article 7, Constitution of Liberia, 1986).

The Liberia Land Authority, which was established in 2016, is statutorily charged with enforcing the 2018 Land Rights Law, including deed registration. The LLA⁷ is a 'one-stop shop' for all land matters that were formerly dispersed across different agencies of government. The Liberia Land Authority is headquartered in the country's capital, Monrovia. The headquarter building of the Liberia Land Authority is shown in Figure 18 below. The World Bank, through a \$7.0million grant under the Liberia Land Administration Project (LLAP), is supporting the Liberia Land Authority to strengthen institutional capacity and establish a Land Administration System (LAS). The project has four components: i) support to the Liberia Land Authority; ii) piloting registration of customary land; iii) development of a land administration system; and iv) project coordination, monitoring and evaluation (LLA, 2021). The Liberia Land Administration Project is critical to addressing the perennial land crisis (Ponsford, 2016;

⁷ The Liberia Land Authority was established in 2016 as one-stop-shop for all land transactions in Liberia. It is headquartered the Capital, Monrovia. See Figure 7.0 below. The LLA, according to DEVEX, is a product of the policy, legal and institutional reform of the land sector of Liberia led by the Erstwhile Land Commission. The LLA, established by an Act of the National Legislature on October 6, 2016, as an autonomous agency of the Government with operational independence, subsumes land functions that were performed by several agencies of the Government, including the key land administration agencies - Department of Lands, Survey and Cartography of the former Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy (MLME), now the Ministry of Mines and Energy, the Deeds and Titles Registry of the Center for National Documents Records Agency (CNDRA), and functions of County Land Commissioners from the Ministry of Internal Affairs ([Liberia Land Authority \(Liberia\) | Devex](#)).

Afrobarometer, 2009) that has plagued the country since 1821 when the American Colonization Society forcefully acquired the first privately own piece of land in present day Liberia. The forceful land acquisition came into direct conflict with the indigenous communal land ownership that existed.



Figure 18: Liberia Land Authority Head Office, Monrovia

The year 1821 marks the first key moment, and arguably the most significant year for private land ownership in Liberia. This was the year the American Colonization Society, through force of arms, grabbed the first piece of land, Cape Mesurado (present day Central Monrovia), from the indigenous people for private use by the repatriated freed slaves and recaptives against communal land practice of the indigenous people. This land sale by unlettered chiefs who could not understand the Whiteman's English language, let alone read documents written in it, was purportedly signed through the 'Deed for Mesurado' or "The Ducor Contract" (Wily, 2007, pp. 67, 68). Appendix 10 contains the detailed text of the contract. Levitt described that moment thus:

On 15 December 1821, having failed on several occasions to procure territory from King Peter, Ayers and Stockton resorted to coercive means. After negotiations broke down with the king, "Stockton pulled out his pistol, cocked it and gave it to Ayers with instructions to shoot if necessary. He then aimed another pistol at King Peter's head" and compelled him and five other kings to forfeit the land by "deed" for approximately \$300 in guns, powder, beads, clothes, mirrors, food, rum, and tobacco (Levitt, 2005, pp.40, 41).

It is important to note that Captain Stockton was an officer of the US Military and that the ACS mission was financed by the US Government (Levitt, 2005, pp. 34, 35). As such, the

transaction and subsequent land grabs as the settlers extended their control into the hinterland from the coast could not have been possible without the support of the US (Kieh, 2012). Notwithstanding, the indigenous people continue to resist such expansion even to this day, especially that of government sanction concessions today (Stokes, 2015). As a result, there were constant wars between the two groups – settlers and indigenes (Levitt, 2005). In other words, the ACS's first purported land purchase sowed the seed of discord between the indigenes and settlers. In this regard, Levitt noted, "the violent and hostile way in which the ACS and the US Government obtained the Cape negatively shaped perceptions about the settlers" (Levitt, 2005, p. 45). The most significant issue about this encounter for this study is that the ACS's action introduced a foreign understanding of land ownership in pre-colonial Liberia. It considered land a commodity that could be privately owned and sold by the owner.

As time went on, this new understanding became dominant. The situation accelerated as settlers moved to establish small private rubber farms, especially following the arrival of Firestone in 1926 (Brown, D. 2017). According to Brown, the majority of the 2,500 smaller private farms as at 1963 were in the hands of the settlers or Americo-Liberians (Brown D. 2017, p. 0272). Despite this dominance of private ownership of land, the communal practice of land ownership persists. Thus, the discord sowed by the American Colonization Society's action remains to this day, especially where, in the view of Brown, lands were appropriated in ways which, if not necessarily illegal in the eyes of the regime, lacked the characteristics of free and willing sale. The Liberia Land Authority, through the World Bank sponsored '*Liberia Land Administration Project*', aims to address some of these historical injustices to ensure the registration of indigenous people's customary land in conformity with the 2018 Land Rights Act. The REDD+ scheme therefore has to first certify forest communities' ownership of the land, if it is to reach the 'Implementation' phase in Liberia. This task appears daunting as other key moments in land ownership laws between 1821 and 2018 in Liberia show.

There were other significant moments in land ownership laws in Liberia between 1821 and 2018. This was particularly the case with public land which was never clearly defined. The only law that came close to a clear definition of public land was the 1931 Department of the Interior Regulations that stated "the fundamental principle is that the primary title to all lands in the Republic is in the Government" (Stevens, 2014, p. 256). The major pieces of public land legislation during this period (1821-2018) include: i) 1847 Constitution; ii) 1948 Public Domain Law; iii) 1850 Public Lands Act; iv) 1869 Interior Department Creation; v) 1904 Public Lands Law; vi) 1956 Public Land Law, vii) 1973 Public Land Laws, and viii) 2009 Community Rights Law with respect to Forest Land. Without going into these laws individually, they all aim to consolidate private ownership for individual use or commercial use of the land. The dominant

commercial use was plantation agriculture. This was started by the American Colonization Society land grabbed 1821, and consolidated by succeeding settlers' governments. In this regard, the 1847 Constitution recognizes private property but bars land purchase from aborigines directly by the Settlers (Article I, Sec. 13th and Article V, Sec. 14th, Constitution of the Republic of Liberia, 1847). While the changes in the land laws during this period consolidated private property right, the 2009 Community Rights Law marks a significant departure from this approach.

The 2009 Community Rights Law was a sea change in terms of ownership of resources on the land compared to the National Forestry Reform Law 2006. It grants ownership of forest land and all forest resources to the community (Section 2.2.a, Community Rights Law 2009; Smyle, 2012, p. 9). Further, the Community Rights Law grants the right to manage and use the forest resources to the Community (Section 2.1, Community Rights Law, 2009). Despite these ownership and management rights to the community, the Community Rights Law gives the Forestry Development Authority the right to regulate all forest resources of the Republic notwithstanding the proprietorship of the land (Section 2.2.b, Community Rights Law, 2009). In other words, the FDA, has to be involved in the management of the forest resources with the community. However, the Land Rights Law 2018 limits the Republic's constitutional control to mineral resources beneath the land only (Article 33.3, Land Rights Law, 2018). This is critical to carbon rights for the community under REDD+. It could have significant impact on REDD+, especially when it comes to ownership of the carbon in the trees on the land and benefit sharing in the future. This was raised by the former Deputy Executive Director of the EPA (Interview, ER10, 13/08/2019, Appendix 1).

The 2009 Community Rights Law, unlike other laws before it, for the first time, codified customary land rights. Thus, it is now an acceptable form of land ownership alongside private land ownership. To ensure ownership, the community is required to survey the land to establish the boundaries with other communities. The law grants a 24-month period to undertake the survey and registration of the land (Article 11, Sections 2 and .4, Land Rights Law, 2018). This grant of deeds to communities for their customary land is not new. Prior to the law, some villages were able to secure title deeds for their land. This deed was conferred by the President of the Republic to establish the village ownership of the land (Article 33.4, Land Rights Law, 2018; Title 32, Liberia Code of Laws, 1956). This western deeding system did not guarantee land security or tenure to a piece of land. In contrast, it appears to create more land crisis/disputes especially after the civil war than anticipated. As a result, in once peaceful areas where respect for customary practices have prevailed for generations, people are now claiming ownership of the land through fake deeds or due to lost deeds during the

civil crisis. The crisis has become so serious to the extent that 90% of civil cases in courts and 63% of violent conflicts now are land related. This study takes particular note of the fact that some of these land conflicts are between forest communities and companies engaged in logging or plantation agriculture in one form or the other (Ponsford, 2016; Afrobarometer, 2009).

The core issue for this research is that the majority of the forest lands, despite the dominance of private property ownership since the American Colonization Society 1821 land grab, still remains the property of the indigenous people governed by their own customary system of land access and ownership. The Indigenous people generally feel the land is theirs whether it is in conformity with the land laws of the country or not. For example, during a protest in 2021 in demand of their ancestral land, the indigenous people of Baconnie and Bleewein communities in Grand Bassa County, South Eastern Liberia were chanting “with deed or no deed, this is our land” (Brown, K. 2021). Thus, it makes no difference whether the land is branded public land because the indigenous people do not have a title deed as per the country’s land laws based on private property rights (Stevens, 2014). Wily shares a similar view, arguing that, “the territory now known as Liberia was not ‘*terra nullius*’ when the American colonists arrived in 1821; that is, it was far from empty, unsettled or un-owned” (Wily, 2007, p. 62; see also Gunther, 1955; Levitt, 2005, p.17; Moran, 2006, p. 2). In this context, it is the view of this research that what obtained in 1821 was essentially a land-grab by the settlers through conquest. It was basically seizing land which was then distributed to settlers for private farms or leased out to companies for commercial purposes, in particular plantation agriculture.

In the view of Brown, the 1821 landgrab was an historical injustice in the land sector which had figured as a major grievance in the pre-coup Liberia [the 1980 coup that ended the Settlers’ 133 years rule], and a clear symbol of the oppression of the majority [indigenous people that constitutes 95% of the country’s population] (Brown, D. 2017, p. 0271). It could therefore be argued that what happened then was a clash of two ideologies – private and communal, with private ownership becoming the dominant practice. However, the private property ownership has not been successful in uprooting the communal ownership. The reason for the difficulties in ending the communal ownership may be gleaned from the indigenous philosophy of land. Before discussing this issue, I would like to observe that the private property concept introduced by the American Colonization Society is not fundamentally different from private property rights in other colonized countries, particularly Africa at the time. This is especially the case since private property rights, an off-shoot of landed property rights, provided the foundation for capital development and the expansion of empire. McAuslan

recognizes this arguing that, 'seizing control of the land and reshaping the land laws to suit the needs of the dominant power is the essence of the colonial and has continued to be an important component of the external law and development input into the developing world' (McAuslan, 2015, p.345).

7.30 Indigenous Philosophy of Land Ownership in Liberia

As discussed in Section 7.20 above, the land-grab by the American Colonization Society in 1821 was the origin of the western private property rights in Liberia. As a result, every document on land ownership had a property rights clause inscribed. For example, the 1847 Constitution, modelled on the US Constitution, had property rights clauses (Articles I and V), and the successor 1986 constitution also has property rights clauses. Article 22(a) of the 1986 Constitution states "every person shall have the right to own property as well as in association with others, provided that only Liberian citizen shall have the right to own real property within the Republic." Article 22(b) nonetheless states the ownership does not extend to any minerals resources on or beneath any land (The Republic of Liberia Constitution, 1986). The Republic exercises eminent domain over all-natural resources on or beneath the land of the Republic, including in the seabed (Article 7, Republic of Liberia Constitution of Liberia 1986).

The proof of private land ownership, as per the law, is a deed. The owner must possess the relevant title 'deed' that shows the 'meets and bounds' of the land, and is duly signed by the parties; is probated and registered with the national archives/land registry (Article 9.3, Land Rights Law, 2018). There are land commissioners assigned in rural areas for land rights purposes. This concept of proof of land ownership is in contrast to the indigenous concept of land ownership prior to the 1821 land-grab by the American Colonization Society.

The indigenous concept of land ownership prior to the arrival of the settlers, and which could have been the main reason for the refusal to sell land to the American Colonization Society then, was collective or communal ownership. For the customary land ownership, the entire village owns the land by virtue of being the first people to settle on the land and to use it for their survival from generation to generation (Article 32.1, Land Rights Law, 2018). The proof of ownership is based on the principle of 'first arrival' that can be attested to orally by both the village and neighbours. Therefore, it appears that, as a means of demonstrating ownership of the land, villagers often seize every opportunity to remind others when they first arrived on the land. This was apparent in every village visited during the field work.

The limits of the land were natural landscape features such as river, streams, creeks, big trees, mountains, hills and valleys (Wily, 2007, p. 63). The chief, the custodian of the land, in

consultation with other elders, assigns lands to villagers for farming purposes (Sawyer, 1992, p.56). It was also understood by traditional custom that, the first villager to reach a virgin forest is given priority to farm that piece of land, unless that villager is no longer interested (Interview, ER14, 10/2/2020, Appendix 1). However, the ownership of the land rest with the entire village that settle in the area. For the villagers, land is not just an object for cultivation, however, it represents a spiritual bond to the past and future. This sacred philosophy of the land permeates the entire existence of the village in every form and manner. For example, at the start of a farming season, the villagers consult the ancestors to bless the land for bountiful harvest. After a farming season, the ancestors are thanked for bountiful harvest. Where a harvest is bad, a sacrifice is offered to 'cleanse' the land of curses. This is done as a village and not as an individual. As such, the treatment of land as a commodity that is tradable, and could be held privately by individuals was not only alien to the indigenous people, but an assault on the essence of the village existence - communal kinship ownership of the land (Brown, D. 2017), the sacred bond for the village. The land is the bond or glue that holds the village together and the fulcrum around which every indigenous institution revolves, including the chiefs and elder council, the high priest shrine and traditional societies.

Institutionally, the chief in association with the elders, and high priest are often revered because they are seen as custodians and protectors of the land. Hence, their commands are obeyed even though the institutions are challenged today, especially from political interference. Nonetheless, these traditional institutions are still very strong and influential. For example, traditional institutions like the Sande 'society' or 'bush' for women, and Poro 'society' or 'bush' for men in the North and North Central of Liberia amongst the Mande-speaking indigenous group - the Kpelle, Mende, Vai, Gola, Dan, Del, Mandingo, Mano, Kissi, Gbandi and Lorma; or the 'Age-grade' societies in the South-East of the Country amongst the Kwa-speaking people - the Bassa, Kru, Grebo and Khran exercise considerable influence over decisions of the tribe, including land matters (Moran, 2006; Sawyer, 1992). This was confirmed during the field visit for this study when the people of Kpalan, a Vai village of the Mande-speaking people were asked if any such 'bush' still exists in the area. A woman responded in the affirmative stating, "yes and if we caught a man there, he would be in trouble" (Interview, V1, 9/11/2019; Appendix 1). This means the village has a 'Sande' and 'Poro' bush as is common across the Mande-speaking areas in Northern and Central Liberia. The important issue for this study is such bushes are held sacred and are not used for farming or hunting. For the Poro, Ellis records, "through Poro, boys at around the age of puberty are initiated into adult society and learned how to act and think like men" (Ellis, 2007, p. 224). Moran describes the Sande society as a 'universal initiatory and educational associations that hold the power of transforming children into adults" (Moran, 2006, p. 31).

The initiation takes place deep into dense forest. Ellis describes this initiation as follows: “in the forest, young initiates live in a special village where they are instructed in ritual knowledge of their community and educated in their duties as men. In particular, they are taught the virtues of discipline, courage and obedience”. This, graduation from the society ‘bush’ is fundamentally an affirmation that the young man is prepared to manage his own household - own little hut, have a wife, farm a piece of the land and continue to uphold the protection of the sacredness of the land with courage and discipline. Further, it underscores the reverence of the people to their land as represented in the traditional institutions and beliefs.

For example, the people of Sehyikeipa, a village along the road to the Sanniquillie Road towards the East Nimba Nature Reserve, sacrificed their houses to road construction just to leave standing a ‘big tree’ which is considered sacred. The villagers even believe that the reddish liquid that comes out of the tree whenever it has a cut is a sacred blood. Pictures 28 and 29 below show the sacred tree and houses opposite the tree that were destroyed to leave the sacred tree standing. In this regard, the belief system of the villagers could be seen as being in conformity with forest conservation generally, and REDD+ in particular. In this context, the indigenous belief system of reverence for the forest is said to be more REDD+ friendly (Interview, SR5, 14/08/2019, Appendix 1). Similarly, the Villagers of Falie Town hold their big trees in reverence as seen in Picture 30, and Geipa town refusing to cut down the ‘snakelike’ tree in Picture 31 despite the danger it poses to vehicles and villagers due to its presence above the road.



Picture 28: Sacred tree in Sehyikeipa village on the road to Zortarpa towards the East Nimba Nature Reserve in Nimba, Liberia



Picture 29: *Destroyed houses opposite the sacred tree for road construction*



Picture 30: *Untouched cotton tree in Falie village, Lake Piso Multi-purpose Nature Reserve*



Picture 31: *The Researcher before the 'snakelike' tree over the road to Geipa, East Nimba Nature Reserve*

From the foregoing, it is surmised that the indigenous philosophy of land ownership is based on the sacredness of a common property, the land that binds members of the tribe. This sacredness is protected by every institution or society, including the chief, elders' council, Poro, Sande, Age-grade and priestly shrine. The land is held in reverence to the ancestors and kept in good health for future generations. It is no surprise that traditional institutions and beliefs are stronger than the colonial institutions of government in Liberia. They are more effective at ensuring compliance of villagers to community norms, in particular forest preservation and sacredness. The villagers would conform more to the values, norms and mores of the tribal elders than government laws, whose legitimacy is suspect to them (Kerkulah, 2021; Ellis, 2007; Moran, 2006). In some instances, the traditional societies overrule decisions of the Government of Liberia for the good of the community (Menkor, 2021). The local government officials would rather not be in the bad books of the traditional societies.

The sacredness and respect for the land is also reflected in the shifting cultivation farming practice of the indigenous people. The practice is intended to allow the land to regenerate. Sawyer took note of this when he wrote that "after harvest, land would remain unused for a considerable period, sometimes up to ten years, in order to regenerate its nutrients" (Sawyer, 1992, p. 57). This appears to support conservation more. In contrast, the introduction of private

property philosophy by the American Colonization Society in 1821 opened up the forest to commercial activities that are threatening the sacredness and preservation of the forest. It has not only opened up the forest to foreign companies but is also pushing villagers into trading in forest timbers, in particular pit sawing for survival. Therefore, private property rights, the foundation of the capitalist economy, seems to have succeeded in incorporating Liberia generally, and forest communities particularly, into the dominant global capitalist economy. The 2012 abuse of the Private Use Permit (PUP) scheme that resulted in a quarter of the country's total land mass being awarded to logging companies in two years is an example of such incorporation into the global economy (Global Witness and SDI, 2012). The PUP allows private land owners to enter timber contracts with companies. This was so abused that 40% of the country's forest and almost half of the country's intact forest was being decimated. Unfortunately, most of the companies involved in the scheme were linked to the Malaysian Logging giant, Samling. This company has a notorious reputation for deforestation around the world (Ibid). The Forestry Development Authority approval of 705,650ha of forest logging contracts through the Community Forestry Management Assembly as documented in Table 2, Section 5.10 of Chapter Five is another clear example of such incorporation of the forest communities into the dominant global capitalist economy (Global Witness, 2018). Before this mad rush for commercial logging or pit-sawing, the forest communities held their land in reverence and largely survived on subsistence farming to feed a family of five on average. This highlights the challenge posed to REDD+ by the privatization of landholding. On the one hand, chapter six revealed one of the main social challenges to REDD+ is the lack of alternative livelihood. On the other, the main economic challenge identified in chapter five is communities' preference for commercial logging. This chapter shows that the pursuit of these destructive alternatives is due to land privatisation. In other words, private property rights, especially landed private property, grants the communities freedom to use the forest as they so wish. Unfortunately, the option they are choosing is driving forest communities deeper into the destructive deforestation activities that REDD+ hopes to mitigate. There is no straight forward resolution to this tension. Nonetheless, it appears communal land ownership and subsistence way of life is far less destructive and more REDD+ friendly compared to private land ownership. Thus, the dominant privatization of land ownership has far more implications for REDD+ in Liberia.

7.40 The challenge of property rights to REDD+ in Liberia

The ownership of the land is central to the REDD+ scheme. Thus, the first step in the REDD+ implementation phase is the certification of the ownership of a piece of land. While Liberia's laws recognize both private and customary land ownership, the 2018 Land Rights Act requires

proof of ownership through the registration of a deed as discussed in Section 7.20 above. This requirement subscribes to the practice of private property rights notwithstanding the dual land ownership regimes in the country. Therefore, the REDD+, a market-based mechanism that aims to trade carbon in standing trees, has to align with the law as per the practice of private property rights - the foundation of any neoliberal market transaction.

As discussed in Section 7.30 above, the ownership of land in indigenous communities means a lot more than that espoused by private property rights. It is communal (Waldron, 1998) land ownership with spiritual bond between the indigenes and the land. This relationship is based on traditional norms and customs and has a deeper meaning beyond private ownership to the community. Along these lines, Sherry thinks “property rights [for the indigenous communities in this case] are both institutional arrangements and social relations” (Sherry, 2017, p. xi). Sawyer shares similar views on property rights in indigenous communities in Liberia that ‘land was the bond linking the ancestors with the present and the future, and association with it defined the community and legitimized its institutions’ (Sawyer, 1992, p. 55). Succinctly put, the land had sacred meanings to the indigenous community. Therefore, the idea of individual or private ownership and, to treat the land as a mere commodity that could be traded for profit, to the exclusion of the rest of the community, is foreign to the indigenous people. They see the land as something spiritual that is passed on to them by their ancestors. Hence, they were bound to hold it ‘in-trust’ for future generations as did their ancestors for the present generation. Further, the indigenous people use natural features like rivers, creeks, mountains, hills, valleys, and big trees as boundaries to their lands. This contrasts with title deeds land ownership under the private property rights.

The boundaries of indigenous land are however faced with delineation challenges between communities. This has become more pronounced because of the 2018 Land Rights Act and the opening up of the forest for resource exploitation. The Land Rights Act of 2018 requires customary land to be deeded and registered. However, the precedent condition for the Liberia Land Authority to issue the deed, a confirmatory survey, must be undertaken to establish the boundaries with surrounding communities (Article 37(2)(4), Land Rights Act, 2018). The confirmatory survey is required to be conducted within 24 months of the passage of the Law. Bearing in mind that the law was passed in 2018, this has not only led to the rush of indigenous communities to confirm the boundaries to their lands, but has also precipitated boundaries disputes between communities. These disputes, which used to be over farm land in the past and could be resolved peacefully between communities, are now intense due to natural resources exploitation, including timber and potential REDD+ benefits. The case between the Gayea and Gblor Clans in Tappita District, Nimba County is an example. The communities

are now renege on earlier agreement with the result of a 2014 USAID People, Rules and Organizations Supporting the Protection of Ecosystem Resources (PROSPER) sponsored confirmatory survey because one of the communities is interested in entering into a logging contract with a company (Koinyeneh, 2020 and 2021). In this regard, the confirmatory survey appears to be precipitating more conflicts than usual. Picture 32 shows the plaque confirming the agreement reached between Gayea and Gblor communities but, unfortunately, is not being honoured because of commercial interest.



Picture 32: USAID Sponsored monument at the starting point of a boundary between Gayea and Gblor clans in Nimba County, Northern Liberia

Source: *Front Page Africa/Gerald C. Koinyeneh*

The case between the two clans highlights the challenge the REDD+ faces along the lines of private property rights, particularly the issuance of title deeds. Before delving further into this issue, I like to restate the importance of land registration as per the Land Rights Act 2018. This process, as was discussed, starts with the confirmatory survey and ends with the relevant title deed issuance by the Liberia Land Authority. In this respect, the first step in the REDD+ Implementation Phase is the certification of the land ownership of the community forest as per the Law. This does not mean private property rights is more REDD+ friendly compared to communal ownership because of the land certification. On the contrary, the communal ownership and traditions, as have been demonstrated throughout this chapter, are more friendly to the environment and more conducive to maintaining forest cover. The REDD+

certification of the ownership is intended to conform to the 2018 Land Rights Act. To return to the issue of private property rights posing serious challenge to the REDD+ implementation, the REDD+ certification unwittingly exposes the forest to commercial interests. As a result, the conflicts between once peaceful communities are not only increasing but are also becoming intense and more difficult to resolve, especially where potential income is envisaged from the resources (Koinyeneh, 2020).

The foregoing is not to suggest that the indigenous communal land ownership does not pose challenges to REDD+. On the contrary, it does. The natural features used as boundaries run the risk of erasure due to changes in the landscape over a long period of time, especially over generations when oral historical knowledge is lost due to death of ancestors, migration and population growth. This makes it difficult to determine the limits and size of a forest. Thus, this could hinder a key tenet of the REDD+ scheme – the measurement of the forest cover. Further, the practice of moving deep into virgin forest, primarily to claim land and not for farming, is another challenge to REDD+. The shrinking size of the proposed Wonegizi REDD+ pilot project in Lofa County, northern Liberia is an example. According to the Livelihood and Governance Coordinator for Fauna & Flora International in Liberia, the implementer of the only REDD+ pilot project, the size of the forest is rapidly shrinking because villagers continue to move deeper into the virgin forest which they consider more fertile (Interview, ER14, 10/2/2020, Appendix 1). However, this research found that the main motivation for such behaviour is to have control over the forest resources. The villagers are basically positioning themselves to benefit from the income that may derive from any future commercial activities, including REDD+ and logging. The accepted traditional norm of 'first arrival' is being used as a reliance to prove ownership of the forest, and therefore, the movement deep into the virgin forest. As a result, the villagers continue to encroach on the Wonegizi protected area. Thus, the REDD+ may have to deal with multiple claimants if the land ownership is not certified.

Notwithstanding the challenges of the communal land ownership to the REDD+ and, to return to the challenge private property rights pose to REDD+, this study, on balance, maintains the customary land practice is more REDD+ friendly. The customary land ownership considers land a bond and not just an item for exchange. Further, the indigenous people see the land as an integral part of their existence as a people. Thus, they strive to live in harmony with the land. The indigenous people's subsistence way of living - thatch huts and shifting cultivation to feed a small family - do not threaten the forest as do large scale commercial activities promoted by private property rights. The private property rights introduce commercialization of both land and resources. Thus, the mad rush to exploit the resources, including forest for profit. Therefore, private property rights, in particular private ownership of the land, poses more

challenge to REDD+. The Private Use Permit scandal discussed above confirms the challenge of private property rights. This has its origin in the 1821 land-grab on which the Liberian state and all institutions are built (Brottem and Unruh, 2009; Stevens, 2014; Brown, D. 2017). Unfortunately, the institutions for managing the Liberian State, in particular, the private land ownership rights are weak.

The weakness of the institution responsible for implementing the land laws further highlights the challenge posed to the REDD+ implementation by private property rights. As was discussed earlier in Section 7.20 above, the Liberia Land Authority is required to undertake a confirmatory survey of customary lands and issue deeds (Article 11.4, Land Rights Act 2018). However, the Liberia Land Authority lacks the needed capacity to undertake this task. In short, it is overwhelmed to undertake such huge task within 24 months as the Law requires (Brown, 2021). As a result, the indigenous people would rather turn to the customary institutions for redress. They see the customary institutions as the only practicable and cost-effective way to defend their interest in the land than submit to the private property laws that largely favour the settlers, cum political elites (Brown, D. 2017, p. 0274). Thus, any failure of the Liberia Land Authority to ensure forest communities secure the ownership of the land through a deed in line with the law would mean the continuous resort to the communal land ownership (Brottem and Unruh, 2009; Stevens, 2014; Brown, 2017).

The Liberia Forest Sector Diagnostic report also recognises the challenge posed by the lack of certification of the ownership of customary land. The report recommends that Liberia focuses on the identification and delimitation of tribal and customary lands, followed by the definition of “communities” within those lands and the identification and delimitation of community lands, and, finally, the adjudication of those lands and the issuance of a full bundle of ownership rights to the communities (Smyle, 2012, p. xi). The report observes further that achieving this would require legal reform. The Land Rights Law 2018 and the Liberia Land Authority have also recognized the need for legal reform. In addition to legal reform, the Liberia Forest Sector Diagnostic report also recommends that the reform be done in parallel with significant and systematic efforts to put in place institutional and governance arrangements at the district, clan, and town levels for the administration, management, and conservation of forests and forest resources, to ensure that they are not turned over to communities without the necessary supporting structures in place. While these recommendations are noted and could advance REDD+ if implemented, the REDD+ still remains challenged by the colonial and neo-colonial context of land ownership in Liberia.

7.50 The colonial context of land ownership in Liberia

The introduction of private property rights, in particular, through institutions that centralized power, have led to dispossession of tribal/customary lands in the interior of Liberia, or to use the words of the settlers, the hinterland of Liberia. As documented in Section 7.20, the first deeded land in Liberia, Cape Mesurado, was acquired by the American Colonization Society in 1821, to settle freed slaves from the US in 1822, with a gun pointed to the head of tribal chief, “King Peter” (Liebenow, 1987). J. Gus Liebenow’s record of this land transaction is worth restating since it sheds light on the importance of land to the indigenous people, and by extension, the land crisis facing Liberia today (Ponsford, 2016; Afrobarometer, 2009). This account is important considering that the ACS was unsuccessful in its initial quest to acquire land in 1821 to resettle the free slaves (Boley, 1983, pp 13, 14). Liebenow recorded the account thus:

The negotiations at Cape Mesurado in December 1821 - Prior to the initial settlement on 25 April 1822 - were protracted and heated. At gunpoint, Captain Stockton attempted to convince “King Peter” and other minor Bassa and Dei chieftains that the settlers came as benefactors, not enemies. The American officer successfully negotiated the deeding of Cape Mesurado to the Colonization Society in return for \$300 worth of muskets, beads, tobacco, gunpowder, clothing, mirrors, food and rum. This was a first of an endless string of transactions in which the tribal negotiators only belatedly realized the full implication of the “sale” of their land to the alien settlers from America. *The settlers and their agent did not appreciate that the concept of “sale” of land had no meaning in societies where land was distributed communally on the basis of usufructuary right of occupancy rather than individual freehold* [Emphasis added] (Liebenow, 1987, pp. 15, 16).

This initial land purchase under duress was followed by subsequent landgrabs by the settlers. Liebenow considers the techniques employed by the settlers to be similar to “the same techniques employed by the French, British and other colonialists in their incorporation of African territory into their respective imperial systems” (Liebenow, 1987, p. 4). One such incorporation technique was the constant clandestine changing of land laws to benefit the settlers, especially when foreign interests in the land and resources were being expressed. Commenting on this practice, Brown writes that “with international interest in Liberia’s land and resources, land laws were surreptitiously reconfigured to the benefit of the Americo-Liberian elite [settlers] (Brown, D. 2017, p. 0273). The changing land laws were not only meant to secure the settlers’ title to the land but to also advance the commercialization of the land to the disadvantage of the indigenes. This laid the foundation of the land conflicts in Liberia today where dubious land sales are rampant (Koinyeneh, 2019; Cassell, 2007; Rights and Resources, 2014; Kollie, 2021; Smyle, 2012).

The Land Rights Law 2018, specifically its codification of customary lands can be seen as progress towards addressing the land crisis. Further, the Law clarification that government's claim over natural resources is limited to mineral resources under the ground and not the forest is a great milestone. However, the employment of deed and registration to certify the ownership of the customary land effectively turns customary land into private property rights practice. The only difference being it is still owned by the community but could not be sold or exploited as a private land would. Thus, the primary aim of registering the customary land remains that of treating the land as a commodity and not communal property. As a matter of fact, the Land Rights Act 2018 clearly states in Article 35.1 that the community should create a Community Land Development and Management Committee (CLDMC), and goes further to state in Article 35.2 that, the CLDMC "possess a legal personality with all the attendant rights, including the ability and right to enter into enforceable contracts to sue and be sued." Additionally, Article 36 on the governance and management of customary land, amongst others, specifically states the community acting collectively have the power to approve the sale, lease or transfer of customary land to persons other than community members. It goes further to say the community members can also approve the sale, lease or donation of customary land to the government (Article 36.2(a)(b), Land Rights Act 2018). As a matter of fact, Article 36 is the most intrusive into the community's way of life, and the clearest manifestation of the Law. To borrow Foucault's language, the Law aims to saliently discipline the population (Foucault, 1977) while infiltrating and re-ordering the community into new markets (Sartre, 1964) for capitalism. Simply put, the Law has effectively created the needed private property rights practice to ensure customary land conforms to future market criteria for the commercial exploitation of the land and forest resources. This will be the fate of customary land, and by extension, community forests in Liberia. Thus, the REDD+ would not only follow similar path, but would be enabling the exploitation of the community forest for commercial profit. It is therefore not a surprise that the first of customary lands to be successfully surveyed and confirmed by the Liberia Land Authority immediately began to enter into various agriculture ventures with private companies (Front Page Africa Staff Reporter, 2020).

From the foregoing, this study argues that the conformity of REDD+ to the Land Rights Law, specifically the certification of the land ownership of customary land at the start of the REDD+ 'Implementation' Phase, is basically transforming customary land into private land. Therefore, REDD+ effectively commodifies the customary land, including all resources on it. The REDD+ would create the opportunity for communities and the government to engage in various forms of private ventures, including commercial logging. Given that commercial logging constitutes one of the main challenges to REDD+ in Liberia as documented in Chapter Five, the private property rights which underpin the commercial activities within the dominant global capitalist

economy is invariably one of the main challenges to REDD+. This is further reinforced by the colonial legacy that enshrines private property rights in the constitution which grants the Government of Liberia eminent domain over the resources on the land for economic purposes (Article 7, Republic of Liberia Constitution, 1986). This colonial legacy has unfortunately left the country in general, and forest communities in particular, vulnerable to fraudulent land practices. This situation is not helped by the weak political, economic and social institutions put in place by the colonialist to manage private land transactions in the country.

7.60 Impact of the Colonial Institutions on Land Rights in Liberia

The 1821 historical dispossession of the indigenous people of their customary land by the settlers did not happen in a political, economic and social vacuum. This private land grab represents the foundation upon which the 'Liberian social order' is built (Sawyer, 1992). Therefore, the politics, economy and social relations of the country rest on it.

Politically, the colonial centralisation of power saw the Government of Liberia assuming total control of the resources of the country including land. As a matter of fact, the President appointed land commissioners across the country. Title 32, Public Land Law of the Liberia Code of Laws 1956 states in Chapter 1.1 that, the President shall appoint a Land Commissioner in each county and the duties performed by the Land Commissioners shall be performed in the Hinterlands by the District Commissioners (Chapter 32, Liberian Code of Laws 1956). It is important to note that the law was applicable in the hinterland/interior, the territories of indigenous people. That means the customary land of the indigenous community was branded public land as per the law since it did not conform to the definition of private property rights. In other words, the customary lands were public land because there was no deed to show proof of ownership. As a result, the land commissioners were not bound by the indigenous communal concept of land ownership but, rather had the powers to approve the sale of tribal lands that were considered public lands in rural areas (Chapter 3, Section 30, Title 32, Liberian Code of Laws, 1956). Today, the 2016 Liberia Land Authority Act has centralized these land sale practices, and the 2018 Land Rights Law, though recognizes customary ownership, are still challenged by customary versus private land ownership. The Liberia Land Authority, as a part of the perennial weakness of institutions of government since the founding of the state, continues to struggle to deal with the myriads of challenges facing the land sector. As a result, the corrupt land practices, including fraudulent deeds and double sale of land are rife in the land sector. The REDD+ would have to contend with this, especially since the practice is driven by economic greed which continues to see the forest being auctioned off through concessions (See Appendix 8 for detailed forest award contracts).

Economically, the first business is to establish title to the land for commercial purposes. In this regard, the private property rights in Liberia have succeeded in facilitating the grabbing of forest land by the Government. This has made it easy to appropriate resources on the land, including timber, notwithstanding the limit of the government's control to mineral resources under land only. Liberia's enclave economy that is dependent on the export of raw commodity, including timber (Beaumont, 2001; Global Witness, 2001) remains unchanged since colonial times 1822. As a result, the resources, specifically timbers are opened and susceptible to the global market needs despite the declaration of political independence. The Government of Liberia continues to use its constitutional authority over all natural resources to exploit logs as a major source of revenue. Therefore, today's neo-colonial economic environment – the exploitation of Liberia's timbers for local and foreign markets – is entrenched and poses serious challenges to REDD+. The contention of George Klay Kieh that the Liberian economy is at the service of what he terms 'American neo-colonialism in Liberia' better shows where the main challenge to REDD+ implementation in Liberia lies (Kieh, 2012, p.170). This challenge is reflected in the Forestry Development Authority approval of 1,745,681ha forest contracts to companies as discussed in chapter 5 (Interviews, ER3, 13/08/2019; ER7, 19/08/2019; ER12, 8/11/2019; Appendix 1; Appendix 8). The situation is not much different socially. Socially, forest communities' livelihoods are threatened and they live on the margin of the society while their forest resources are exploited through various forms of private schemes made possible by private property rights

It is important to note that these challenges are not limited to Liberia but appear to be the same across participating partner countries of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. For example, Ngendakumana et al think the current institutional and policy frameworks of Cameroon and other South Sahara African countries have bestowed exclusive land tenure rights to the State, while curtailing access to local farmers to forest and forest-based resources on which they depend for a living (Ngendakumana et al, 2013). This, in their view, has been one of the major challenges since the inception of REDD+. Therefore, for them, REDD+ has to develop strategies to maintain social safeguards such as community rights, and actors' consents within the land use policy. Similarly, Filer and Wood are of the view that the prospect of a forest carbon market in Papua New Guinea added a new element of instability to national forest policy and property processes that were already moving in contradictory directions (Filer and Wood, 2012). In these respects, Palmer argues that given the widespread existence of common property regimes in tropical forest areas, serious consideration should be given to the creation of common property carbon rights (Palmer, 2010). It is in this context that REDD Net contends:

Carbon rights should not be simply about property rights. They need to be embedded in a comprehensive package of rights and entitlements. Unless this happens, the REDD+ will serve to entrench inequitable structures for determining and distributing benefits, and may unnecessarily expose indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities to fraud and corruption, thus resulting in the loss to communities of valuable carbon rights (REDD Net, 2010).

From the foregoing and while it is acknowledged that the REDD+ as a concept could contribute to carbon sequestration to combat climate change under the Paris Agreement, it still remains a neoliberal scheme to address the global climate crisis. Therefore, this study concludes the REDD+ is basically a project to incorporate the tropical forest sector into the dominant global capitalist economy. Thus, while the REDD+ goal is to incentivise forest communities to trade in sequestered carbon from standing trees, the REDD+ invariably remains challenged in countries like Liberia with colonial and neo-colonial legacies, especially as it relates to the demand for tropical timber in the global market place. This legacy continues to favour the exploitation of timbers for domestic and international consumption. As a result, the REDD+ inadvertently privileges commercial logging over conservation. Therefore, and in a broader international context, the REDD+ represents the contradiction in neoliberal capitalist societies. This contradiction seeks to use the cause of a problem to address the problem (Wright and Nyberg, 2015; Lohmann, 2012; Bonanno, 2017). In this case, Liberia's deforestation is mainly driven by commercial logging activities to meet the demand for timber products in the market place. The market is made possible by private property rights, the foundation of neoliberal market transactions. Thus, the freeholders of land, including the government, with all the rights associated with the ownership of the property, continue to pillage the forest to supply the global market (Global Witness, 2018). Hence, the cause of the deforestation is the market. Therefore, the solution to the deforestation rests in the global market place and not in tropical countries like Liberia.

Despite the market being the main cause of the deforestation, the dominant narrative for the destruction of the forest is often framed in languages that largely apportion blame on livelihood activities of the indigenous forest communities. In contrast, commercial logging and plantation agriculture that bear the greatest responsibility are often framed as revenue generators, job creators and seen as involving sustainable agriculture and protecting the environment (Brown, 2021; Stokes, 2015). To borrow the words of Kashwan et al, corporations enjoy 'greenwashing'- the corporate malpractices of misleading consumers by creating spurious environmental campaigns as a means of covering up environmentally degrading practices (Kashwan et al, 2021, p. 13). However, if REDD+ is to successfully complete the 'Readiness' phase in Liberia, it has to hold the powerful actors in the global capitalist economy to account.

The failure to do so may render the REDD+ scheme nothing but, what Kashwan et al refer to as, “an excessive reliance on technocratic management jargon ... indicative of a neoliberal daylighting initiative that fails to hold the powerful actors to account” (Kashwan, 2021, p. 9).

7.70 Conclusion

The political, economic, social and structural challenges confronting REDD+ in Liberia are rooted in the dominant private property rights introduced by the landgrab of the American colonization in 1821. Despite the codification of customary land in the Land Rights Act 2018, the private property right is dominant. In this regard, the 2018 Land Rights Law, the latest of numerous changes to the public land laws in Liberia since 1847, requires a confirmatory survey of customary lands, a title deed and registration of the deed as proof of the ownership of the land. This effectively entails the conversion of customary land practice to private land practice. Nonetheless, customary land practices remain entrenched. The tribal people still lay claims to their land via customary means, and have greater faith in their customary institutions. In other words, the dominance of private property rights has not been successful in dislodging the indigenous communal land ownership which considers land more than a mere object to be traded at will. The indigenous philosophy of land ownership sees the land as sacred, and a bond that binds the present generation to their ancestors and the future generations. For the indigenes, the proof of ownership is based on the traditional principle of first to settle the land, oral testament to such arrival, and natural features like rivers, mountains and trees as boundaries.

While private property right has not been successful in ending communal property right, it has created the opportunity for individuals and companies to exploit the forests resources for profit. Therefore, the REDD+ certification of customary land through title deeds, in line with the Land Rights Act 2018 that subscribes to private property right, has inadvertently exposed the forest to commercial interest and exploitation. As a result, Liberia, like other tropical countries, finds it hard to stop deforestation. This remains a daunting challenge in light of the dominant neoliberal global economic order that places ‘profit over people’ (Chomsky, 1999). The challenge is made even more difficult by greed or the ‘business as usual’ corporate behaviour in “a new and altogether more frightening era of so-called progress: the age of creative self-destruction” (Wright and Nyberg, 2015, p.1). As long as the dominant global neoliberal economy foundation is private property right or ownership, the free movement of capital across national borders in search of cheap resources for profit is ensured. Therefore, if Liberia is to complete the ‘Readiness’ phase of REDD+, the main actors, in particular multinational

corporations, must be held to account for the deforestation in tropical countries like Liberia. If not, the REDD+ scheme may be seen as exacerbating the social and economic vulnerabilities in these countries under the pretext of “selling nature [carbon in standing trees] to save it [the trees]” (Kashwan et al, 2021). This is especially the case considering that these vulnerabilities are rooted in the country’s colonial legacies and sustained by neo-colonialism that also rests on private property rights now (Kieh, 2012). As is shown in the general conclusions of this study in the next chapter, the success of the Paris Agreement in general, and REDD+ in particular, depends on concrete actions in the dominant global neoliberal market place to stop deforestation in tropical countries like Liberia.

Chapter 8: Dissertation Conclusion

8.0 Introduction

The 2015 Paris Agreement was greeted with great optimism globally (Figueres, 2017). It represents significant progress in global multilateral efforts to address the climate crisis, especially when the planet seems to be on the precipice of cataclysmic natural disasters (Tribett et al, 2017; IPCC, 2021: Summary for Policymakers). Unlike the 1992 Convention and the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement has specific temperature goals. First, it aims to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Second, the goal is to pursue efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (Article 2, UNFCCC Paris Agreement 2015). Of the 29 Articles in the Paris Agreement, Article 5 is particularly significant for this study.

Article 5 effectively codifies the use of the forest, specifically the employment of the REDD+ mechanism, in the fight against climate change (Article 5, UNFCCC Paris Agreement 2015; La Vina and de Leon, 2017). It provides the opportunity to investigate the climate change problem, in particular deforestation in tropical developing countries, within a broader context. This allows for the analysis of the deforestation problem taking into consideration factors internal and external to the implementing country. It ensures the deforestation problem is situated within the dominant global capitalist economy in which a developing country trades, especially as it relates to the timber trade.

The REDD+ is a neoliberal concept, in that it is based on the commodification of carbon. The scheme rests on the notion that forests could be saved if carbon is sequestered in standing trees and subsequently traded to generate income. The aim is to share the income generated with the host communities to incentivize them to keep the forest standing. As a result, the community would discontinue livelihood practices such as slash and burn farming, shifting cultivation and pit sawing, which REDD+ proponents largely see as the main drivers of deforestation. In other words, to proponents of the REDD+ scheme, the livelihood practices of forest communities appear to be the main drivers of deforestation (Acworth, 2019; Forestry Development Authority; 2016). Activities like commercial logging and plantation agriculture that bear the greatest responsibility for the deforestation in tropical countries like Liberia receive lesser scrutiny (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, 2017).

The implementation of the REDD+ scheme basically goes through three main phases: the 'Readiness Phase', 'Demonstration Phase' and 'Implementation Phase'. The 'Readiness Phase', which is the focus of this research, is the planning and preparation phase. At this phase, a country puts into place the requisite policies and builds the needed technical and

institutional capacities to implement the REDD+ scheme. The 'Demonstration Phase' is the trial phase where the policies are tested and pilot project (s) undertaken. The 'Implementation Phase' represents the performance phase or results-based phase at which the country undertakes the REDD+ scheme in practice; the forest is left standing, and the sequestered carbon quantified. Based on the verified carbon sequestered in the standing forest, a country receives payment from one of the publicly managed compliance carbon funds. The payment received is in turn shared with forest communities as per the agreed benefit sharing scheme (UN-REDD Programme, 2020). The ultimate goal of the REDD+ scheme is the 'Investment Phase'. This is the final stage where stored carbon is traded on carbon markets involving private sector investors (Munden Project, 2011). This seems the ultimate objective because critics of the current compliance carbon market which is dependent on donors' funds, managed by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and UN-REDD, argue it is subject to the political interest of donor countries (Piris-Cabezas, 2010). Thus, the donors may decide to fund the scheme or not, provided it aligns with their interests. Therefore, the compliance model is inefficient in terms of economics (Lovera- Biderbeek, 2019). This issue is discussed in detail in Section 2.50 of this research.

The implementers to the REDD+ scheme adopt a technical posture that is anti-political (Ferguson, 1994). The challenges are considered internal affairs for the national authorities to deal with. Thus, the REDD+ implementation is problem-solving (Cox, 1996). It divorces itself from the political, economic, social and structural challenges facing a country while largely proffering expert technical solutions (Mitchell, 2002). This approach overlooks how the challenges came about, and/or how they are being enabled and sustained by the broader global environment within which the country operates. The REDD+ scheme, besides resting on neoliberal logic, shall be implemented within a dominant global capitalist economy that is underpinned by neoliberal economic policies. It is only through neoliberal policies of free trade, free movement of capital, free market and private property rights that concepts like the REDD+ scheme are possible. These policies, in particular, private property right, are the foundation upon which REDD+ rests. As von Mises contends, all demands of [neo]liberalism, including the REDD+ in this case, originate from private ownership (von Mises, 1985). Thus, it is critically important to situate the analyses of the REDD+ project implementation within the context of the dominant global capitalist economy.

Situating the REDD+ project within this global economic context allows analysis of the challenges to go beyond the narrow technical and institutional capacity to the broader internal and external barriers to the scheme. The analysis needs to understand how the challenges came about, and how they are being enabled and sustained. In other words, the challenges

need to be historicized. This is the approach taken by this study. This research investigates how neoliberal economic policies of the dominant global capitalist economy pose challenges to the Paris Agreement in general, and the REDD+ in particular. It situates the challenges within the context of Liberia's colonial legacy. The Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' Project serves as the case study for the investigation. This approach lays bare the link between deforestation in places like Liberia, and the global supply chain for timber products from Liberia.

From the investigation, this study contends that the REDD+ ultimately appears to be a medium through which the exact quantity of forest in tropical countries like Liberia would be known to private investors. It unwittingly exposes the exact locations of the country's prime, and intact forests to powerful commercial interests, especially foreign logging, and plantation companies. As a result, the REDD+ paradoxically makes the forest more visible to commercial activities. For example, through the REDD+ National Forest Inventory and the Forest Cover Map, the Government of Liberia, and forest communities are able to know the exact location of prime forests, the size of the forest, and the quality of timber species in the forest. As a result, while the REDD+ is aiming to verify the quantity of sequestered carbon from a country's national forest inventory through a REDD+ registry that holds all the information on the forest (Interview ER3, 13/08/2019; Appendix 1), it unintentionally puts the forest at risk to commercial interest. This would in turn leads to the mad rush to award commercial logging contracts in the country. The case of the Private Use Permit Scandal in 2012 is an example (Republic of Liberia Special Independent Investigating Body Report on the Issuance of Private Use Permits 2012; Global Witness and Sustainable Development Institute, 2012).

The unintended risk from the REDD+ scheme increases further due to the government's persistent financial difficulties, and forest communities' desperation for immediate short-term benefits from the forest resources (Interviews ER7, 19/08/2019; ER10, 20/08/2019; ER11, 22/08/2019; V1, V2 and V3, 9/11/2019; V4 and V5, 11/2/2020; Appendix 1). The award of 1.74 million hectares of new logging contracts as indicated in Table 2 of Chapter Five of this research is a testament to this reality. Appendix 8 is a further testament to this trend. The situation becomes more acute when concessions for plantations and mining are included. To put it succinctly, the REDD+ is facilitating the preference for commercial logging over conservation because it reveals where the prime forests are located without addressing the immediate financial and livelihood needs of the Government and forest communities. The benefits, in particular the results-based payments, from the REDD+ scheme is long-term. It is only accessible after reaching the implementation phase, when the sequestered carbon has been verified (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, 2017; UN-REDD, 2016). This may take years to attain. For example, Liberia has been engaged in the REDD+ scheme since 2008 but

is yet to fully complete the 'Readiness' phase. This is more than a decade ago. It is exactly fourteen years (2008-2022) which is too long a period for the Government and forest community to wait for benefits amid tough economic and social conditions. In contrast, commercial logging and plantation agriculture provides immediate revenue for the Government, and promises forest communities some immediate benefits like roads and health clinics. Thus, the Government and forest communities prefer commercial logging over forest conservation schemes like REDD+. As was discussed in Chapters Five and Six, logging companies are taking advantage of the situation to exploit the forests. In this context, it is argued the main challenge to the Paris Agreement in general, and the REDD+ in particular, remains the dominant global neoliberal economic policy environment that makes it possible for commercial logging companies to exploit the forest resources in distant places like Liberia.

Unfortunately for countries like Liberia, the exposure of its prime forest to commercial interest is a continuation of the country's colonial legacy. The country's colonial legacy has created a 'Liberian social order' that overcentralizes power in an individual who may mortgage the resources of the country, including forest, to commercial interest as he or she deems necessary (Sawyer, 1992; Sungbeh, 2019). Further, the colonial legacy has put in place an enclave economy that continuously extracts raw materials like timbers for export abroad to serve external capitalist economies. Sadly, the historical marginalization of the rural forest communities from the colonial era keeps denying these communities a fair share in the benefits from the forest resources despite the communities themselves preference for commercial logging. Based on this colonial legacy, Liberia may not successfully complete the REDD+ 'Readiness' Phase.

8.10 Case Findings - Political, Economic, Social and Structural Challenges

The REDD+ implementation in Liberia faces challenging political, economic, social and structural conditions. Political power is centralized in the Presidency, the country is dependent on the export of a few primary products; forest communities are denied basic social services, such as schools, hospital, safe drinking water and public toilets. 70% of the rural forest communities live below the poverty line of less than \$1.90 per day. The forest communities are largely cut off from provisional towns due to deplorable laterite roads, especially during the annual rainy season between April to November annually. The mainstream 'problem-solving' literature about REDD+, along with the dominant literature on Africa's postcolonial condition, see these challenges as primarily internal to developing countries, rooted in their weak institutions, poor governance and political culture.

This thesis has, in contrast, developed a critical approach which historicises these various 'internal' conditions within the longer colonial and neocolonial incorporation of Liberia's society

and economy in the global capitalist system. The forest communities have endured these exclusionary conditions since 1822 when the ACS that founded the modern Liberian State introduced a republican form of government. This form of government essentially institutionalises an 'imperial presidency' that dominates every institution of government and fabric of the Liberian society despite its core principle of three separate, but co-equal branches of government: Legislative, Executive and Judiciary (Article, 3, Republic of Liberia Constitution, 1986; Sungbeh, 2019). This has led to a 'Liberian social order' that works at the whims of the President. The President's will prevails in how the country's resources are managed and distributed. The President, through the Executive branch of government, crafts the national budget, enters concession agreements with foreign companies, and sets the country's foreign policy (Articles 57, 58 and 59, Republic of Liberia Constitution, 1986). The Legislature basically rubber stamps whatever the President submits while the Judiciary often rules in favour of the President. As a result, the Executive keeps mortgaging the natural resources of the country to foreign firms without checks on its powers. The President uses funds generated from the sale of the resources to maintain power, and run a patronage network. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, the line between the President (the person) and the Presidency (the institution) is blurred to the extent one cannot be separated from the other. The case of President William V. Tubman, the 18th President that ruled the country for twenty-seven unbroken years is a classic example (Wreh, 1976). Of particular note is the fact that, the Constitution of the Republic gives the President such broad and extensive powers as 'Head of State, Head of Government and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of Liberia' (Article 50, Republic of Liberia of Liberia Constitution 1986).

The President use of these broad powers, especially to manage the natural resources of the country, does not translate into tangible benefits for the population generally, and the forest communities in particular. The revenue generated from the sale of the resources, including logging concessions, is appropriated by the President in whatever ways he or she deems necessary. The national budgetary process is more of a perfunctory exercise through which the President essentially rewards a network of cronies and clients appointed to various positions across the country (Articles 55 and 56, Republic of Liberia Constitution 1986). The Legislature is unable to keep the President in check because it is more interested in its own share of the national revenue than the interests of the people it purports to represent. As a result, the owners of the resources, specifically the rural forest communities like Kpalan, Latia, and Falie in the Lake Piso Multipurpose Use Reserve Area, and Zortapa and Geipa in the East Nimba Nature Reserve that were visited during this research, continue to be excluded from any meaningful benefit from the exploitation of their resources. They are largely marginalized and are languishing in abject poverty. The communities continue to depend on the forest

through subsistence farming, shifting cultivation, slash and burn farming and pit-sawing as the main sources of livelihoods. This constitutes further challenge to the REDD+ scheme, especially taking into account that alternative livelihood is virtually non-existent in these communities.

The foregoing constitutes the political, economic, social and structural realities for forest communities in Liberia. These are the challenges that REDD+ must confront in Liberia. Unfortunately, the REDD+ considers these deep-rooted issues as concerns for the national government to address. Therefore, the REDD+ scheme's main focus is on institutional capacity-building and the production of various technical documents. As of this study, Liberia through the Forestry Development Authority and Environmental Protection Agency, produced the Liberia National REDD+ Strategy (FDA 2016), REDD+ Communication Strategy, Liberia Forest and Cover Map, Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA), Environment and Social Management Framework, Safeguard Information System, validated Liberia's National Forest Definition, National Forest Inventory (NFI), Emission Reference Level and Feedback Grievance Redress Mechanism (FDA 2017; Liberia's REDD+ Readiness Annual Progress Report 2018; Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, 2017).

The production of technical documents, and building institutional capacities for REDD+ implementation aligns with the problem-solving approach of proponents of the REDD+. The proponents of REDD+ assume putting into place policies like free, prior and informed consent, participatory decision-making, and building the requisite technical capacities of the Forestry Development Authority and Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia could ensure the preservation of the forests while benefitting the communities. This approach, as discussed in Chapter Three, is couched in Africanist narratives that blame bad governance in developing countries on factors internal to the country. From this perspective, states failures in Africa are largely blamed on bad leaders in pursuit of personal interest at the expense of the public. It is in such context that Bratton and van de Walle contend that "neopatrimonial regimes demonstrated very little developmental capacity as a consequence of both clientelism and the use of state resources" (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997, p. 67). Along similar lines, Clapham attributes the fall of the Tolbert Government in a 1980 military coup in Liberia to what he terms "Tolbert did not seek to operate as Tubman had done; he could scarcely be said to have been alive to clientelism at all" (Clapham, 1982, p. 83). Tubman was Tolbert's predecessor who had ruled Liberia on clientelism for twenty-seven years from 1944 until his death in 1971(Chapter Four discussed this in detail). In other words, Clapham thinks Tubman succeeded because he ran an effective patronage system while Tolbert did not. What however, Clapham fails to take into account is that Tubman lasted that long because he served

Western interests through his "*Open-Door-Policy*, which granted unfettered access to Liberia natural resources (Werker and Pritchett, 2018).

According to the Union of Liberian Association in the Americas, "Liberia's unprecedented 'Open Door Policy' has bred economic dependency on foreign investments - US capital and manpower, thereby, undermining the country's economic self-sufficiency and self-reliance" (ULAA, 1978, p. 97). It should be stated though that Clapham referenced this policy but did not see it as a medium through which Tubman got protection from his Western backers or bourgeoisie (Kieh, 2012; Dunn and Tarr, 1988). In the words of Medard, local bourgeoisie like Tubman "shares with the foreign bourgeoisie a privileged access to economic resources" (Medard, 1982, p. 183). Despite such foreign connections, Clapham is of the view that Tolbert's attempt to raise the price of rice, the country's staple food, in order to reduce the reliance on rice importation and save the country millions of dollars in foreign currency was a good intention only, but politically explosive (Clapham 1982). What commentaries as Clapham does not take into consideration is that, Tolbert's 'self-reliance' economic policy threatens external rice dealers' interests in Liberia, and that the domestic opponents to the policy may very well be agents of foreign interests (Kieh, 1992). For instance, Gabriel Baccus Mathews, the leader of the Progressive Alliance of Liberia that organised the protest against Tolbert's increase in the price of rice was alleged to have been on the payroll of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States (Kuzmarov, 2021). Thus, Tolbert downfall could have been due to his quest to wean the economy of Liberia off Western imports while building the country's industrial base than his failure to maintain a network of clients in Liberia (Kieh, 2012; Norman, 2014, p. 147). Similarly, Boas while acknowledging the causes of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone are rooted in their histories of neopatrimonialism, asserts the immediate precursor of the war in Liberia was due to the violence perpetrated by President Doe through his soldiers on the Gio and Monos tribes (Boas (2001, p. 709). What this narrative fails to take into account however is that, Doe was supported by the United States even after coming to power through a bloody military coup in 1980, and despite being accused of rigging the 1985 Presidential elections. An allegation that led to a failed coup attempt in November 1985 by General Thomas Quiwonkpa, a member of the Gio tribe, and the former commanding General of the Armed Forces of Liberia. He was also an original Member of the People Redemption Council military coup that toppled Tolbert in 1980. By some strange coincidence, Quiwonkpa prior to the failed coup of 1985 was exiled in the United States after falling out with President Doe in 1983 (Dolo, 1996, pp. 59-64, Dunn, 2009; Sirleaf, 2009). In this context, the Africanist narratives, and by extension the REDD+ problem-solving approach, fail to take into account that the bad governance, marginalization of the population, cheap sale of the

country's resources to multinational companies, and the lack of basic social services are rooted in the country's colonial past.

To address the foregoing limitation of the problem-solving approach, I historicized the political, economic and social barriers to REDD+ implementation in Liberia. I argued that the problems could not be divorced from the country's past. Therefore, I traced them, in particular the personalization of executive powers by the President, to the colonial foundation of the country. I firstly contend that any effective solution should be looked at through the colonial history of the country. Secondly, the problems need to be situated in the broader dominant global capitalist economic environment in which the country trades, especially as an exporter of timber. This approach is critical if one is to avoid the pitfall of overlooking the root causes of the challenges, especially considering that the REDD+ would be implemented in the same political, economic and social environments that are essentially a carryover of the country's colonial legacy.

8.20 Liberia Colonial Legacy

The form of the Liberia government is republican. It comprises three separate branches: the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary that are co-equal (Article 3, Republic of Liberia Constitution 1986). In theory, they have equal powers and serve as checks and balances on one another. However, the Executive dominates the other two branches, and the society as a whole (Dunn and Tarr, 1988; Sawyer, 1992; Ellis, 2007). Power flows from the top to the bottom. The President controls all levers of power within the Executive from the Ministers down to the town chief. The Liberia constitution gives the President the power to appoint all officials within the Executive. The Constitution clearly states that:

All cabinet ministers, deputy ministers and assistant cabinet ministers, ambassadors, ministers and consuls, superintendents of counties, and other government officials, both military and civilian, appointed by the President pursuant to this Constitution *shall hold their offices at the pleasure of the President* (The emphasis is mine) (Articles 54 and 55(a), Republic of Liberia Constitution, 1986).

As a result, the President can relieve any official of their position, if the President desires without explaining the reason for the action. In addition, the constitution permits the President to remove elected chiefs from office "for proved misconduct" (Article 56(b), Republic of Liberia Constitution 1986). However, in a political environment with an over powerful President, the chief stands no chance of opposing his removal from office even without "proved misconduct". This excessive executive power is a carryover from the colonial era since 1822, when the American Colonization Society laid the foundation for the republican form of government. The excessive power was retained in the Independence Constitution of 1847 after the American

Colonization Society transferred power to the freed slaves or settlers. Thus, the all-powerful executive remains the foundation of the modern Liberia State. The American Colonization Society copy this form of government from the US. It should be noted though that there have been attempts at reforms to decentralize power away from the Executive.

Despite various attempts to reform, for example the Local Government Act of 2018, these have not been successful in curtailing the excessive power of the President. As a matter of fact, these reforms seem more like a 'decentralized despotism', to use the words of Mamdani (Mamdani, 1996). The chief at the local level is more accountable to the President far away in Monrovia, the capital, than to the people in the village. These reform initiatives tend to re-enforce indirect rule and control by the Executive over counties, districts, towns and villages in the hinterland of the country. In short, the republican form of government is an imposition of the Weberian legal- bureaucratic or patrimonial governance architecture by the American Colonization Society. It transplanted the indigenous governance institutions that were more accountable to the people, and the participatory decision-making amongst the traditional leaders, elders and people of the village (Sawyer, 1992; Moran, 2006). Further, the decentralization exercise to reform government appears to be a deliberate effort to open up the interior to market penetration to seamlessly incorporate rural forest communities into the dominant global capitalist economy since the arrival of the settlers in 1822. They are structuring the rural communities in ways that would make it easy to enter into forest contracts as per the laws (Republic of Liberia Community Rights Law, 2009; Republic of Liberia Local Government Act 2018)

Economically, Liberia is an enclave economy that primarily supplies a few products to the global market. The country depends on the export of rubber, iron ore, timber and gold to industrial economies for revenue to fund its national budget (Central Bank of Liberia, 2020). In the reverse direction, the country imports more than 90% of finished goods and services, including rice, the country's staple food, as well as fuel (Jackson, 2019). This aligns with the view of Jean Paul Sartre that colonies are markets that export raw materials and import excess goods from the industrial world (Sartre, 1964).

Socially, the country remains exclusionary and stratified. The few political elites in urban centres, particularly Monrovia, continue to appropriate revenue from the exploitation of the resources for themselves. The exclusion is further compounded by structural conditions like the bad laterite roads that are impassable during the rainy season. This makes rural communities access to important goods from urban centres nearly impossible. Therefore, it is no surprise that more than 70% of the country's rural population lives in abject poverty on a mere \$1.90 per day (Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-information Service, 2017).

The chapters in Part II of the thesis examined each of the various 'internal' challenges facing the implementation of REDD+ in Liberia, as identified by various stakeholders, policy experts and the villagers and forest communities. In each case the thesis developed a critical analysis which sought to historicise these various features of Liberia's present within a longer global history of colonialism and capitalism.

In Part III, the final chapter addressed the question of property rights, which underpins the entire REDD+ scheme. The indigenous people of Liberia hold a different philosophy of property right compared to that introduced by the settlers' landgrab in 1821 and that assumed by REDD+. For the indigenous, land is based on communal ownership (common property) while that of the settlers is individual ownership (private property). These contending philosophies gave rise to the dual land regimes that the country is grappling with today.

8.30 The continuous struggles over landed property rights in Liberia

The country has a dual land regime: private property rights based on the constitution (Article 22, Republic of Liberia Constitution 1986), and customary land ownership based on the Land Rights Law (Republic of Liberia Land Rights Law, 2018). Since 2018, the proof of ownership for customary land is through a registered deed. This, paradoxically, is in line with private property right. Thus, while the law recognizes indigenous customary land ownership, it requires official recognition through a process based on private property rights. The land has to be surveyed, deed prepared, probated and registered. Notwithstanding the law requirement that proof of ownership is only after registration of the land deed, the indigenous people continue to assert their ownership based on ancestry and according to indigenous traditional philosophy. For the indigenous people, the land remains theirs, with or without registered land deed. Therefore, the private property right which largely facilitated land grabs by the settlers since their arrival in 1821 continues to face strong resistance from the indigenous claim to the land. This has resulted in perennial land conflicts that the country continues to face today.

Besides the clash in the philosophies of land ownership between the two groups, the introduction of the private property philosophy by the ACS opened up the country to commercial interests, in particular the hinterland where forest communities live. This gave rise to the country's plantation economy, and the subsequent opening up of the forest and land to commercial logging and mining activities by multinational companies. Today, due to the lack of alternative livelihood and the high rate of unemployment in the country, forest communities – especially the youths - are pushed into the timber trade such as pit sawing, for survival. The sacredness and preservation of the forest are therefore under threat from these commercial activities. In this context, private property rights, the foundation of the capitalist economy, may have succeeded in incorporating Liberia generally, and forest communities in particular, into

the dominant global capitalist economy. This is demonstrated through the sprawling lumber markets across urban centres in Liberia, in particular Monrovia, and the export of timbers to countries abroad, with China and the EU being major destinations (See Figure 18 and Chat 5 in Chapter Five of this research). In this context, I contend that private property right is unwittingly contributing to the challenges to REDD+. Holders of private property rights are at liberty to manage their properties in whatever ways they chose, including selling the land or resources on the land. Thus, private property right is the foundation of all neoliberal economic transactions, including the trade in timber products. As von Mises himself argued, all other demands of [neo]liberalism starts from private property (von Mises, 1985).

In contrast to the private ownership of land, the customary land philosophy which considers land as life, and the bond between the past, present and future generations, is more REDD+ friendly – or rather, more conducive to environmental protection. These customary understandings support forest conservation by largely treating the land, in particular the forest, as ‘Sacred Bush’, the continued existence of which is tied to the survival of the people. This contrasts with private ownership, which facilitates commercial activities for individual profit. This commercialization of the land seems to have brought more land conflicts in the country.

8.40 Theoretical thoughts

At the onset, the goal of this project was to explore the hypothesis ‘why weak political institutions in Africa would make it difficult to implement the Paris Agreement.’ It was based on a problem-solving approach. In this respect, I sought to investigate how power dynamics, using discourse analysis, at international level during the regime formation might play out between stakeholders involved in national implementation. The Liberia REDD+ Readiness Project was chosen as the case study. The Liberia REDD+ project started in 2008 after Liberia received the first grant to prepare its ‘Readiness’ proposal. In this research, I draw on interviews conducted with respondents from the Liberia REDD+ Technical Working Group, five forest communities within two of Liberia five protected areas, and senior students from the Department of Forestry, University of Liberia for the case study (Appendices 3 and 4). The target respondents were engaged in the Liberia REDD+ ‘Readiness’ project in one form or another. The power relations amongst stakeholders, especially the forest community’s involvement in the decision-making process of REDD+ ‘Readiness’ scheme was the main focus.

The initial theoretical thinking informing the investigation was based on discourse analysis and Michel Foucault’s conception of power. For Foucault, power is micro and dispersed across society, and is not situated at a particular centre (Foucault, 1984). Therefore, Foucault contends that to understand the influencers of decisions one needs to look to the locales of

power across the society, and not to a central location like the seat of government in the capital. However, upon the field visit, the research found that the challenges to the REDD+ scheme are more than the weakness of the institutions and forest communities' involvement in the decision-making process of the REDD+ scheme. This also involves an understanding of how the institutions came into being; how the weaknesses evolved, and the history of structural conditions within the forest communities. As a result, an investigation of the history of the Liberia state and economy, and the broader global economic environment within which the country trades are required. In other words, the challenges to the Paris Agreement could not be divorced from the colonial past of Liberia as represented by the strongly centralised political institutions and the exclusionary political, economic, social and structural conditions in the country, generally and the forest communities in particular. This required me to change my lens of analysis from looking at how to make REDD+ work effectively by the identification of challenges to the scheme nationally, to understanding how those challenges came into being. Therefore, I resorted to a critical approach in order to develop a theoretically informed analysis of how colonialism, neo-colonialism and neoliberalism have shaped the country's history, and to understand its current political, economic, and social predicaments.

The colonial analytical tool puts into perspective how power in Liberia became centralized in an imperial presidency. Further, it illuminates that colonialism is far more than the direct physical presence of a colonizer or indirect presence through local agents, but also through mental conditioning. I drew on conceptual thoughts of thinkers like Sartre, Ferguson and Mamdani. Based on this perspective, I argue the population of Liberia, in particular the political elites, are conditioned mentally in the ways of the West, especially the US where the ACS originated from to establish the modern Liberian state. In this context, I have realized that the resources of the country are still externally controlled since Liberians are already conditioned to see no alternative universe to the US economic and social order. Liberians, especially the political elites, mimic everything American. To them, the satisfying of Washington is paramount, and necessary for the protection of the national interest. To Liberia's political leaders, anything that meets Washington's approval is good for the country.

This form of colonial control has morphed into neo-colonialism today by ensuring the continuous supply of raw materials to industrial economies. Further, I have determined that neoliberalism, which is a new social order to make "responsibilized" citizen to operate as a miniature firm, responding to incentives, rationally assessing risks, and prudently choosing from different courses of action (Ferguson, 2009), represents the latest phase of modern capitalism that itself is a stage for colonialism (Dumenil and Levy, 2011). These theoretical tools together better explain the challenges the REDD+ faces in places like Liberia than the

'weak institution' narratives, which blames the failure of the Weberian legal-bureaucratic institution or patrimonialism in Africa on neopatrimonialism or Africanist discourses. These theories demonstrate that the political, social, economic and structural challenges of a country cannot be separated from the country's past, and the dominant global capitalist' economic environment in which the country trades.

8.50 Main Conclusions

The main conclusions of this study are firstly, the main challenge to the REDD+ implementation is the neoliberal economic policy environment underpinned by private property rights, free market, free trade, privatization, commodification, and securitization that continue to facilitate the unfettered movement of capital through multinational companies in a dominant global capitalist economy. These policies place "profit over people", to borrow the words of Chomsky (1999), and have the world, in the view of Wright and Nyberg (2015), on "a path of creative self-destruction" as is manifested by the changing climatic conditions. Secondly, Liberia's colonial legacy, including the republican form of government and institutions, and plantation economy make the country dependent on the global market for survival. Thirdly, the 'Readiness' activities are underpinned by Africanist narratives that largely focus on challenges internal to the country. The role being played by the neo-colonial environment is largely ignored. It adopts a 'technocratic' (Mitchell, 2002) or 'anti-politics' (Ferguson, 1994) posture in the conception of the challenges to REDD+ in countries like Liberia. This is essentially reflective of the general approach to environmental issues where the colonial linkage to the production of the problem is often ignored (Ferdinand, 2022).

8.60 Summary of key Findings

The key findings of the research can be summarised as follow: (i) the REDD+ scheme is essentially a new and foreign form of social order and control. It specifically introduces, in countries like Liberia, western values of economic governance that would ultimately discipline and incorporate forest communities into the broader dominant global capitalist economy; (ii) alternative livelihood in forest communities is not taken into consideration in the REDD+ 'Readiness' Phase. As a result, forest communities livelihood activities like shifting cultivation and slash and burn farming are wrongly construed as the main culprits for deforestation; and (iii) Liberia's precarious economic position in the dominant global capitalist environment - debt ridden, small revenue base and huge national development needs - makes it difficult to stop the deforestation and degradation of its forest. Thus, the focus of any concrete actions should be directed towards the global market place where the demand for timber is fuelling the problem in countries like Liberia.

In sum, it is the dominant global neoliberal economic policies environment that makes access to Liberia timbers possible through globalization that constitutes the main challenge to the Paris Agreement 2015 in general, and the REDD+ particular.

8.70 Reflection on the Research Journey

The PhD project is more than just an academic exercise to produce a piece of written work to contribute to the frontier of knowledge. It is, in totality, a training of the whole being of a person. It tests one's intellectual capacities, endurance, objectivity and tolerance towards the views of others. It requires honesty, respect for facts and hard work. It is a journey of peaks and troughs that is challenging, but fulfilling as one reaches various milestones.

The journey starts with the initial proposal; revising the initial proposal/and or topic after a thorough review of relevant literature; deciding on the best methodological approach; deciding which theoretical concepts and philosophical tools to adopt; the writing and rewriting of various chapters; the field work that brings up different realities to the initial conceptual thoughts; the numerous supervision meetings, workshops and symposiums; the production of the final dissertation, a viva and corrections, if any. While all these elements are important for the success of the journey, the philosophical thought appears the most profound to this researcher. At the end of the journey, the researcher emerges with a particular philosophy on the area investigated, and a general perspective of life. This philosophy determines the view the researcher shall subscribe to in the day-to-day dealings with problems of the real world in general, and the area studied in particular. It guides the person's whole being in their human interactions with the living and non-living environments.

I have emerged from this research journey with the philosophy that humans, animals, and non-living environments exist in a symbiotic relationship. The biological species survival/existence depends on the survival, preservation and protection of the non-biological environments. Based on this philosophy, I am of the conviction that human actions have implications for our planet. I think anthropocentrism should be guarded against, especially since the advent of the industrial revolution when machines relying on fossil fuels started dominating production of goods and services. These human activities are largely responsible for the variation in the Earth's climatic conditions. Thus, the reversal of these conditions requires humans to live in harmony with the living and non-living environments. Therefore, the sooner humans realize that we are not the only species with intrinsic value and interest while the rest of nature is of instrumental value, the better for our planet (Carter, 2007). This requires more than just the recognition of biodiversity but also the preservation of the living species and the physical environments in which the species live. For humans to do this, the way through which humans' activities are impacting the environments needs to be understood. For

this research, conceptual tools like colonialism, neoliberalism, capitalism, and governmentality were more relevant to understand how humans' activities are at the root of the causes to the global climate crisis in general, and deforestation in particular.

I have realized that to get a better grasp of a problem requires situating it in a broader context. In other words, the problem exists in an environment that is beyond the proximate to remote locations. Thus, deforestation in places like Liberia is better understood by looking at the demand for timber products in places far from Liberia. Also, I understand that contemporary problems have historical roots. Therefore, it is important to get a grasp of how a problem came into being, and how such past is informing the challenges posed by the problem now, notwithstanding the difficulty in investigating a problem because of the length of the time lapse. The value in trying to understand the history of the problem far outweighs the challenge of the long historical periods. I am therefore of the view that Liberia's problems today are a product of its colonial past. As a result, Liberia would be better placed to address its contemporary challenges by confronting its past, especially how this past is playing out in subtle ways through unconscious means today. In other words, I understand colonialism is more than the physical presence of the colonizer. It is also mental and operates in more subtle ways than is visible to the eyes.

Lastly, I have come to the conclusion that the global world order, though made up of independent nation-states, has hierarchies. Thus, nations do not occupy equal positions as the principle of national sovereignty posits in International Relations theory. Some nations are more powerful than others. For example, the industrialized nations dominate international relations and global commerce. These powerful industrial nations are best placed to decide if global efforts to combat the climate crisis will succeed or not. Therefore, any pragmatic solution to the climate crisis should target the industrial world more, especially those behaviours that drive the demand for timber products in countries like Liberia. Similarly, I think the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations are antiquated when powerful nations often employ different ways, overt and covert, to influence happenings in other nations to advance their national interests. Put differently, the powerful nations would do anything to advance and protect their national interests around the world or in the 'globalized' village. Therefore, the powerful nations cannot divorce themselves from the political, economic, social and structural problems taking place in countries in which they have interests under the guise of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. Realism is still a force in today's world order despite the advancement in international relations (Mingst, McKibben and Arreguín-Toft, 2019).

8.80 Opportunities for further research

The complexity of the project and some of the issues identified, including Liberia's colonial past despite the general misconception that Liberia was never colonized, provide opportunities for further research. Considering that Liberia colonialism is a quite specific variant, a wider understanding of the role of coloniality and race/indigeneity in the politics of REDD+, in particular for Liberia, and in general for Africa and the Global South, is needed. This is important for one to understand the particular ways in which race and indigeneity play out in land ownership in Liberia (Pailey, 2016; Articles 27a and 22, Constitution of the Republic of Liberia 1986). An in-depth investigation of Liberia's colonial past, especially how this past connects to contemporary challenges is critical to understanding why various efforts at reforms, and development are not succeeding in places like Liberia. A critical research of the country's colonial legacy would present the opportunity to determine the extent to which external influence, especially from the US, continues to dominate the political life of Liberia. A line of enquiry could be 'how has the US enabled the failure of Liberia as an independent nation?'. This is not to discount the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of nation-states. On the contrary, this would establish how power is employed in relationships between nations, in particular geopolitical alliances between poor nations like Liberia, and world powers to advance the economic interests of the powerful nations. This could lead to establishing if there are any link between the deforestation in Liberia and the relationships with powerful nations.

Additionally, the extent to which REDD+ could be seen as a governmental practice that may condition forest communities as objects of neoliberal market needs investigation. This may reveal ways through which REDD+ is unwittingly enabling capital or incorporating forest communities into the dominant global capitalist economy. For example, the dependence of the economy of Liberia on the dominant global capitalist economy makes the country and its political elites less independent (Sartre, 1964; Nkrumah, 1965). Thus, it calls into question international relations principles such as 'national sovereignty' and the 'non-interference' in the internal affairs of other nations. This is more so when nations continue to pursue their respective national interests in a world of realism or anarchy despite the advancement in international relations and cooperation (Mingst, McKibben and Arreguin-Toft, 2019; Kissinger, 2014; Varoufakis, 2015; Moyo, 2012). A possible line of enquiry could be 'is REDD+ unknowingly enabling deforestation by exposing prime forest to commercial interests?' This may provide the space to investigate how Liberia's plantation economy makes it difficult to implement schemes like REDD+.

Finally, the probability of Liberia's indigenous governance institutions prior to the arrival of the freed slaves in 1822 serving as a better alternative to the current Weberian patrimonial/legal-bureaucratic institutionalism in the country requires thorough investigation. Could the checks and balances within the indigenous traditional institutions be better at countering the political elites neopatrimonial behaviours than the current republican form of government in the country? Could re-imagining the REDD+ in terms of the sacredness of the forest and land to forest communities (Sawyer, 1992) lead to a greater buy-in into the REDD+ scheme because this aligns with the beliefs/practices of the tribal people? This may also provide an opportunity to understand how the tribal communal land practices perpetuate the same neoliberal practices as the REDD+. These lines of enquiry are not only beyond the scope of this research, but would require significant resources and time.

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List of fieldwork interviews.

1. Interviews - students and villagers

Group interview with senior students, Department of Forestry, University of Liberia, Fendell Campus, Monrovia, Liberia, 14 August 2019;

Group interview with villagers, Kpalan Town, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia, 9 November 2019;

Group interview with villagers, Latia Town, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia, 9 November 2019;

Group interview with villagers, Falie Town, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia, 9 November 2019;

Group interview with villagers, Zortapa Town, Nimba County, Liberia, 11 February 2020;

Group interview with villagers, Geipa Town, Nimba County, Liberia, 11 February 2020

2. Interviews with stakeholders

Interview with Asst Professor, Benjamin Karmorh, Coordinator, Multilateral Environmental Agreement, Environment Protection Agency and UNFCCC National Focus Person, Republic of Liberia, Monrovia, 12 August 2019;

Interview with Z. Elijah Whapoe, Climate & Renewable Energy Finance Expert and Head Planning & Policy Department, Environment Protection Agency, Monrovia, 13 August 2019;

Interview with Urias S. Goll, Environmental Economist & Management Expert; In-House-Counsel, Liberia Petroleum Regulatory Authority, Monrovia, and former Executive Director, EPA, and former head National Climate Change Secretariat, Monrovia, 13 August 2019;

Interview with Dr. Johnson Jlokpeh Geply, Asst Professor, Forest Governance and Management, University of Liberia, Monrovia, 14 August 2019;

Interview with Tom Wesley Korpor, Senior Technical Officer for Land Use, Liberia Land Authority, Monrovia, 15 August 2019;

Interview with Dr. Nathaniel T. Blama, Sr., Executive Director and CEO, Environment Protection Agency, Monrovia, 16 August 2019;

Interview with Saah A. David, Jr., National REDD+ Coordinator, REDD+ Implementation Unit, Forestry Development Authority, Monrovia, 19 August 2019;

Interview with George Tee Forpoh, PhD, Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, REDD+ Implementation Unit, Forestry Development Authority, Monrovia, 19 August 2019;

Interview with Atty Roland T. Lepol, Lawyer and Programme Manager, REDD+ Implementation Unit, Forestry Development Authority, Monrovia, 19 August 2019;

Interview with Peter G. Mulbah, Deputy Country Director, Conservation International, Monrovia, 22 August 2019;

Interview with Lawrence A. Bondo, Sr., Community Development Initiative, Monrovia, 22 August 2019;

Interview with Zinnah S. Mulbah, Environmental Specialist, World Bank Country Office, Monrovia, and Focus Person, World Bank's Implementation Support to the Liberia Forest Sector Project, 8 November 2019;

Interview with Dominic T. Johns, Convenor, REDD+ Technical Working Group, Monrovia, 8 November 2019;

Interview with Z. Abednego G. Mehn, Livelihood and Governance Coordinator, Fauna and Flora International, Monrovia, 10 February 2020;

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

The interviews consist of experts and focus groups. The experts were drawn mainly from the REDD+ Technical Working Group of Liberia (RTWG). The RTWG comprises key stakeholders to the Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' Project. The focus groups involve villagers and students. The villagers were drawn from five villages across two of Liberia five protected areas - the Lake Piso Multipurpose Protected Area, Grand Cape Mount County, Western Liberia, and the East Nimba Nature Reserve, Nimba County, Northern Liberia. The villages of Falie, Kpallan and Latia were visited in the Lake Piso area while Zortapa and Geipa were visited in the East Nimba Area. Senior students of the Department of Forestry, University of Liberia served as another focus group to contextualize the responses of experts and villages group due to their reputation for independent thinking.

A EXPERTS				
#	Interviewee	Code	Position/ Institution	Date
1	Benjamin Karmorh	ER1	Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences, University of Liberia; Coordinator Multilateral Environmental Agreement, EPA, Republic of Liberia and UNFCCC National Focus Person, Republic of Liberia	12/08/2019
2.	Z. Elijah Whapoe,	ER2	Climate & Renewable Energy Finance Expert; Head, Planning & Policy Department, EPA. REDD+ Focus Person at EPA	13/08/2019
3	Atty Urias S. Goll,	ER3	Environmental Economist and Management Expert; In-House-Counsel, Liberia Petroleum Regulatory Authority; Consultant, Fiona & Flora International and CWB Law Firm; Former Deputy Executive Director, EPA and First	13/08/2019

			Administrative Coordinator, Liberia Climate Change Secretariat	
4	Dr. Johnson Jlokpeh Geply, Assistant Professor Forest Governance and Management	ER4	Department of Forestry, University of Liberia; CITES Expert for Liberia.	14/08/2019
5	Tom Wesley Korpor	ER5	Senior Technical Officer for Land Use, Liberia Land Authority, Republic of Liberia; Focus Person, Liberia Forest Sector Project, LLA	15/08/2019
6	Dr. Nathaniel T. Blama, Sr.	ER6	Executive Director and CEO, EPA, Republic of Liberia	16/08/2019
7	Saah A. David, Jr.	ER7	National REDD+ Coordinator, REDD+ Implementation Unit, FDA, Republic of Liberia	19/08/2019
8	George Tee Forpoh, PhD	ER8	Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, REDD+ Implementation Unit, FDA, Republic of Liberia	19/08/2019
9	Atty Roland T. Lepol	ER9	Program Manager and Lawyer, REDD+ Implementation Unit, FDA	19/08/2019
10	Peter G. Mulbah	ER10	Deputy Country Director, Conservation International. CI is pilot of the first REDD+ Project, Wonagizi Project in Liberia	20/08/2019
11	Lawrence A. Bondo, Sr.	ER11	CEO, Community Development Initiative, Liberia	22/08/2019
12	Zinnah S. Mulbah	ER12	Environmental Specialist, World Bank Country Office, Liberia; Focus person for the Bank's implementation support to the Liberia Forest Sector Project	8/11/2019
13	Dominic T. Johns	ER13	Convener, REDD+ Technical Working Group	8/11/2019

14	Z. Abednego G. Mehn	ER14	Livelihood and Governance Coordinator, Founa & Flora International	10/2/2020
B	Focus Group 1: Senior Students, University of Liberia			
1	Joannah T. Y. David, Bong County	SR1	Department of Forestry,	14/08/2019
2	David M. Flomo, Bong County	SR2	Department of Forestry	14/08/2019
3	Alpha K. Karr, Grand Gedeh County	SR3	Department of Forestry	14/08/2019
4	Harrison B. Waydon, Nimba County	SR4	Department of Forestry	14/08/2019
5	Eric B. Quanie, Nimba County	SR5	Department of Forestry	14/08/2019
6	William Vour Quiah, Grand Gedeh County	SR6	Department of Forestry	14/08/2019
C	Focus Group 2: Villages			
1	Chiefs, Elders, Women and Youths	V1	Kpalan Town, Lake Piso Multipurpose Nature Reserve, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia	9/11/2019
2	Chief, Elders, Women and Youths	V2	Latia Town, Lake Piso Multipurpose Nature Reserve, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia	9/11/2019
3	Chief, Elders, Women and Youths	V3	Falie Town, Lake Piso Multipurpose Nature Reserve, Grand Cape Mount County, Liberia	9/11/2019
4	Chief, Elders, and Youths*	V4	Zortapa Town, East Nimba Nature Reserve, Nimba County, Liberia	11/2/2020
5	Chief, Elders, Women and Youths	V5	Geipa Town, East Nimba Nature Reserve, Nimba County, Liberia	11/2/2020

++ Focus Group 1 comprises senior students of the Department of Forestry all of whom signed an individual consent form. Also, each one was afforded the opportunity to respond to every question. The counties of origin include Bong, Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties. These are

all forested counties in Rural Liberia. Bong is in Central Liberia; Nimba is in Northern Liberia and Grand Gedeh in South Eastern Liberia.

*There were no women present during the interview in Zortapa village as they were said to be at the home a bereaved member of the village.

Appendix 2: Expert Consent Form and Information Sheet

(For Institutions and NGOs)



TITLE OF RESEARCH: Challenges to Implementing the UNFCCC Paris Agreement through REDD+ in Liberia: A Critical Analysis

RESEARCHER: *Harry T. Conway*

CONTACT DETAILS: Cardiff School of Law and Politics
Cardiff University
Law Building
Museum Avenue
Cardiff CF10 3AX
Email Address: *ConwayHT@cardiff.ac.uk*

Research Overview

This research investigates the politics around Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plus (REDD+) in Liberia. It uses the Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' Project as case study to explore the decision-making around the REDD+ scheme. It seeks to know the power relationships between stakeholders and the extent to which locals are involved in project decisions. It also explores the extent to which locals are buying into the scheme (i.e. how much are they supporting or resisting it?). Further, it wants to know how the local political, social and economic conditions in Liberia are affecting the implementation of the project in terms of the REDD+ core idea, which is, standing trees provide one of the effective ways to combatting climate change. Basically, the study wants to know how interactions between the REDD+ concept to control climate change on the one hand, and the political, social and economic conditions in Liberia on the other, are affecting the implementation of the REDD+ scheme in Liberia. In short, the study is trying to understand how Liberia's particular political, social and economic conditions are enabling or challenging the implementation of REDD+. The primary goal is to determine opportunities and challenges that the international community generally, and Liberia in particular, should take into account if Liberia is to meet its obligation (i.e. its nationally determine contributions) under the 2015 UNFCCC Paris Agreement.

"This project has received ethical approval from the Cardiff School of Law and Politics Research Ethics Committee (SREC) on 22/07/2019 (Internal Reference: SREC/160419/03)."

Involvement in Research

You are expected to be interviewed for approximately 30 – 60 minutes. The format is semi-structured. The exact nature of the questions is not determined in advance but depends on how the interview develops. At any stage where you find a line of questioning to be uncomfortable, you are free to decline to answer.

The information and insights you share will be recorded in this research. If you agree, interviews will be recorded *via a digital recording device and could also be recorded in a word document on a computer*. Data will be stored on a registered Cardiff University computer that will be password controlled and will be used for research purposes only. You will only be identified in the research if you give consent for this to happen.

The researcher intends to present and publish the research results at academic conferences and in academic publications such as journals.

Interview Consent Form

I understand that my participation in this project will involve an interview about *my institution, community or individual role in the Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' project*.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time, but no later than 31 January 2020, without giving a reason.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. If for any reason I experience discomfort during the interview, I am free to decline to answer.

I understand that my participation in this interview is anonymous and the information I provide will be held anonymously, such that only the interviewer can trace this information back to me individually. The data will be stored in accordance with the United Kingdom Data Protection Act (2018).

Thank you for taking part in this research. Could you indicate whether you agree with the following statements. Please initial your agreement in the box opposite the statement:

Statement	Initial
I have read and understood all the information provided, and I have received adequate time to consider all the documentation.	
I have been given adequate opportunity to ask questions about the research.	
I am aware of, and consent to the written and/or digital recording of my discussion with the researcher.	
I consent to the information and opinions I provide being used in the research.	

I am aware that participation is purely voluntary and I can withdraw at any time, refuse to answer any questions, or retract any statements before 31 January 2020 without any disadvantage.	
I am aware that I may be quoted in any results or publications, but that my name will not be used. A pseudonym or identifier such as 'Head of an Agency of Government', 'Spoke Person for an NGO', 'Interview 1' or 'Participant 1', etc will be used.	
I am aware that I may be quoted in the results or publications and have no problem with my name being mentioned.	
I am aware that I stand a risk of being identified no matter the level of anonymity employed by the researcher due to the uniqueness of my organization or role.	
I would like to receive a copy of the transcript of my interview. I would like to receive a final report of the research. I give consent for the researcher to use my organisation name. My contact details are: Email: _____ Address: _____	

Interviewee Declaration

I consent to participate in the study being conducted by *Harry T. Conway*, Cardiff School of Law and Politics, Cardiff University, United Kingdom.

Signature:.....

Print Name: Date:

Expert Information Sheet



TITLE OF RESEARCH: Challenges to Implementing the UNFCCC Paris Agreement through REDD+ in Liberia: A Critical Analysis

RESEARCHER: *Harry T. Conway*

CONTACT DETAILS: Cardiff School of Law and Politics
Cardiff University
Law Building
Museum Avenue
Cardiff CF10 3AX
Email Address: *ConwayHT@cardiff.ac.uk*

Who is doing the research?

Harry Conway.

What is the purpose of the research?

This research investigates the politics around Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plus (REDD+) in Liberia. It uses the Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' Project as case study to explore the decision-making around the REDD+ scheme. It seeks to know the power relationships between stakeholders and the extent to which locals are involved in project decisions. It also explores the extent to which locals are buying into the scheme (i.e. how much are they supporting or resisting it?). Further, it wants to know how the local political, social and economic conditions in Liberia are affecting the implementation of the project in terms of the REDD+ core idea, which is, standing trees provide one of the effective ways to combatting climate change. Basically, the study wants to know how interactions between the REDD+ concept to control climate change on the one hand, and the political, social and economic conditions in Liberia on the other, are affecting the implementation of the REDD+ scheme in Liberia. In short, the study is trying to understand how Liberia's particular political, social and economic conditions are enabling or challenging the implementation of REDD+. The primary goal is to determine opportunities and challenges that the international community generally, and Liberia in particular, should take into account if Liberia is to meet its obligation (i.e. its nationally determine contributions) under the 2015 UNFCCC Paris Agreement.

"This project has received ethical approval from the Cardiff School of Law and Politics Research Ethics Committee (SREC) on 22/07/2019 (Internal Reference: SREC/160419/03)."

Who is being invited to participate?

Stakeholders to *the Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' project*, including donors, government institutions, INGOs, NGOs, residents of forest communities, etc.

You are expected to be interviewed for approximately 30 – 60 minutes. The format is semi-structured. The exact nature of the questions is not determined in advance but depends on how the interview develops. At any stage where you find a line of questioning to be uncomfortable, you are free to decline to answer.

What is the type of information gathered during interviews?

The views of participants on chances of the REDD+ project in Liberia succeeding or being challenged.

What happens if I wish to withdraw?

Participants are free to withdraw themselves any time before the interview or up to seven months after the interview (i.e. 31 January 2020). After this time period, the data will have been analysed and integrated into the study.

Confidentiality and privacy: what will happen to my data?

I will collect all the data in the form of interviews that will be recorded, if written or electronic consent to the recordings is obtained. Those recordings will be used to create transcripts of interview recordings. These transcripts will be anonymized using coded file names and stored on the university hard drive. The data would then be used to investigate opportunities and challenges to the REDD+ implementation in Liberia.

As I am conducting interviews of which some participants may be senior level policy or institutional officials, the data will be anonymised to the extent that it is only identifiable to the researcher, given that some opinions could be political and regarded as sensitive data. In this respect, the identity of the interviewees will be protected by granting institutions and individuals generic titles/pseudonyms such as '*Head of an Agency of Government*'; '*Spoke Person of an NGO*'; '*Participant 1*'; '*Interview 1*', etc... However, I wish to note that some interviewees who are unique for what their organizations do may be difficult to reasonably anonymize. Therefore, they could be potentially identified, no matter the level of anonymity I may employ. Additionally, I will store the personal data gathered; for the duration of the study and, no longer than five years, up to 31 December 2025; when personal data of participants will be deleted.

However, I wish to note that, the data used to identify and contact some institutional participants for interview may be publicly available on the organization's website, in published documents or reports. Notwithstanding, the data will be attributed according what a participant decides (i.e. anonymously, institutionally or individually).

Contact Information:

Name: Harry Conway

Email Address: ConwayHT@cardiff.ac.uk; Contact #: +231-886-551-782 and +44-77-4173-0815

Address: LAWPL Research Ethics Committee, Law Building, Cardiff University, Museum Ave, Cardiff CF10 3AX

Appendix 3: Focus Group Consent Form and Information Sheet

(Focus Group)



TITLE OF RESEARCH: Challenges to Implementing the UNFCCC Paris Agreement through REDD+ in Liberia: A Critical Analysis

RESEARCHER: *Harry T. Conway*

CONTACT DETAILS: Cardiff School of Law and Politics
Cardiff University
Law Building
Museum Avenue
Cardiff CF10 3AX
Email Address: *ConwayHT@cardiff.ac.uk*

Research Overview

The purpose of this research is to understand who are the main decision makers around the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plus (REDD+) project in Liberia. A project that encourages people to leave trees standing as a means to fighting climate change in the world. The study main goal is to establish the extent to which people living in forest communities [taking into account their social, cultural, economic and political conditions] are involved in decision-making around the project. It also aims to know how people [especially those living in forest communities] are supporting or resisting the project implementation. Depending on what is found, the study will make recommendations the Government of Liberia and donors on some steps that could be taken for project to succeed. In this way, it is hoped, Liberia may be able to meet its set targets to reducing greenhouse gas (CO₂) release into the earth's atmosphere globally under the 2015 Paris Agreement of the United Nations Frame Work Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

"This project has received ethical approval from the Cardiff School of Law and Politics Research Ethics Committee (SREC) on 22/07/2019 (Internal Reference: SREC/160419/03)."

Your Participation in the Study

You are expected to be interviewed for approximately 30 – 60 minutes. The exact nature of the questions is not set before the interview. Questions will be asked based on how the interview goes. In other words, the format is semi-structure. However, you are free to decline to answer any question at any time during the interview where you feel uncomfortable with the question or the direction the interview is going.

The information you give will be recorded in the study. If you agree, your interviews will be recorded on a *voice recorder*. I may also put it in a word document on a computer. Data will be kept on computer that is registered at my university, the Cardiff University. The data will be password protected and will be used for study only. You will only be identified in the study if you give your permission for that to be the case.

I intend to make presentations of the results of the study at academic conferences and may also publish the results in academic publications, including journals.

Interview Consent Form

I/We am/are aware, as non-native speaker(s) of the English/Welsh language, the researcher will use the service of a translator of my/our local Vai or Mano language.

I/We understand that my/our participation in this project will involve an interview about my/our community's or organization's role in the REDD+ 'Readiness' project in Liberia.

I/We understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I/we can withdraw from the study at any time before or during the interview, and up seven months (i.e. 31 January 2020) after the interview without giving a reason.

I/We understand that I/we am/are free to ask any questions at any time. If for any reason I/we experience discomfort during participation in this project, I/we am/are free to withdraw.

I/We understand that my/our participation in this interview is anonymous and the information I/we provide will be held anonymously, such that only the interviewer can trace this information back to me/us individually or as a group, and that the data to be gathered will be stored in accordance with the United Kingdom's Law on the protection of people's personal data (i.e. the UK Data Protection Act (2018)).

Thanks for agreeing to take part in this project.

Please tell me if you agree with the below statement by initialling or thumb printing in box opposite it:

Statement	Initial/Thumb Print
<u>I/We am/are</u> aware, as non-native speaker(s) of the English/Welsh language, the researcher will use the service of a translator of <u>my/our</u> local Vai or Mano language.	
<u>I/We</u> have read or the researcher/translator has explained to <u>me/us</u> what the project is about, and <u>I/we</u> have understood all the information provided. <u>I/We was/were</u> giving enough time to consider all documents or to think about the information provided.	
<u>I/We</u> have been given adequate opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
<u>I/We am/are</u> aware of, and agree to the written and/or voice/video recording of <u>my/our</u> discussion with the researcher.	
<u>I/We am/are</u> aware of, and agree to the written and/or voice/video recording of <u>my/our</u> discussion with the researcher.	
<u>I/We</u> agree to the information and opinions <u>I/we</u> provide to be used in the study.	

<p><u>I/we am/are</u> aware that participation is purely voluntary and <u>I/we</u> can withdraw at any time, refuse to answer any questions, or retract any statements before 31 January 2020 without any disadvantage.</p>	
<p><u>I/We am/are</u> aware that <u>I/we</u> may be quoted in any results or publications, but that <u>my/our</u> name(s) will not be used. A pseudonym or identifier such as 'Head of an Agency of Government', 'Spoke Person for an NGO', 'Interview 1' or 'Participant 1', etc will be used.</p>	
<p><u>I/We am/are</u> aware that <u>I/we</u> may be quoted in the results or publications and have no problem with <u>my/our</u> name(s) being mentioned.</p>	
<p><u>I/we</u> am/are aware that <u>I/we</u> stand a risk of being identified no matter the level of anonymity used by the researcher due to the special nature of <u>my/our</u> organization, community or group.</p>	
<p><u>I/We</u> would like to receive a copy of the transcript of <u>my/our</u> interview. <u>I/We</u> would like to receive a final report of the research. <u>I/We</u> give consent for the researcher to use <u>my/our</u> organisation name. <u>My/</u> contact details are:</p> <p>Email: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p>	

Interviewee Declaration

I/We consent to participate in the study being conducted by *Harry T. Conway*, Cardiff School of Law and Politics, Cardiff University, United Kingdom.

Signature:

Print Name: Date:

Focus Group Information Sheet



TITLE OF RESEARCH: Challenges to Implementing the UNFCCC Paris Agreement through REDD+ in Liberia: A Critical Analysis

RESEARCHER: *Harry T. Conway*

CONTACT DETAILS: Cardiff School of Law and Politics
Cardiff University
Law Building
Museum Avenue
Cardiff CF10 3AX
Email Address: ConwayHT@cardiff.ac.uk

Who is doing the research?

Harry Conway

What is the purpose of the research?

The purpose of this research is to understand who are the main decision makers around the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plus (REDD+) project in Liberia. A project that encourages people to leave trees standing as a means to fighting climate change in the world. The study main goal is to establish the extent to which people living in forest communities [taking into account their social, cultural, economic and political conditions] are involved in decision-making around the project. It also aims to know how people [especially those living in forest communities] are supporting or resisting the project implementation. Depending on what is found, the study will make recommendations the Government of Liberia and donors on some steps that could be taken for project to succeed. In this way, it is hoped, Liberia may be able to meet its set targets to reducing greenhouse gas (CO₂) release into the earth's atmosphere globally under the 2015 Paris Agreement of the United Nations Frame Work Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

"This project has received ethical approval from the Cardiff School of Law and Politics Research Ethics Committee (SREC) on 22/07/2019 (Internal Reference: SREC/160419/03)."

Who is being invited to participate?

Stakeholders to the Liberia REDD+ 'Readiness' project including donors, government institutions, INGOs, NGOs, residents of forest communities, etc.

What is the type of information gathered during interviews?

The views of participants on the chances of the REDD+ project in Liberia succeeding or being challenged.

What happens if I wish to withdraw?

Participants are free to withdraw themselves and the information they provide during the interview or up to 7 months (i.e. 31 January 2020) after the interview. After this time period, the data will have been analysed and integrated into the study.

Confidentiality and privacy: what will happen to my data?

I will collect all the data in the form of interviews that will be voice or video recorded, if you grant approval. Those recordings will be used to create transcripts of interview recordings. These transcripts will be anonymized using coded file names and stored on the university hard drive. The data would then be used to investigate opportunities and challenges to the REDD+ implementation in Liberia.

As I am conducting interviews of which some participants may consider some of the issues discussed to be sensitive, the data will be anonymised. This will be done to the extent that it is only known to the researcher. To achieve this, the identity of the interviewees will be protected by granting groups generic titles/pseudonyms such as '*Focus Group 1*'; '*Participant of Focus Group 1 or 2*', etc. However, I wish to note that some focus groups that are stand out for what they do may be difficult to reasonably disguised. Hence, they could be potentially identified, no matter the level of anonymity I may employ. In such instances, the group(s) will be informed and asked how they wish to be attributed. Finally, I will store the personal data collected; for the length of the study and, no longer than five years; up to 31 December 2025, when personal data of participants will be deleted.

However, I wish to note that, the data used to identify and contact some focus groups participants for interview may be publicly available on some organizations' websites, in published documents or reports. Notwithstanding, the data will be attributed according what a group decides (i.e. anonymously or individually as a group).

Non-native Speaker(s) of English/Welsh Language

The researcher will use a translator for the Vai or Mano ethnic groups who are non-native speaker(s) of English/Welsh in the Lake Piso Protected Area and East Nimba Nature Reserve areas of the project.

Contact Information:

Name: Harry Conway

Email Address: ConwayHT@cardiff.ac.uk; Contact #s: +231-886-551-782 and +44-77-4173-0815

Address: LAWPL Research Ethics Committee, Law Building, Cardiff University, Museum Ave, Cardiff CF10 3AX

Appendix 4: Translator Confidentiality Agreement

Project Title: Challenges to Implementing the UNFCCC Paris Agreement through REDD+ in Liberia: A Critical Analysis

This research is being undertaken by Harry Conway, a PhD candidate in Politics and International Relations, Cardiff University, United Kingdom. This research is being conducted to gain an understanding of the politics and decision-making around the Liberia Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plus (REDD+) Programme in Liberia as a strategy to fighting climate change globally.

As a translator of this research, I understand that I will be translating confidential interviews between the researcher and some members of a focus group that do not speak the English Language. The information they provide is based on an understanding that participation in this research is on the condition that their interviews would remain strictly confidential. I understand that I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement. I agree not to share any information on these interviews, about any member, with anyone except the Researcher of this project. Any violation of this and the terms detailed below would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards, and I confirm that I will adhere to the agreement in full.

I, _____ agree to:

1. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the content of the interviews with anyone other than the Researcher.
2. Keep all research information in any form or format (e.g.s. audio files, CDs, transcripts; visual pictures) secure while it is in my possession.
3. Return all research information in any form or format (e.g.s. audio files, CDs, transcripts) to the Researcher when I have completed the translation tasks.
4. After consulting with the Researcher, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Researcher (e.g.s. CDs, information stored on my computer hard drive).

Translator: _____
_____ (name) (signature) (date)

Researcher: _____
_____ (name) (signature) (date)

This research has been approved by the School of Law and Politics Research Ethics Committee (SREC), Cardiff University, United Kingdom (22/07/2019; Internal Reference: SREC/160419/03), and is funded by the Liberia Permanent Mission to the International Maritime Organization.

If you have any further questions at any time, please contact either Harry Conway (primary researcher) or Dr Hannah Hughes (supervisor) on the details below.

Researcher: Harry Conway

Email: conwayht@cardiff.ac.uk or boisy71@yahoo.com

Mobile: +447741730815 or +447508389111

Supervisor: Dr Hannah Hughes:

Email: hughesh8@cardiff.ac.uk

Phone: +44 (0)29 2068 8820

Note: The translator and researcher were physically present at the times of the interviews.

Appendix 5: Executive Order 44 Moratorium on Private Use Permit

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 44 PROTECTING LIBERIAN FORESTS BY A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON PRIVATE USE PERMITS

WHEREAS, the forests are part of our natural heritage that exist for the benefit of the people of Liberia;

WHEREAS, forests in our Nation's territory constitute forty percent of the tropical rainforests in the West African sub-region and therefore must be managed in a manner that takes cognizance of this fact and of the vital role Liberians must play in conserving, harnessing, and harvesting these treasured assets in a responsible, ecologically prudent, and beneficial manner;

WHEREAS, as part of the reform process that culminated in the enactment of the National Forestry Reform Law of 2006, provision is made for Private Use Permits (PUPs) which allow land owners who have forest resources on their land to apply for such permits;

WHEREAS, based on allegations of misrepresentations and abuses in implementing the law that allows for issuance of PUPs, Government established a Special Independent Investigating Body in August 2012, to conduct a comprehensive review of the issuance of PUPs;

WHEREAS, the report issued by the Special Independent Investigating Body has revealed that there have been massive fraud, misrepresentations, abuses and violations of the National Forestry Reform Law in the issuance of Private Use Permits to the extent that this inter-generational asset has been severely threatened;

WHEREAS, because the mismanagement of the PUPs poses a threat to the efficient, effective, and sustainable management of our forests, it is imperative to impose a moratorium to protect the national interest;

NOW THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority in me vested by the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Liberia, I do hereby declare and order:

1. A moratorium on the issuance of PUPs is in force and activities involving or related to the felling or export of logs under any PUPs granted, authorized or approved by the Forestry Development Authority is suspended;

2. That this moratorium applies to all individuals, communities, groups, and associations who are holders of PUPs;
3. That this moratorium applies also to all logging activities of any person, whether natural or juridical, who holds a PUP and operates in Liberia under any other logging license;
4. That the relevant ministries and agencies of Government shall take appropriate actions to remedy the situation through criminal prosecutions, review of the relevant legal and regulatory framework, validation of deeds, audit of the Forestry Development Authority, public sensitization, and such other necessary measures;
5. That this moratorium shall remain in effect until otherwise lifted.

This Executive Order shall take immediate effect.

**GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND SEAL
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA THIS
4th DAY OF JANUARY, A.D. 2013.**

**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
PRESIDENT
REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA**

Appendix 6: Forestry Development Authority Act, 1976

FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (FDA) APPROVED: NOVEMBER 1, 1976
MONROVIA

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN
AFFAIRS MONROVIA, LIBERIA DECEMBER 20, 1976

AN ACT CREATING THE FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

It is enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of Liberia, in
Legislature assembled:

Section 1: Chapters 1 through 4 of the National Resources Law with respect to the Bureau of
Forest Conservation Forest, National Parks and the Conservation of Wildlife are hereby
repealed,

Section 2: Creation of Forestry Development Authority (FDA): An authority to be known as the
“Forestry Development Authority” is hereby created as a corporate body pursuant to the Public
Authorities Law. As used in this Act, the term “Authority” means the authority hereby created.

Section 3: objects: The primary objectives of the Authority shall be to:

1. (a) Establish a permanent forest estate made up of reserved areas upon which
scientific forestry will be practiced;
2. (b) Devote all publicly owned forest lands to their most productive use for the
permanent good of the whole people considering both direct and indirect values;
3. (c) Stop needless waste and destruction of the forest and associated natural
resources and bring about the profitable harvesting of all forest products while assuring
that supplies of these products are perpetuated;
4. (d) Correlate forestry to all other land use and adjust the forest economy to the overall
national economy;

1. (e) Conduct essential research in conservation of forest and pattern action programs
upon the results of such research;
2. (f) Give training in the practice of forestry; offer technical assistance to all those
engaged in forestry activities; and spread knowledge of forestry and the acceptance of
conservation of natural resources throughout;
3. (g) Conserve recreational and wildlife resources of the country concurrently with the
development of forestry program.

Section 4 powers: In addition to the powers conferred upon an authority by the Public
Authorities Law, the Authority shall have the following powers:

1. (a) To take all actions necessary to create and establish Government Forest
Reserves, Native Authority Forest reserves, Communal Forest and national parks;
2. (b) To administer all such reserved areas to fulfil the policies and objectives set out in
Section 3 of this Act;
3. (c) To enforce all laws and regulations for the conservation of forests and the
development of their resources;
4. (d) To assist the owners of timber land in applying sustained yield forest management;
5. (e) To carry out a program for the wise use and perpetuation of the forest, recreational
and wildlife resources of the country except that regulations for the zoning of hunting

grounds and the restriction of hunting to stated periods shall be promulgated by the President;

6. (f) To prescribe the form of all licenses, permits, agreements and other instruments dealing with the use of forest resources;
7. (g) To control the issuance of such instruments and determine the conditions under which they may be granted, exercised, produced revoked or returned;
8. (h) To control the transportation or export of forest products by land, water or air;

1. (i) To be responsible for the collection of all fees payable under the rules and regulations promulgated under the authorization of this section;
2. (j) To promulgate rules and regulations required to insure the accomplishment of all the policies and objectives of the Authority;
3. (k) To open and operate a main and subsidiary banking accounts, to receive and expend monies;
4. (l) To continue existing services and to initiate new services, such as:

(i) To establish a unit for market cost-component analysis; (ii) To monitor real timber prices and production cost; (iii) To commission and carry out feasibility studies;

(v) To levy cess on other components of the wood-using industries for purposes connected with the Authority's functions;

1. (m) To negotiate, raise and make loans;
2. (n) The power to issue, amend and rescind forestry regulations;
3. (o) The power to engage in commercial undertakings as a principal or in conjunction with others, to enter into contracts, to sue and be sued;
4. (p) As a principal or in conjunction with others to fell trees and prepare them for export or to have them processed locally, or both; to trade with such timber in the raw or processed state and to engage in all other operations directly or indirectly connected with the trade in forest products;
5. (q) To make by-laws for its internal administration

Section 5. Penalty for violation of rules and regulations: Any person who contravenes any rule or regulation made under sub-section (j) of Section 4 or fails to comply with the conditions made a part of any license, permit, agreement, other instrument issued or entered into, under any person shall be convicted of any offense under this Act, the court may in addition to or in

lieu of the imposition of any fine or term of imprisonment, order that the whole or any part of the forest product or wildlife resource with respect to which the offense was committed, be confiscated and forfeited to the government to be sold or otherwise disposed of in such manner as the Managing director may prescribe.

Section 6, Board of Directors.

1. Composition, The policies of the authority shall be by the Board of Directors consisting of:

1. A) The Minister of agriculture as chairman, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of local Government, The Minister of planning and Economic Affairs, the Minister of commerce Industry and Transportation, and the President of the Liberian Bank of development and Investment;
2. B) The Managing Director of the Authority, to be appointed by the President.

3. C) Two Liberian nationals, one with experience in the field of law, and the other with experience in the field of business, to be appointed by the president.
1. Voting by Board Member without meeting. The Board may by regulation establish a procedure whereby the Managing Director, when he considers such action in the best interest of the Authority, may obtain a vote of the board members on special question without calling a meeting of the Board.
 2. QUORUM. A quorum for any meeting of the Board shall be a majority of its members.
 3. Financial interest. No Director or member of his immediate family shall hold any financial interest in a forestry concession or in any auxiliary under taking in Liberia.
 4. Reimbursement. The members of the Board, in their capacity as such, shall not receive salaries, but they may receive from the authority a stipend for each meeting attended and reimbursement for all expenses they incur in discharging their duties to the authority.

Section 7. Officers. The Authority shall have a Managing Director and such other officers and staff as the Board may determine to be necessary or desirable for carrying out its lawful function. The Managing Director shall be professionally qualified in Forestry. He shall be responsible for the conduct of the general operation of the Authority and for that purpose shall exercise all powers delegated to him by the Board. Subject to the approval of the Board with regard to senior officers and staff, the Managing Director shall be responsible for the organization of the staff and the appointment and dismissal of the officers.

Section 8. Appointment of assistant Managing Director: The President shall appoint and Assistant Managing Director for administration and finance who shall be a qualified controller and administrator rather than a professional forester.

Section 9. Collection of revenues and expenditures: The Authority shall be responsible for the collection of its revenues, settlement of its financial obligations and all other matters connected with the collection and disbursement of funds of the Authority.

Section 10.

Duration: - the existence of the Authority shall continue until it shall be terminated by the Legislature. Upon the termination of the existence of the authority, all its rights and property shall rest in the republic.

Section 11. Audits: -- The Accounts of the Authority shall be subject to periodic audits by the Government. The accounts of the Authority shall also be audited annually by a firm of independent accountants appointed by the board

Section 12. Reports: --- The Authority shall submit an annual report to the President and such other periodic reports as he may from time to time require. Such reports shall set out in detail facts describing the operation and fiscal transactions of the Authority during the preceding year, its financial condition and a statement to all receipts and disbursements during such year.

Section 13. Power of Forest Officer to arrest Offenders: -- Every Forest Officer is hereby authorized and empowered to arrest any person whom he finds or reasonably suspects of violating any of the provisions of the statutes or regulations

relating to conservation of forests. On arrest he shall immediately take such person before the court of the county superintendent, County Commissioner, Tribal Authority, or Justice of the Peace who shall immediately forward the matter to a court of competent jurisdiction in the county in which the reserve is located.

Section 14. Power of Forest Officer with regard to tress: -- A Forest Officer may fell, cut, damage, tap, or destroy tree within Government Forest reserves, Native Authority Forest Reserves Communal Forests, and National Parks, and make clearing or remove timber there from for the purpose of planting trees, improving the growth of trees, or for the general better management of reserved forests.

Section 15. Advisory conservation Committees: -- An Advisory Conservation committee shall be appointed within each county with the county Superintendent or county commissioner as Chairman. The Purpose of the committee's development is to advise the Authority on the ideas, desires and opinions of the people in matters pertaining to forest and wildlife conservation and to exercise general supervision of the enforcement of forest and wildlife regulations.

Section 16. This Act shall take effect immediately upon publication in hand-bills.

Any law to the contrary notwithstanding. Approved: November 1, 1976.

AN ACT TO AN ACT CREATING THE FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BY REPEALING SECTION 16 THEREOF AND ADDING THERETO EIGHT NEW SECTIONS

It is enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Republic of Liberia in Legislature Assembled:

Section 1: Section 16 of an Act Creating the Forestry Development Authority is hereby repealed.

Section 2: That from and immediately after the passage of this Act, an Act entitled: "An Act Creating the Forestry Development Authority" is hereby amended by adding thereto Eight new Sections to be Sections 16 through 23 to read as follows:

Section 16: Form and Content of Forest Products Utilization Agreement: In all negotiations concerning the awarding of a Forest Products Utilization Agreement between the Government of Liberia shall be represented by the Managing Director of the Forestry Development Authority and the Minister of Finance. Upon the successful conclusion of said negotiations, the Minister of Finance and the Managing Director of the Forestry Development Authority shall for and sign on behalf of the Government of Liberia; attested by the Minister of Justice and the prospective forest user by an authorized representative. Notwithstanding the above, the Forest Products Utilization Agreement shall be valid only upon the approval of the President of Liberia and subsequent ratification by the Legislature of the Republic of Liberia.

Section 17: Performance Bond and Minimum Expenditure: A Forest Concessionaire shall be required to deposit with the Forestry Development Authority a performance bond or a Manager's Check of US\$150,000 in favour of the Government of Liberia warranting that concessionaire shall faithfully and promptly commence survey and other operations and performance of all the terms and conditions of the Forest Product Utilization Agreement within two years and shall within two-year period after the effective date of the Agreement between the concessionaire and the Government of Liberia spend a sum not less than US\$500,000 on

the construction and installation of a processing plant. Any concessionaire who on the coming into force of this Act has already complied with the old

regulation on performance bond shall not be retroactively affected by the provision of this Section. A Salvage Permit Holder shall be required to deposit with the Forestry Development Authority a Performance Bond or Property Valuation of US\$50,000 or Manager's Check of US\$50,000 in favour of the Government of Liberia and shall be required to invest; not less than US\$200,000 within two years of operation.

Section 18: Protection of Liberian Salvage Permit Holder: No law, executive order or regulation shall be passed depriving Liberia citizens the right to apply and be granted forest salvage permits from the Forestry Development Authority if such category of forests is available for leasing.

Section 19: Land Rental Fee: The concessionaire shall in respect of the Concession granted under the Forest Product Utilization Agreement, pay to the Government of Liberia in advance an annual surface land rental fee of US0.50 cents per acre or prorate for part thereof for all land held by the concessionaire. In the case of the forest salvage permit holders, the annual Land Rental per acre of the Exploitation Area to be paid shall be US0.30 cents per acre of pro rata for part thereof for all land held by the permit holders and said amount shall be paid in advance to the Government.

Section 20: The concessionaire shall be granted duty free privilege for the importation into Liberia during the first two years upon

coming into force of the Forest Products Utilization Agreement signed between the concessionaire and the Government of Liberia, any equipment, machinery or similar items of a capital nature having a useful life of five years or more for use in the harvesting, processing, transportation and marketing of timber products; provided, however, that all such items to be exempted from duties shall be exempted only if items reasonably comparable in price and quality are not obtainable in Liberia, it being understood that Forest Salvage Permit Holders shall also be granted duty free privilege for the importation into Liberia equipment machinery or similar items of capital nature to last for a period of not less than two years. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the period or exemption from the payment of import duties two (2) years shall not be extended not renewed after the expiration of the said two (2) years period.

Section 21: Payment of Forestry Fees in U. S. Currency: The concessionaire and the forest salvage permit holders shall pay all their respective forest fees in U.S Currency after assessment by the Forestry Development Authority (FDA).

Section 22: Wood Processing: The concessionaire shall comply in the requirements of the Forestry Development Authority regarding the percentage of total production to be sawn or otherwise processed in Liberia and that the export of logs and processed wood shall be in accordance with the Forestry Development Authority Regulation; however, the percentage of processed wood for export shall be a maximum of five percent (5%) of export logs during 1988 and 1989. Beginning 1990 the percentage of processed wood for export shall be a minimum of five percent (5%) and a maximum or ten percent (10%) of export logs. It being understood that all Forest Salvage Permit Holders shall process at least five percent (5%) of their total log production for either local or export markets.

Section 23: Employment of Professional Liberian Foresters: A concessionaire having a valid Forest Utilization Agreement shall be required to employ a maximum of four (4) trained Liberia Foresters while a Salvage Permit Holder shall employ at least one (1) trained Liberia Forester.

Section 3:

This Act shall take effect immediately upon publication in hand-bills.

Any law to the contrary notwithstanding

Approved: July 21, 1988 Published by Authority Government Printing Office

Appendix 7: State of Liberia Economy

**Except from
The ANNUAL MESSAGE
To the
Sixth Session of the 53rd National Legislature of the Republic of Liberia**

**By:
Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
President of the Republic of Liberia
Capitol Hill, Monrovia
Delivered on Monday, 23 January 2017**

STATE OF THE ECONOMY

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro-Tempore: In 2006, we inherited a collapsed economy, which recorded a staggering ninety percent decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – the greatest decline by any nation since World War II. Our administration also inherited an unsustainable external debt level of US\$4.9 billion – more than six times our GDP, brought about by debt unserviced for over two decades. A large verified domestic debt of over US\$900 million lingered in arrears. The Treasury was virtually broke, facing salary arrears, unmet obligations to international bodies, and continuing food and fuel crises. With only US\$80 million in annual revenues, Liberia was at the bottom of a very deep hole, desperately needing revival and emergency measures. With your support, we resuscitated iron ore and rubber – our historical productive sectors. We took bold steps by cancelling or renegotiating concession agreements in the agriculture, mining and forestry sectors. 7 Additionally, we negotiated the cancellation of an external debt burden of US\$4.7 billion, out of the US\$4.9 million, in a record period of five years, and returned the country to the path of economic recovery by expanding the fiscal space to pursue our agenda of inclusive growth and development. Relationships with the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund were restored, providing technical and financial support for the formulation of policies and laws aimed at achieving macroeconomic stability. On account of wide-ranging economic reforms, we attracted US\$16 billion in foreign direct investment in concession agreements programmed to inject resources into the country over a period of up to twenty-five years. These were in iron ore mining activities, large-scale oil palm operations, resuscitation of coffee and cocoa production, and petroleum exploration. To date, largely on account of land and labor disputes, exacerbated by economic shocks, only US\$4.2 billion of the amount mobilized has been operationalized to create jobs, improve infrastructure and generate national income. We implemented a wide range of fiscal incentives to provide relief to the private sector, including businesses and large-scale concessions. We also expanded

duty free privileges on all agricultural machinery and farm inputs to incentivize agroprocessing and manufacturing. The economy responded with an average growth of 7.53 percent between 2006 and 2013, thus placing Liberia among sub-Saharan African countries recognized as fast growing economies. In 2013, we experienced significant shocks that adversely impacted the economy. The decline in global commodity prices affected our two primary exports. UNMIL drawdown reduced purchasing power. The Ebola virus led to an exodus from the country, which brought most production-related operations to a virtual halt. GDP plummeted to zero percent. Through effective action, resilience and determination, things have stabilized. Growth, in 2017, is projected at 3.2 percent, and we are confident that with the several measures to be implemented under our Agenda for Transformation, we will be back to a trajectory of more positive growth. The economic shocks profoundly affected fiscal performance. In FY15/16, actual revenue declined by nine percent, or US\$51.8 million. Given the continuing economic difficulties, we adopted a conservative approach for FY16/17, projecting revenue at US\$555.9 million. You subsequently approved a budget based on revenue intake of US\$600.2 million. This could be a challenge to collect unless we work together, with cooperation from the public, to intensify mitigants such as tax compliance, and enforcement of anti-money laundering and anti-corruption measures. In July 2013, the Liberia Revenue Authority was established to administer and enforce revenue laws in accordance with the Liberia Revenue Code. The LRA has concluded collaborative partnerships with several institutions and with key bilateral partners. The performance of the Authority will determine our progress in increasing the level of domestic revenue. Honorable Legislators, Fellow Citizens: The declining trend in official development assistance is a clear signal of the unsustainability of foreign aid. We must therefore widen the tax base and identify alternative sources of income, including investments in infrastructure, that would result in diversification of the economy and, potentially, increase domestic revenue. In this regard, Liberians themselves must set the example for all who reside and operate in our country. A higher level of tax consciousness and compliance is required, especially on real property and personal income. Simply put, Liberians must willingly and sincerely pay their just taxes at all times! This is the only path to ensure growth and sustainable development. Honorable Legislators: As I close the fiscal report, it is important to mention a few issues that we still face. A high level of unverifiable domestic debt, on account of questionable vendor claims, as well as a large potential domestic debt surge arising from judicial decisions, could lead to major spending cuts in priority areas. The private sector, designated as the engine of growth, as required by the Agenda for Transformation, needs more support in capital and technology. Liberian business entities need support to make them the core private-sector actors. Although benefits have accrued from the twenty percent set aside for procurement, specifically for Liberian-

owned businesses, we all need to think about additional measures that we can do to encourage Liberians to go into the business sector. We will also need to implement land rights policies and laws, as these are the only means to attract investment in large-scale agricultural operations which have export potential to earn the foreign exchange required to achieve diversification goals. This will also define the rights of citizens who, by land ownership, will be able to access credit, thereby becoming active participants in investment and operations involving land. Additionally, labor problems which investors have faced, with negative consequences, will be largely addressed. Honorable Members of the Legislature, Mr. Vice President: The lack of foreign exchange, brought about by economic shocks, negatively impacted the exchange rate, resulting in a slowdown in economic activity. This was mitigated by applying prudent liquidity management, thereby maintaining an annual average inflation rate within single-digit range. We also met foreign reserves targets. This facilitated extension, to November 2017, of the External Credit Facility with the International Monetary Fund. In 2005, the financial sector comprised four commercial banks and fewer than eleven branches concentrated in the Greater Monrovia area. Today, the banking sector comprises nine banks with ninety-three branches, and at least one financial institution in each of the fifteen counties. Additionally, eleven Rural Community Finance Institutions were established and licensed to provide banking services in rural areas, thereby offering access and finance to invest in agriculture and other income-generating activities. Several steps have been taken by the Central Bank of Liberia to maintain financial stability, strengthen and deepen the financial sector, and enhance public confidence. In collaboration with the Liberia Bankers Association, the Banking Institute of Liberia was established to help build capacity in the sector. A new Commercial Code and a fast-track Commercial Court were approved to facilitate commercial activity and expedite the handling of commercial, including credit-related, cases. Replacement of the Insurance Act of 1973 with the new Insurance Law of 2013 aims at strengthening the legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks governing the insurance sector. The CBL has tried, through strong regulatory oversight and adoption of good practice criteria, to avoid some of the dismal experiences of the past. However, in 2016, the CBL had to take over the First International Bank Liberia Ltd. to protect depositors and the integrity of the Liberian banking system. An independent forensic audit has been commissioned by the CBL to determine the reasons for the failure. When concluded, a report, with recommendations, will be submitted to me. Disruption of banking services to the customers of the bank was avoided through a purchase and assumption arrangement with a regional financial institution. Efforts are under way to modernize the financial sector. Your passage of the Securities Market and Central Securities Depository Acts, along with the issuance of the first Treasury bonds, has further enhanced money market activities in the country. This will eventually lead to the development

of a capital market that provides the basis for domestic capital mobilization and private investment by individuals and corporate entities. In order to replace the large volume of mutilated banknotes in the system, the CBL, with your approval, has printed superior-quality banknotes, with better security features, and introduced the first L\$500 note, to improve portability. 10 To encourage the wider use of the Liberian dollar, new and old, the CBL issued a regulation in 2016 which mandates that twenty-five percent of all inward remittances, via money transfer, to be paid in Liberian dollars. The positive results of this regulation are already being felt, as the Bank is using part of the proceeds surrendered to intervene in the foreign exchange market, thereby smoothening volatility in the Liberian dollar exchange rate. All these measures fall short in addressing the major problem – the low productive capacity of the real sector that leads to a high degree of dollarization in the existing dual-currency regime.

Appendix 8: Forest Award Contracts

Commercial Department
Forestry Development Authority
When Town, Monrovia
Liberia

Forest Award Contracts as of 26/8/20

COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT ASSEMBLY (CFMA)							
NO.	COMPANY	CONTRACT TYPE	CONTACT PERSON	REGION #	COUNTY	AREAR (in hectare)	REMARK
1	Magna Logging Company (Worr)	CFMA	Morley P. Kamara	3	Grand Bassa	35,337	Approved/Active
2	Indo African Plantations Liberia, Inc. Koninga "B"	CFMA	G. R. Kumar	1	Gbarpolu	31,318	Approved/Active
3	Booming Green (Zuzohn)	CFMA	Jerry Wang	3	Grand Bassa	12,611	Approved/Active
4	L & S Resource Incorporated (Gheegbarn 2)	CFMA	Sidique	3	Grand Bassa	12,576	Approved/Active
5	Sing Africa Plantations (Bluyeama)	CFMA	G. R. Kumar	2	Lofa County	49,444	Approved/Active
6	Akewa Group of Companies (Beyanpoye)	CFMA	Abigail Odebonmi	2	Margibi	33,338	Approved/Active
7	Tetra Enterprise Inc. (Garwin)	CFMA	Jerry Wang	3	Rivercess	36,637	Approved/Active
8	Mandra Forestry Ltd (Sewacajua)	CFMA	Augustine Johnson	4	Sinoe	31,936	Approved/Active
9	Starwood Inc. (Metro Comm.)	CFMA	G. R. Kumar	3	Grand Bassa	-	Approved/Active
10	African Wood & Lumber Company (Marblee & Karblee)	CFMA	Carsar Colombo	3	Grand Bassa	24,355	Approved/Active
11	West Africa Forest Development Incorporated (Gheegbarn 1)	CFMA	McCarthy	3	Grand Bassa	26,383	Approved/Active
12	Brilliant Maju Inc. (Ziadue & Teekpeh)	CFMA	-	3	Rivercess	24,649	Approved/Active
13	Coveiyalah (Koninga A)	CFMA	Anthony Urey	1	Gbarpolu	48,296	Approved/Active
14	Kparblee Timber Corporation	CFMA	-	3	Grand Basa	9,929	Approved/Active

	(Kparblee Community)						
15	Liberia Hard Wood Bloqua)	CFMA	-	4	Grand Gedeh	-	Approved/Inactive
16	LTTC INC. GBI	CFMA	Nyunnyun Johnson Toweh	3	Nimba	31,155	Approved/Inactive
17	LTTC DORU	CFMA	Nyunnyun Johnson Toweh	3	Nimba	36,192	Approved/Inactive
18	LTTC Thairy	CFMA	-	-	-	-	-
19	Indo African Plantation (Bondi Mandigo)	CFMA	G. R. Kumar	1	Gbarpolu	37,222	Approved
20	Universal Forestry Corporation (Sehzuplay)	CFMA	Jin S. Kyung	3	Nimba	6,890	Approved/Inactive
21	Gola Konneh	CFMA	James K. Mono	2	Cape Mount	49,179	Approved/Inactive
23	Putu	CFMA	Arthur K. Gbagbow	4	Grand Gedeh	21,377	Approved/Inactive
25	Seekon-Pellonken	CFMA	Levi Tarpeh Williams	4	Sinoe	6,204	Approved/Inactive
26	Tarsue	CFMA	G. Dennis Weah	4	Sinoe	9,714	Approved/Inactive
27	Tarweh	CFMA	Sorboh. S. Wesseh, Sr.	4	Sinoe	10,369	Approved/Inactive
28	AW & L (Gbarsaw & Dorbor)	CFMA	Koffa Ziah	3	Rivercess	21,320	Approved/Inactive
29	District 3 B & C	CFMA	James Z. Komman	3	Grand Bassa	49,310	Approved/Inactive
30	Salayah	CFMA	Yassah Y. Mulbah	2	Lofa	8,270	Approved/Inactive
31	Central Morweh	CFMA	Clinton B. Cephas	3	Rivercess	19,091	Approved/Inactive
32	Marbo-2	CFMA	Milton Beh	4	Grand Gedeh	22,568	Approved/Inactive
	Total Approved					705,670	
	Total Active					414,031	
	Total Inactive					291,639	
	% Active					58.67%	
	% Inactive					41.33%	

TIMBER SALE CONTRACT (TSC)							
NO.	COMPANY	CONTRACT TYPE	CONTACT PERSON	REGION #	COUNTY	AREAR (in hectare)	REMARK
1	Tarpeh Timber Corporation	TSC A-2	David Tarpeh, Jr.	3	Grand Bassa	5,000	Approved/Active
2	Bargor & Bargor	TSC A-7	-	1	Gbarpolu	5,000	Approved/active
3	Sun Yeun	TSC A-15, & 16	-	1		5,000	Approved/Inactive

4	Bassa Logging	TSC A-11	Clarence Massaquoi	1	Grand Cape Mount	5,000	Approved/Active
5	Thunder Bird	TSC A-8	-	-		5,000	Approved/Inactive
6	Bulgar & Vincent	TSC A-6, 9 & 10	-	1		5,000	Approved/Inactive
	Total Approved					30,000	
	Total Active					15,000	
	Total Inactive					15,000	
	% Active					50%	
	% Inactive					50%	

FOREST PLANTATIONS							
NO.	COMPANY	CONTRACT TYPE	CONTACT PERSON	REGION #	COUNTY	AREAR (in hectare)	REMARK
1	Westnaf Limited	Plantation	Geogia Owens Holder	4	River Gee	913.4	Approved/Active
2	Regnals Limited	Plantation	Edward Slangar	3	Nimba	913.2	Approved/Active
3	Build Liberia	Plantation	Brema Ali	3	Nimba	N/A	Approved/Active
	Total					1,826.6	
	Total Active					1,826.6	
	Total Inactive					0%	
	% Active					100%	
	%Inactive					0%	

FOREST MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS(FMC)							
NO.	COMPANY	CONTRACT TYPE	CONTACT PERSON	REGION #	COUNTY	AREAR (in hectare)	REMARK
1	ICC	FMC-K	Caesar Colombo	3	Nmba	266,916	Approved/Active
2	Euro Logging	FMC-F	Jihad Y. Akkari	4	Grand Gedeh	254,583	Approved/Active
3	Geblo Logging	FMC-I	Caesa Colombo	4	Grand Gedeh	131,466	Approved/Active
4	Alpha Logging	FMC-A	N/A	4	Lofa	119,240	Approved/Active
5	Atlantic Resources	FMC-P	N/A	4	Grand Kru and Maryland	119,344	Approved/Active
6	LTTC Inc./Mandra	FMC-C	Yonyon Toweh	3	Nimba & Rivercess	59,374	Approved/Inactive
7	Mandra EJ & J	FMC-B	Eliza Kronyan	3	Rivercess	57,262	Approved/Inactive
	Total					1,008,185	
	Total Active					891,549	
	Total Inactive					116,636	
	% Active					88.43%	
	%Inactive					11.57%	

Source: Commercial Department, FDA, Republic of Liberia

Contract Type	Total Approved (Hectare)	% Active	% Inactive
Community Forest Management Assembly (CFMA)	705,670	58.67%	41.33%
TIMBER SALE CONTRACT (TSC)	30,000	50%	50%
FOREST PLANTATIONS	1,826.6	100%	0%
FOREST MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS(FMC)	1,008,185	88.43%	11.57%
TOTAL	1,745,681.6		

Appendix 9: FDA Allocation in Liberia National Budget (2013/14- 2018/19) Fiscal Year

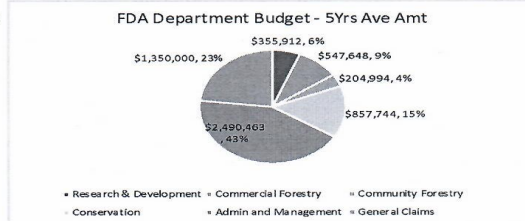
Category Department/Expense Area	FISCAL PERIOD						Average	% of Ave
	2013/14	2014/2015	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/2019		
Research and Development	\$9,089,000	\$361,964	\$312,214	\$297,912	\$309,087	\$498,382	\$355,912	6%
Commercial Forestry	\$66,075	\$618,862	\$588,862	\$517,981	\$521,655	\$490,880	\$547,648	9%
Community Forestry	\$28,318	\$275,425	\$237,050	\$164,304	\$190,729	\$157,462	\$204,994	4%
Conservation	\$0	\$962,867	\$886,605	\$808,074	\$841,097	\$790,075	\$857,744	15%
Administration and Management	\$1,246,940	\$2,226,087	\$1,789,363	\$3,769,847	\$2,882,162	\$1,784,857	\$2,490,463	43%
General Claims	\$750,000	\$750,000	\$5,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$0	\$0	\$1,350,000	23%
TOTAL	\$11,180,333	\$5,195,205	\$8,814,094	\$6,558,118	\$4,744,730	\$3,721,656	\$5,806,761	100%

Notes:

- 2013/14 Research and Development \$9.0million is donor funded projects. Therefore, it is excluded from the averages to avoid distortion. The averages starts from 2014/15-2018/2019.
- General claims is for debt servicing.
- Of particular significance is that allotments are primarily for employees compensation and goods and services and not for projects.
- Average percentages of Research and Development(6%), Community Forestry(4%) and Conservation departments(15%) are not priority.

Expense Areas as percentage of total	2013/14	2014/2015	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/2019	Average
Research and Development	81.29%	6.97%	3.54%	4.54%	6.51%	13.39%	13.39%
Commercial Forestry	0.59%	11.91%	6.68%	7.90%	10.99%	13.19%	13.19%
Community Forestry	0.25%	5.30%	2.69%	2.51%	4.02%	4.23%	4.23%
Conservation	0.00%	18.53%	10.06%	12.32%	17.73%	21.23%	21.23%
Administration and Management	11.15%	42.85%	20.30%	57.48%	60.74%	47.96%	47.96%
General Claims	6.71%	14.44%	56.73%	15.25%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Department	Five Yrs Ave Amount
Research & Development	\$355,912
Commercial Forestry	\$547,648
Community Forestry	\$204,994
Conservation	\$857,744
Admin and Management	\$2,490,463
General Claims	\$1,350,000



Source: Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Republic of Liberia

Appendix 10: The 1821 Land Grab Contract ('The Ducor Contract')

December 15, 1821

Deed for Mesurado

Know all men, that this contract, made on the fifteenth day of December in the year of our Lord One Thousand eight hundred and twenty-one, between King Peter, King George, King Zoda, King Long Peter, their Princes and Headmen, of the one part, and Captain Robert F. Stockton and Eli Ayres on the other part; witnesseth, that whereas certain Citizens of the United States of America are desirous to establish themselves on the Western Coast of Africa, and have invested Captain Robert F. Stockton and Eli Ayres with full powers to treat with and purchase from us the said Kings, Princes and Headmen, certain lands, viz: Dozoa Island and also all that portion of land bounded North and West by the Atlantic Ocean and on the South and East by a line drawn in a South-east direction from the North of Mesurado River.

We, the said Kings, Princes and Headmen, being fully convinced of the pacific and just views of the said citizens of America and being desirous to reciprocate the friendship and affection expressed for us and our people DO HEREBY, in consideration of so much paid in hand, viz: six Muskets, one Box Beads, two hogsheads Tobacco, one cask Gunpowder, six bars Iron, ten iron Pots, one dozen knives and forks, one dozen Spoons, six pieces blue Baft, four Hats, three Coats, three pair Shoes, one box Pipes, one keg Nails, twenty Looking-glasses, three pieces Handkerchiefs, three pieces Calico, three Canes, four Umbrellas, one box Soap, one barrel Rum, and to be paid the following three casks Tobacco, one box Pipes, three barrels Rum, twelve pieces Cloth, six bars Iron, one box Beads, fifty Knives, twenty Looking-glasses, ten iron Pots different sizes, twelve Guns, three barrels Gunpowder, one dozen Hats, one dozen Knives and Forks, twenty Hats, five casks Beef, five Tumblers, and fifty Shoes – FOR EVER CEDE and relinquish the above described Lands with all thereto appertaining or belonging or reputed so to belong to Captain F. Stockton and Eli Ayres to have and to hold the said Premises for the use of these said Citizens of America; and We, the said Kings, Princes, and Headmen do further pledge ourselves that we are the lawful owners of the above described land without manner of condition, limitation or other matter.

The contracting Parties pledge themselves to live in peace and friendship forever; and do further contract not to make war or otherwise molest or disturb each other. We the Kings, Princes and Headmen, for a proper consideration by us received do further agree to build for the use of the said Citizens of America six large houses on any place selected by them within the above tract of ceded Land.

In WITNESS whereof, the said, Kings, Princes and Headmen of the one Part, and Captain Robert F. Stockton and Eli Ayres of the other Part, do set their hands to this Covenant on the day and year above written

Source: Liberia Collection, Indiana University