

Conflict Timber: Lessons from Liberia

SILAS SIAKOR

Director,
Sustainable Dev. Institute (Liberia)



Forest Exploitation 1990 - 2003



Warlord

- **Taylor & associates harvested and traded in timber 1991 – 97 (\$50m)**

- total collapse of rule of law
- illegal logging reached all time high



President

- **Taylor elected president in 1997**
 - rewarded associates with concessions
 - introduced changes to laws
 - used timber revenue to fuel conflicts



UNSC Imposed Sanctions (2003)

- Timber revenue funding conflicts and instability in Liberia and the sub-region
 - ✓ widespread human rights abuses
 - ✓ breakdown of rule of law in forest sector

Civil Society Engagement

- o 2003 proposal for moratorium on extractive industries (extraction, international trade and concession allocation) during the interim period
- o 2004 proposal for an independent review of all existing forest concessions - 2 attempts by GOL considered inadequate by civil society and UN
- o Insistence on broad participation and transparency in conduct of review

Immediate Challenges

- Ex-combatants (pit-sawing, SNP)
- Increase in diamond and gold mining by ex-combatants and foreign companies (BOPC, AMA, etc.)
- Trade – sale of stockpile of iron ore in Buchanan not yet accounted for
- Concession allocation (83 agreements signed by interim government in two years – Mittal Steel attracted negative publicity)

Timber Concession Review Process

- Involved civil society, government, members of international community and local people;
- Information relating to concession operations made available to committee
- Agreed standards applied to all concessionaires
- Published report after submission

Findings of Review

- 17 companies linked to the conflict - companies and their principals barred from the sector
- None of the companies met the minimum criteria established by the review committee (including articles of incorporation, business registration for certificate for at least one year of operation, contract in force and effect and present documentation under oath)
- Concession allocation during the conflict did not follow established procedures and guidelines
- U\$64m in tax arrears
- Companies did not comply with community obligations defined within their agreements

Recommendations

- Cancel all existing concession agreements
- Implement reforms (legal, institutional, etc.)
 - ✓ Participatory (involve the various interest groups)
 - ✓ Transparent (improve access to information)
 - ✓ Accountable (regular and verifiable reporting by FDA)
 - ✓ Equitable (fair risk and benefit sharing by all)
 - ✓ Rule of law (adequate enforcement of laws/ due process)