



Rutile dredge.

SMALL NGO BECOMES KEY PLAYER

The Environmental Foundation for Africa/Sierra Leone plays a vital coordinating role in strengthening the collective green voice of NGOs across the region. Their common goal is to make the environment a central part of the overall development and peace agendas.

In wartime the environment is never a priority, and, unfortunately, immediately after a war has ended there are always other problems whose solution seems more urgent. In West-African Sierra Leone, after 11 years of civil war and with over 2 million displaced persons, the environment was in a dismal state. The practices of unsustainable mining, illegal logging and poor agricultural techniques were making a bad situation even worse. Just one hundred years ago an estimated 80 percent of Sierra Leone was covered in beautiful lush forest. Today some small patches covering just 3-5 percent of the total land area remain.

ACTIVITIES Immediately following the decade-long conflict in Sierra Leone (and later in Liberia), a small local NGO started to work with refugee settlements. With key funding from IUCN NL, the Environmental Foundation for Africa/Sierra Leone (EFA) used information, awareness-raising, education and advocacy to contribute to an environmentally sound reconstruction of the country, which would not provide further hardship to an already vulnerable population. EFA also encouraged NGOs and relief agencies to integrate environmental management into their work. Using small grants from IUCN NL it was able to leverage funding directly from the UN-refugee organization UNHCR for its work in refugee affected areas, and from CEPF for the rehabilitation of the Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary. In 2005, another small grant from IUCN NL enabled EFA to audit past rehabilitation sites of rutile (a titanium ore) and bauxite mining to understand how rehabilitation can produce healthy landscapes. This small grant further leveraged a larger, long-term project from the UK-funded Darwin Initiative to implement the recommendations emerging from the audit. EFA works directly with research institutions and the mining company involved to ensure that accurate information informs successful rehabilitation strategies.



Washing in polluted rutile pond.

IMPACT EFA is a prime example of how small grants can help a small NGO become a key player in countries plagued by conflict and rampant poverty. The organization has built up unique expertise in mainstreaming the environment in conflict zones, humanitarian and refugee operations, post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation, and the subsequent transition to sustainable development. During the past decade, EFA has become a leading civil society partner on interrelated social and environmental issues for key decision-making bodies in Sierra Leone and Liberia, including relief agencies, the government and the private sector. As a regional 'focal point' for IUCN NL, the organization now coordinates strategic capacity-building initiatives and monitoring for lessons learned in ten countries. By fostering partnerships and increased communication between environmental NGOs and other green actors throughout the region, the 'focal point' is stimulating and strengthening the collective green voice in West-Africa.



Studying water quality. All photos: Eveyenia Wilkins.

Grantee: Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA) (member of IUCN)

Project: •'Preparing for the future: national environmental awareness programme' (2002-04)
•'Socially and environmentally responsible rutile and bauxite mining in Sierra Leone' (2005-06)

Grant size: € 84,000 and € 29,000

Category: Developing civil society; Governance.

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