

## **Project Update: June 2009**

### **Summary**

Since the start of this project, five preparatory meetings have been held initially in five communities within the Marshall wetland. The towns included Marshall City, Owensgroves, Snafu dock, Bassa Point and Zanga Town. The purpose of the meetings was to inform community members about the commencement of the project within their communities as planned with them earlier and to set the stage for a larger meeting to be held with various sectors of the community by identifying the heads of the sectors in their communities who could help in arranging meetings.

### **Marshall City**

Since the preparatory meetings, two focus group discussions have been held. The first focus group discussion was held in Marshall City with 35 community members attending the meeting. Out of the participants 14 were women, 7 traditional leaders, 12 fishermen and two youth representatives. During the discussion the community members identified the problem themselves. One of the elders told a story that during the 1960s lots of fish used to be around the mangrove wetland but since the war most of the fish have left due to heavy harvesting of the mangrove by inhabitants for economic reasons and harvesting for firewood to dry fish and for cooking.

### **Snafu Dock community**

In Snafu town, one focus group discussion has been held. This is a coastal community with fishing as one of the major income generating activities for many members of the community. The meeting, which was attended by men, women, youth and the elders, focused on the history of mangrove in their community as it relates to fishing and flooding, the present behaviour of community members towards mangrove protection and how it could be improved. The community presented a better picture of mangrove treatment in the past and present and also suggested a way forward. The community is working to identify mangroves areas that should be conserved to increase the area in the community. The vegetation of the Marshall wetland is dominated by mangroves with some mature trees reaching up to 10 m.



Left: Fishing is one of the key livelihood activities of people in Marshall City. Right: Mangroves along the Junk River in Snafu Dock.

**Nature Clubs**

Two schools have been selected for the setting up of a nature club in the Marshall Wetland area. The intention is to increase the knowledge of young students about respecting and protecting nature which contributes to the overall goal of biodiversity conservation. The Schools include the SNAFU community school and the Marshall Methodist School. However, because of the school calendar of Liberia which runs from September to June each year, the principal of the schools suggested that it would be better to begin setting up the nature club at the beginning of the school year so that there was enough time to work with the students of the clubs.