

LISA Monthly Newsletter

September 2025

Liberian-Swedish Access-Driven Rural Development Programme (LISA)

Key Points

- The LISA project started in July 2024
- The LISA TA team started in March 2025
- The three TMCs started in June 2025
- The following are underway:
 - VAR final selection
 - Community profiling and engagement
 - Detailed surveys and designs
 - Specialist assessments

Background

The LISA project has been established within MPW with Sida support to construct and maintain VARs in Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties.

The LISA project has the following aims:

- Establish **16 CBOs** and **55 CMCs**
- Construct **195.0 km** of VARs
- Maintain **174.6 km** of previously constructed VARs
- Spot improvements of **12.3 km** on Feeder Roads linking to VARs

VARs will be managed by CMCs under the supervision of District based CBOs.

TMCs arrange and manage the day-to-day implementation of LISA:

- Longman Engineering Services in Bong
- Olow IGC in Lofa
- BK Enterprise in Nimba

MPW, the TA and County and District staff work as a single LISA team. They supervise the TMCs and provide additional expertise with engineering, community management, gender inclusion, agricultural productivity and social enterprise specialists.

The LISA team coordinates closely with Sida programme management, with frequent site visits, progress meetings and technical discussions.



Progress

VAR final selection

MCA workshops were carried out during August in all districts with a large number of candidate tracks. These workshops allowed stakeholders to decide the criteria by which one track would be prioritized over another. In total, 6 MCA workshops were held: 3 in Bong, 1 in Lofa and 2 in Nimba.

Some tracks in each county leading to Grow-2 or VOSIEDA project sites were pre-selected, up to around 20% of the county's allocation.

The final selection of VARs is now almost complete.



Detailed designs and community profiling

The technical teams are now carrying out detailed surveys and designs for all selected VARs. In parallel the community teams are profiling the communities to assess labour availability and form the CMCs and CBOs.



If the surveys show sections of the VAR that will be very costly to improve, or the profiling shows an absence of workers, the VAR selection will be adjusted; otherwise the selection will be finalised.



Specialist inputs

The selection of VARs and the profiling of communities will allow VARs to be constructed and maintained. However, in order to ensure the long term sustainability of the VARs, further input is required.

In addition to engineers and community development specialists, the TA team has other specialists: social enterprise, agricultural development, gender and inclusion, and land rights. Now that VARs and communities have been selected, this team has started assessing the capacity of the communities to generate and use maintenance funds, help local businesses emerge, increase farm outputs and market their surpluses, and for all members of the community to benefit from the opportunities presented by the VARs. After this assessment, the specialists will make recommendations and devise training programmes and other forms of capacity building in their discipline.

Maintenance of VARs from LSFRP

During LSFRP a CBO was established at each VAR (in contrast to the LISA method of a CMC at each VAR supported by a single CBO at district level). During August, these CBOs – 18 in total – were supported (and reactivated if necessary) to be able to restart maintenance of their VARs. By the end of August, the first cycle of maintenance, cutting vegetation and clearing drains, had started.

Future Plans

Overall programme

September will see maintenance of LSFRP VARs start in all counties and final preparations for the new VARs.

With the detailed designs from the engineers and the community profiles from the social team, the TMCs will go through a strategic planning phase, supported by MPW and the TA, to work out the detail of the construction process: how many workers are needed, what standard the VAR will be constructed to, in what sequence the VARs will be constructed, and how many TMC site teams are needed to properly instruct and supervise.

When the plan meets the LISA budget and timeframe, work will begin, with expected start in late September and completion in April or May of next year.

While this work is going on, C-MAP maintenance plans will be made and the specialists assessments will be completed.

Partnerships

Tracks providing access to Grow-2 and VOSIEDA project sites have been identified and have been shortlisted. Assuming successful detailed designs and community profiling, these tracks will be included in the VAR final selections.



Challenges

The main challenge facing the LISA team is to be ready for construction to start by October.



Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

A wide range of indicators have been considered for the LISA M&E framework, with those likely to be used including quantity of completed work, worker-days/income earned, CMCs established and changing traffic patterns. Swansea University have supported this work.

After confirmation of indicators, a baseline survey will be carried out during September, with endline surveys planned after work is completed, and in September 2026 if feasible.

Community of the month

The community of Wobazu in Lofa has been maintaining their VAR since it was constructed in 2023 during LSFRP. LISA is now helping them to reestablish a full cycle of maintenance.

“This road has been beneficial to the entire people of Wobazu.”

The community includes James Forkpoh Sammy Bema, the Town Chief and co-Chair, Hawah Gabriel, co-Chair, Mary J Kemeh and Beyant Kizeakai, maintenance supervisors, and Sumoiwuo Kizeakai, office assistant. They report that through the VAR and the income that it generates they can:

- buy land and build houses
- send their children to school
- look after their families
- travel daily to Voinjama, 13 km away, on their motorcycles
- send agricultural produce, charcoal and other items to market
- bring in other supplies
- load directly onto motorcycles and tricycles, rather than headloading to the main road

“We have been helping ourselves to brush the road.”

10% of project income was retained in a community savings scheme. This has been used for community projects and to give personal loans.

“I took some [of the savings scheme] and paid my school fees and it helped me.”

The community is very happy with their VAR, carries out voluntary clearing and maintenance, and is looking forward to the opportunity to further develop and expand their VAR.

“I’m so happy with the money I received. I bought my piece of land.”

“This road is really useful; it’s helping us. I must commend the funder.”

