

LISA Monthly Newsletter

December 2025

Liberian-Swedish Access Driven Rural Development Programme (LISA)

Key Points

- The LISA project started in July 2024
- Maintenance of LSFRP VARs started in August 2025
- The LISA TA team and three Track Management Consultants (TMCs) started in early 2025
- Construction of LISA VARs started in October 2025

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 **55** CMCs at community level and **16** CBOs at District level
- Construct **195.0 km** of new VARs
- Maintain **174.6 km** of VARs from LSFRP
- Spot improvements of **12.3 km** on Feeder Roads linking to VARs

MPW, the TA, County and District staff and the three TMCs work as a single LISA team. Together they ensure that the CMCs and CBOs are trained and resourced, the VARs are well designed and constructed, long term maintenance plans are in place, the communities are supported with good quality guidance, and advice is provided on gender and inclusion, agricultural development, and opportunities for the VARs to enable sustainable economic growth,

Progress

VAR maintenance

The first cycle of maintenance of all LSFRP VARs (2 in Bong, 21 in Lofa and 24 in Nimba) is nearing completion.



VAR construction

After work started on 18 new VARs in October, the TMCs expanded their county programmes such that by the end of November work was being carried out on 44 VARs. These VARs are:

Bong

- Salala District
 - Moipata-Buteisue
- Suakoko District
 - Nunetulamue-Tomkpolore
 - Ballamah-Claymue
- Jorquellah District
 - Whomgbah-Dankpasue

Lofa

- Foya District
 - Sadu-Farmah
 - Sadu-Sayma
 - Fassapoe-Farm 1
 - Farmah-Farm 2
 - Farmah-Farm 3
 - Borliloe-Kolochoe
- Voinjama District
 - Vezela-Ballah
 - Bazagizia-Zayea
 - Jallamai-Kuyamai
 - Lawalazu-Kpakacongozu

Nimba

- Gbelay-Geh District
 - Kpolay-Gboalay
 - Zualay-Gopea (Mobula)
 - Zualay-Nentepea
 - Zortapa-Kapia
 - Kailay-Prince
 - Kailay-Nalah
 - Larpea #1-Tontenpea
 - Larpea #1-Larmie
 - Larpea #2-Tonpea
 - Larpea #2-VOSIEDA farm
- Zoe Gbor District
 - Korsein-Cowpea
 - Korsein-Yarpea 1
 - Korsein-Yarpea 2
- Sanniquellie Mahn District
 - Gborpa-William Dokie
 - Sehyi Gueh-Josephus Gbato
 - Sehyi Gueh-Prince Dolo
 - Mankinto-Mark Village

- Mankinto-Bessonor
- Bleemain-Gartain
- Boapea-Nahnla
- Boapea-Osaka
- Mao-Jallah Quor

- Zoe Gbao District
 - Zaglay-Voaplay
 - Zaglay-Gbopea
 - Zehplay-Gotuo
 - Zehplay-Clepea
 - Troupoe-Fredrick
 - Troupoe-Pa Moses
 - Duowine-Tarpor Siah
 - Duowine-Gbopoa

The construction activities across these VARs include clearing, de-stumping, grubbing, formation, drains, sourcing and prepositioning of timbers and boulders, and construction of the first bridges.



Worker payments

The first payment to workers on the VARs was due in the middle of November. There were minor delays to set up CBO bank accounts, ensure that all workers have access to a mobile money account and understand how it works, and check completed tasks against attendance lists, but first payments for work carried out in October were made by the 30th of November. All delays relate to setting up the system and are unlikely to affect subsequent payments, so

it is expected that payments will catch up with the two-week processing time very soon.

Superintendent site visits

Collaborative agreements signed between the project and the counties during October cover contributions by county and district officials, in terms of site visits and coordination meetings.

On the 25th and 26th of November, delegations from Lofa and Nimba visited VAR construction sites in their counties, allowing Superintendents and County and District officials to meet LISA and TMC staff and local communities. All were impressed with what they saw and heard. These visits show a level of support and commitment that is vital for VAR sustainability, and that is greatly appreciated by the LISA team.



Gender and inclusion

After submitting the first draft of her report on the field assessment carried out during September, the Gender Specialist gave a presentation to staff from the MPW Gender Unit and handed over her draft report. This report was used to inform a visit carried out to VAR sites by the Gender Unit and the LISA Project Director at the end of November.



CBOs and social enterprise

The Social Enterprise Specialist carried out an assessment of potential economic opportunities during October, initiatives that will allow VARs to be maintained and economic development to sustain. She then arranged a series of meetings during November with CMCs and CBOs to explain each of the various options and help them to choose which was most appropriate for their environment, situation and capacity. A further visit will be arranged in January to help the communities to establish their chosen initiative.



CBO training on financial systems

In parallel with the community enterprise meetings, the CBO Finance Specialist carried out training of all CBO Business and Finance Assistants, so that they are ready to manage finances within the CBOs, in respect of procurement, worker payments and financial management of the enterprise initiatives above.

Agriculture assessment

A second assessment of agricultural potential was carried out in November, with the expectation that some of the enterprise initiatives will be based on using the VAR to establish new farms, increase productivity and carry produce to markets. The Agriculture Specialist also talked with the communities about how their agricultural plans need to comply with the EUDR regulations which prohibit crops grown on recently cleared forest land being exported into the EU, as well as the long term local impact of excess tree removal.

Worker Handbooks

Worker Handbooks, one of the components of the LISA Social and Environmental Safeguards Management Plan, were described in the previous newsletter. During November, they were distributed to all CMCs where work is starting so that all workers are able to understand their rights as well as their responsibilities.



Land issues

The Land Rights Specialist visited two communities during September to help the District Commissioner to resolve a land dispute that could block the construction of a VAR. Encouraged by this support, and understanding the potential benefits to all from the VAR, the two communities have agreed on their

mutual border and construction work is expected to start soon. The report of the specialist included short, medium and long term recommendations for the maintenance and strengthening of the agreement between the communities to prevent reoccurrence and to allow the benefits of the VAR to continue to all parties.

Technical supervision

The Senior Programme Engineer and Senior Field Engineer spent two weeks visiting all active sites during November. They advised TMCs and CMCs on a range of matters, including task rates, working conditions, worker attendance lists, tool and PPE use, team management and site management.



Future Plans

First Aid training

The Worker Handbook, above, is one component of the Social and Environmental Safeguards Management Plan. Another is the provision of First Aid kits and training to a nationally recognized standard to each CMC. Lofa County Health Team will provide kits and training across six Districts in early December. The training course will then be repeated in Bong and Nimba.

C-MAPs

Community Management Action Plans guide CMCs in the long-term management of their VARs, including fundraising and project management, and are central to long-term operations and sustainability. LISA staff will work with all CMCs and CBOs in December to establish their C-MAPs, noting that each CMC may have chosen different economic initiatives to fund them. After establishment, support will continue throughout the LISA project.

Research

Impact assessment of LSFRP VARs

The fourth research project within LISA was an impact assessment of LSFRP VARs. A comprehensive report has summarized a series of findings, challenges and recommendations with respect to VAR selection, planning, management and impact, and will be circulated to all relevant parties to correct limitations, learn lessons and enhance outcomes.

Research pipeline

In order to ensure that the LISA research budget is well used during the remainder of the project to address the highest priority topics, while remaining able to tackle urgent issues that may arise at short notice, the PMT is carrying out a planning exercise to establish a costed research pipeline. It is expected that this pipeline will be ready for dissemination in the next newsletter.



Challenges

Construction work has started well, with the number of workers available from most communities higher than the 30-35 estimate used for initial planning. This bodes well for on-time completion, but the LISA team is well aware that the incentive to earn before the dual pressures of harvest and Christmas might lead to fewer workers in the New Year. The team also hopes that the very visible signs of improved rural access and prompt worker payments might help to limit any drop in numbers.



Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Baseline survey

The just-completed baseline survey across the three counties aimed to gather essential data on current socio-economic conditions and opportunities, infrastructure, and service access within targeted communities. The survey focused on assessing the state of local roads and tracks, transportation modes, and their impact on livelihoods, market access, education, and healthcare services.

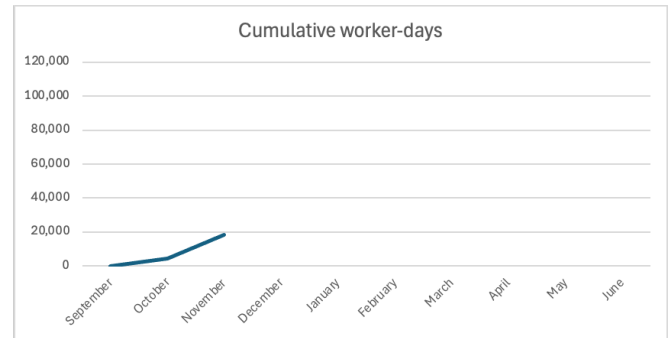


Data collection involves household interviews, traffic counts, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs), targeting diverse respondents including farmers, traders, transport operators, community leaders, and social service providers.

Preliminary findings indicate significant challenges related to road conditions, especially during the rainy season, which affect agricultural productivity, market connectivity and access to essential services. The survey also explores community perceptions, road usage patterns, and readiness for participation in maintenance activities. The results will inform future project design and implementation strategies to improve rural road infrastructure, enhance economic opportunities, and promote sustainable community involvement.

Worker-days

With work increasing on a growing number of VARs, the cumulative number of worker days is rapidly increasing, with a total to the end of November of just under 20,000 with approximately 40% by female workers.



Group of the month

From the moment the Whomgbah to Dankpasue path was selected for upgrade to VAR, the community in Whomgbah, led by the newly formed CMC, has been very committed to its success.

When the CMC were being given training in setting out and formation work, they were joined by other members of the community, keen to learn.



Work has been underway for just over a month but the CMC are already able to plan and manage much of the work, allowing Longman Eng. Services, the TMC, to focus attention on other communities.

After this VAR is complete, the CMC intends to open VARs to other communities.

Alexander Gbormue, the CMC Chair, is impressed with the project and the prospect of seeing an end to slow and arduous headloading.



Alexander is grateful to LISA, and the engineers and social workers of Longman in particular.