

LISA Monthly Newsletter

January 2026

Liberian-Swedish Access Driven Rural Development Programme (LISA)

Key Points

- The LISA project started in July 2024
- Maintenance of LSFRP VARs and construction of LISA VARs is not underway in all counties
- The LISA TA team and three Track Management Consultants (TMCs) started in early 2025
- **The Sida programme is due to end in August 2026 – more details below**

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 second phase of the first cycle of maintenance of all LSFRP VARs (2 in Bong, 21 in Lofa and 24 in Nimba) is underway, with current activities of roadside brushing, drain clearing and bridge repairs.



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 and towards the end of December on 56 VARs. These VARs are:

Bong

- Salala District
 - Moipata-Buteisue
- Suakoko District
 - Nunetulamue-Tomkpolore
 - Ballamah-Claymue
- Jorquellah District
 - Whomgbah-Dankpasue
- Zota District
 - Naamai-Jarkai
- Panta District
 - Gbaita-Wumeh
 - Foequellah-Gbaita

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
- Bain Garr District
 - Whynor - Jefferson Wuo
 - Whynor - Kamawee Village
 - Whynor - Alphonso Canada
 - Yelekorlee – Fongowee
 - Tundi – Payepea
 - Tundi - Karwolo - Gbainya -Zumba
- Doe District
 - Keinpea – Manlor
 - Nuopea – Toepea
 - Nuopea - Barpea

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 recruitment

In most communities, the number who want to work is more than the number who the engineers need to carry out the planned work and can manage on site. The LISA team want to fairly share the work amongst all those who want to work. This is typically done by giving all candidates a numbered ticket and then drawing, at random, the required number of tickets. Those ticket holders are recruited to start the work. All those not selected are recorded and recruited in the second cycle, with cycles arranged so that all those who want to work are able to do so. The ticket drawing is also often used to ensure that a fair proportion of women are recruited.



Worker payments

The success of any infrastructure project that uses community labour will depend on accuracy and promptness of worker payments. Many workers were let down during October and November when mistakes by commercial banks led to payments being late or missed or, in two instances, made twice to some workers while others were not paid.

The process was revised, with LISA staff having direct control of record keeping and payment processing. By early December, payments were back on track and some of the doubts generated by the delays were being dispelled. Further significant delays are not expected and the forbearance of many workers has been appreciated.

County Administration meetings and site visits

Showing commitment to the Collaborative Agreements, County officials from Bong followed their counterparts in Lofa and Nimba by holding a stakeholder meeting and joining a site visit to the Naamai to Jarkai VAR. The County team learned much about VARs and the CDO even helped the community with some vegetation brushing. These

meetings and visits will contribute to the long term success of the VAR. LISA team always appreciate these inputs.



C-MAP training

The daily work of planning, supervision, training, reporting and coordination continued during November. In addition to this, focus moved to the development and establishment of community maintenance action plans (C-MAPs). A workshop was held within each community to decide how the VAR will be maintained, in terms of sources of funding, use of voluntary labour, management of handtools, sequences of maintenance cycles, and imposition of fines for non-compliance. As VARs are completed, the C-MAPs will begin, and the future of the VAR will be assured.



Worker Handbooks

Worker Handbooks continue to be distributed to CMCs as work starts on site. All workers have been told about the handbooks and have the opportunity to read those held by their CMC. Further developments might include linked video explanations and graphics within the text.



Technical supervision

This work continues with reviews of designs, and tool and material procurement plans, the approval of good quality plans that will lead to the completion of the VARs within time and budget, and technical guidance on bridge construction.

Feeder roads

The LISA Project Director and the TA senior Field Engineer spent a week inspecting ongoing feeder road maintenance work in the South-East to confirm that Road Fund feeder road maintenance support is being carried out, with a focus on previously LSFRP-funded feeder roads.

These counties include:

Grand Gedeh County

- Guebueh - Voogbadee Road
- Zwedru - Boundary Road
- Zwedru - Ziah Road
- Zwedru - Bawaydee Road
- Gborbo - Guebuah

Rivergee County

- Kawacain - Yunken-mamoken

- Fish town - Juwelhbo

Maryland County

- Harper - Giabo-Little Wlebo-Fish Town Road
- Wetchoken-Golobo-old Sodoken Road

Grand Kru County

- Big Sueh - Juduken Road
- Big Sueh - Grandcess Road
- Big Sueh - Filorken Road



MPW 5 year Strategic Development Plan

On the 17th of December the Minister of Public Works and his team presented the MPW 5 year Strategic Development Plan to staff of MPW, senior officials of other Ministries and agencies, and representatives of development partners. The Plan was developed after extensive consultation, and emphasizes the need to address the access needs of the entire population. As such, it is compatible with the central principle of ‘access for all’ of the VAR approach.

Holiday closure

All parties in LISA, from the workers and the CMCs to the management in Monrovia, stopped for a well-earned break on the 20th of December. The entire team will restart work on the 6th of January, with recharged batteries and ready to work until all VARs are finished. Core staff remained active and online

during the break in case of incident and issues to address.



Future Plans

First Aid training

A First Aid training course was planned to be held in Lofa during December but was delayed. It will now be planned for January, given by the Lofa County Health Team, and will be followed by similar courses in Bong and Nimba.

Research

Research pipeline

By early December a range of research topics had been discussed by the LISA PMT and priority topics identified. However, the decision by Sida, explained below, changed the perspective and timeframe of the project and, consequently, the relative priority of the topics. The list of topics is currently being reviewed and work on the final list is expected to start in January. It is likely that the final list will include a complete revision of the social and technical VAR manuals to include the large number of developments and improvements of the last three years.

Challenges

Worker payments

As above, worker payments were disrupted during October and November, leading to low worker turnout and construction productivity. However, the worker payment procedure was revised, with payments back on schedule by mid-December, and belief returning to the workers, ready for the work to restart with confidence after the holiday closure.

Sida

On the 5th of December the Swedish Government announced the closure of the embassy and the Sida development programme in Liberia, and other countries, with effect from August 2026.

This decision, made for geopolitical reasons unrelated to Liberia or any project in its Sida programme, will have a major impact on LISA and the team's hopes for the future. Discussions are underway with Sida to find the best way to use the remaining project resources, complete the intended work, and leave the work in the best possible shape for work to restart when alternative sources of support can be found.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Baseline survey

The result of the baseline survey, completed in November, are currently being analysed, with a report soon to be issued. The Person of the Month, below, was met during the baseline survey, on one of the nine assessed tracks, and the section below gives some initial indication of the issues that arose.

Person of the month

During the baseline data collection exercise for the Liberia–Swedish Access Driven Rural Development Programme (LISA), the assessment team engaged with community members in Gborpa Town, Senequelleh District, Nimba County. Gborpa is a small rural settlement that serves as a reference town along one of LISA's VARs leading to William Dokie Village. The town's socio-economic conditions and access challenges provided critical baseline evidence to inform VAR planning.

One of the key informants interviewed was Mrs. Mamie Gonlepa, a full-time farmer and the wife of the Town Chief of Gborpa. Mrs. Gonlepa represents a typical smallholder farmer in the project area whose livelihood is highly dependent on agriculture but significantly constrained by limited access to basic services, and most notably, access to markets.



Mrs. Gonlepa reported that it takes approximately two hours of walking from Stephen Village to reach Gborpa Town to reach, where market access and storage facilities are available. Due to the long distance, poor road conditions, and the absence of affordable transport options, she has been unable to transport her farm produce to market consistently. At the time of the interview, she

disclosed that portions of her agricultural produce harvested as far back as three years ago remain stored in her farm kitchen, having deteriorated due to prolonged storage and lack of market access.



These access constraints have had a direct negative impact on her productivity and motivation. Mrs. Gonlepa explained that repeated post-harvest losses and physical exhaustion from head-loading farm produce have discouraged her from expanding cultivation in recent years. The situation is further aggravated during the rainy season, when road conditions deteriorate and the community becomes largely isolated. As observed during the baseline, the poor state of access roads has contributed to reduced economic activity, limited service delivery, and overall livelihood vulnerability along the path running from Gborpa Town to William Dokie village.

Despite these challenges, Mrs. Gonlepa expressed strong optimism regarding the proposed road improvements under the LISA programme. She anticipates that improved village access roads will significantly reduce travel time, ease the burden of transporting goods, and enable her to increase agricultural production. Improved road access

would also allow her to spend more time in her community while accessing essential social services, thereby improving household welfare. In particular, she identified the introduction of VARs as a critical intervention that would eliminate the need for head-loading and long-distance walking.

These baseline findings align closely with the Government of Liberia's national development agenda, which prioritizes Agriculture, Roads, Rule of Law, Education, Sanitation, and Tourism (ARREST) as drivers of inclusive growth. Addressing rural road infrastructure gaps is essential to reducing poverty, improving market access, and strengthening local economies. As evidenced in Gborpa Town, sustained and targeted investment in rural roads remains a prerequisite for unlocking agricultural potential and achieving meaningful, long-term development outcomes