

# LISA Monthly Newsletter

March 2026

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

### Key Points

- The LISA project started in July 2024
- The LISA Technical Assistant (TA) and three Track Management Consultants (TMCs) started in early 2025
- Maintenance of Liberian Swedish Feeder Road Project (LSFRP) VARs and construction of LISA VARs is now ongoing in three counties
- The LISA team are working hard to meet the project closure deadline of August 2026

### Background

The LISA project was established within MPW and 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
- Support **18 CBOs** 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 Community Management Committees (CMCs) and the County Based Organizations (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 and economic growth for all in the community.

### Progress

#### Midpoint of the VAR construction work

By the end of February, the construction phase of LISA is about half-way through. Progress has been assessed for each county and plans have been made to continue the good progress and increase capacity if required.

The next few months are expected to be smoother than before, with worker payments more reliable, worker numbers increasing (partly because of improved payments), and with several disruption-free months ahead.



- Gbansuesulonmai-Boyanquelleh
- Panta District
  - Gbaita-Wumeh
  - Foequelleh-Gbaita
  - Foequelleh-Finutolee
  - Foequelleh-Vayanhin
  - Gbarnga Siaquelleh-Moses Village
- Yealiquelleh District
  - Voloblai-Gbaito Ta
  - Gwenikalay-Koliekaju
  - Pleemue-Jorker

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

**VAR maintenance**

Maintenance continues on all VARs constructed under LSFRP, now moving from the first to the second cycle of activities. The new activities in the second cycle focus on implementing routine Maintenance from RM-1 to RM-10, including bridge repairs, assessments of the bridge deck, piers and waterway and repairs and clearing as required. Bridge maintenance is particularly important due to the possible result of failure when under traffic, as well as the subsequent total loss of access after failure.



**VAR construction**

The TMCs have further expanded their programmes, with work underway on a total of 65 VARs by the end of February. Work on all remaining VARs will start soon. The VARs under construction are:

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

Bong

- Salala District
  - Moipata-Buteisue
- Suakoko District
  - Nunetulamue-Tomkpolore
  - Ballamah-Claymue
- Jorquelleh District
  - Whomgbah-Dankpasue
- Zota District
  - Naamai-Jarkai

- 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
  - Sopea-VOSIEDA farm 1
  - Sopea-VOSIEDA farm 2
- 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, grubbing, de-stumping, formation, drains, sourcing and repositioning of timbers and boulders, and construction of bridges.

#### IFAD and LISA-PMT site visit

During the period under review, the LISA-PMT had the opportunity to present at the IFAD-MOA Review Mission meeting held at the Ministry of Agriculture. The team presented on the overall state of the Village Access Roads and its importance to agricultural production, linking to the ongoing feeder roads project undertaken by IFAD. And this was

followed by a site visit with the IFAD technical team in Zota and Panta Districts, Bong County.



#### County Administration meetings and site visits

Coordination meetings with county authorities continue to go ahead and to help with the level of ownership and understanding at county, district and community levels.



A meeting and site visit was held in Bong on the 5<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> of February and in Lofa on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

#### Sida and MPW site visit

A party comprising the Programme Officer, Controller and Political, Promotion and Communication Officer from Sida, the Deputy Minister for Rural Development and Community Services and other officials from MPW, County and District officials, and members of the PMT and TMCs made a two-day visit to Bong and Nimba counties. Six VARs – some just started and some nearly complete – were inspected and a wide range of social and technical discussions were held.



### Technical support and work plans

Members of the PMT continue their support to the TMCs and CMCs of all technical functions. A particular focus during February has been the construction of bridges. The nature of the terrain in which LISA is working is such that typically one to two timber bridges are needed every kilometre, so there is plenty of timber cutting and construction required.



Work plans are used on all construction projects to ensure that sufficient time and resources are available, monitor progress and adjust plans in case of delay, and inform all parties when work is expected to start and finish. VAR work is no different, particularly with a deadline for completion and with the need to support CMCs to take over management and maintenance as soon as work is nearing completion. The TMCs are thanked for their plans, and for making adjustments as required.



### Signboards

VAR budgets include one weather-proof signboard on each VAR. These signboards are currently being designed and fabricated, ready for installation at, or near, the start point of the VAR. Signboards provide information about the VAR (start point, end point, length), and all parties involved in the project, as well as, and perhaps most importantly, the prohibition on any vehicle larger than a motorcycle or three-wheeler using the VAR.



### First Aid training

First Aid training began in Kolahun and Foya Districts in Lofa on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of February, followed by sessions in Voinjama and Zorzor. The training was given by the Lofa County Health Team and managed by the two district level CBOs: Fekpma Development Association and Ngoyilangi Development Association.

All Community Health Assistants who attended the training received nationally recognized EMS certificate and a First Aid kit that they will use in their communities.



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Kolahun, Liberia  
Darlington S. Johnson

First Aid training will start in Nimba in early March and will then move to Bong.



**Social enterprise and business plans**

The LISA social enterprise specialist has prepared business plans for each community, in line with the economic opportunities that they have chosen to be part of their VAR-based development plans. During February she started training the communities in how to implement these business plans.

As part of the move to align all VAR communities so that all are in a similar position at the end of LISA to use their VAR for community-led development, this

training is being extended to include those with VARs constructed during LSFRRP.



Results of this engagement are already being seen. A CMC in Lofa, with CBO support, provided Koo labour for agricultural work in the nearby area, and with the profit has started a palm oil trading business.

**Agricultural surveys**

The LISA agriculture specialist has started a survey of communities in all three counties. This survey will identify the agricultural opportunities and constraints facing each community. It is expected that these will vary significantly according to the terrain and environment of each. The survey will also identify available extension services and advise the community members in how to access these services.

Recommendations will then be made to allow community members to adapt and improve their farming practices and benefit from the improved access from the VAR. Training materials will be prepared and training given.

The agriculture specialist will also ensure that all communities are aware of EUDR, a regulation to prevent products such as coffee and cocoa that have been grown on recently cleared forest land from being exported to the EU.

**Future Plans**

**Feeder roads**

Since VARs are the ‘first mile’ in the national network which also comprises primary, secondary and feeder roads, for the full benefit of the VARs to be realised, it is important that higher levels of the network do not block agriculture produce after it has left the VAR.

Surveys have been carried out of feeder roads in Bong, Lofa and Nimba to identify sites in poor condition which could inhibit access to LSFRP and LISA VARs.



The required work – referred to as ‘spot improvements’ – is typically the repair of erosion gullies, damaged drains, eroded shoulders and potholes in the road surface. Designs and budgets are being prepared to improve these sites and restore access to the VARs. The work is expected to start in early March and be complete before the end of April.

## Research

### Research projects

A pipeline of priority research topics was established during December 2025 and projects are now being planned and budgeted. Forthcoming topics include the incorporation of the strengths of different timber species into the bridge design table currently in use, the identification of measures to prevent erosion and accident on steep gradients, the production of good quality handtools by local artisan workshops, the involvement of motorcycle operators in the VAR implementation cycle, the inclusion of community demand into the VAR selection procedure and the assessment of various options for long term VAR maintenance.



## Challenges

### Harvest time

Although community members are keen to work on the construction of their VAR, they cannot ignore their farms at times of land preparation and harvest, something that could, without careful consideration, reduce worker availability and disrupt the work at a critical time.

TMCs and CMCs are helping the workers manage these parallel roles, either altering days on site with days on the farm, or completing tasks early so that some time can be spent each day on the farm.

Early indications are that this approach is allowing workers to both harvest their crops and earn income and contribute to the community’s VAR.

## Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

### Baseline and endline surveys

A baseline survey of the VAR communities and their socio-economic and access/mobility conditions was carried out in November 2025. A report on this survey has been submitted by the M&E Officer and is being prepared for distribution. An endline survey will be planned for July in order to contribute to impact assessment, lesson learning, and future planning.



### Final evaluation

In parallel to the internal baseline and endline surveys, an independent final evaluation is being planned, with ToRs being drafted and reviewed. This evaluation will assess both the LSFRP Phase 3 extension and LISA using OECD-DAC criteria, as well

as evaluate the VAR implementation model as developed over time and followed during LISA.



**Worker-days**

With work underway on a growing number of VARs, the cumulative number of worker days is rapidly increasing, with a total to the end of February of almost 37,000 with approximately 40% by female workers.



**People of the month**

A Business and Finance Assistant (BFA) is being trained in each district to help CBOs to record attendance and manage worker payments, support new social enterprises, and give training and other help as required.

Njekay Sahr Bumbeh (L) of Fekpema Development Association in Foya District in Lofa County and Moses K Apay (R) of Tennamima Development

Association in Salala District in Bong County are two of these BFAs and are making a big difference to their communities.



Njekay has previously worked in community development and with small business initiatives; Moses has worked as a director of an orphanage and a teacher. Their daily contact with community members, chiefs, elders, women’s groups, youths, business owners and entrepreneurs gives them a deep understanding of the needs and capacities of their communities.

Both believe that their VARs will help communities by reducing poverty, creating jobs and generating income, encouraging enterprise and community ownership, increasing connectivity and mobility, improving access to markets, schools, finance and other services, and increasing socio-economic development.

Njekay and Moses express their hopes for the future:

"My hope is that the VAR project will continue to empower communities, create sustainable livelihoods, and become a model for inclusive economic development in the future."

"My hope is that the VARs are the backbone of rural connectivity and play a vital role in socio-economic development.

"I want the VAR project to be extended to all 15 counties, and also that a strong policy should be established to govern the VARs"