

LISA Monthly Newsletter

February 2026

Liberian-Swedish Access Driven Rural Development Programme (LISA)

Key Points

- The LISA project started in July 2024
- The LISA Technical Assistant (TA) team 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 making plans to meet the Sida closure deadline of August 2026

Background

The LISA project was established within the Ministry of Public Works (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 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

Return from the Christmas and New Year break

After hard work during 2025 by all those involved with LISA, the programme had a short Christmas and New Year break and a welcome rest from the 22nd of December to the 2nd of January.

The return in January was slightly languid in some quarters, but by the last week of the month work was back to normal across the three counties.



The successful changes to the worker payment system helped ensure a quick return by the workers, with the Gbarnga Siaquelleh-Moses Village VAR site in Bong County reporting over one hundred workers on site ready to work. To the credit of the CMC, all those who came were given tasks to complete and work is progressing well.

VAR maintenance

The first maintenance period of all LSFRP VARs (2 in Bong, 23 in Lofa and 25 in Nimba) is now complete, with scoping work starting for the next period. This will include repairing damage to the bridges, clearing debris and sediment from the waterways and repairing potholes, ruts and erosion on the carriageway surface.



VAR construction

After the break, the TMCs have again expanded their programmes, with work underway on a total of 59 VARs by the end of January. These VARs are:

Bong

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

• Panta District

- Gbaita-Wumeh
- Foequelleh-Gbaita
- Foequelleh-Vayanhin
- Gbarnga Siaquelleh-Moses Village

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, grubbing, de-stumping, formation, drains, sourcing and prepositioning of timbers and boulders, and construction of structures.



Worker payments

The system for paying workers through commercial banks did not perform well for the October payment, with late and missed payments leading to some disenchantment and poor worker turnout.

The system was revised, with LISA staff managing the process and handling the November and December payments efficiently and punctually. This encouraged workers to return after the holiday; if payments had not improved, January turnout might have been very low.

The system is now able to make mobile money payments directly to workers' accounts within 2 or 3 days of attendance lists being received in the LISA office, helped by the Business and Finance Assistants recruited by the CBOs and trained by the CBO Finance Specialist.

As before, the patience and understanding of the workers has been welcomed.

CMC management of VARs

The LISA team is responsible for selecting VARs, training various parties, and leading the construction process, but it is the Community Management Committee (CMC) that will take over its VAR when it is complete and then manage and maintain it for the future. Ideally, management should be handed over progressively to the CMC during construction, so that the assumption of full responsibility is smooth and risk-free.



It is to the credit of some CMCs – Whomgbah and several others – and their TMC and LISA trainers, that the construction of some VARs is already largely under CMC control, with twice-weekly TMC visits sufficient to guide the work towards completion.

Such active levels of ownership are very likely to result in a VAR that serves and benefits its community for years to come.

County Administration meetings and site visits

Monthly coordination meetings and site visits are going ahead in all counties, as below in Nimba on the 29th of January, and then Lofa on the 30th. This contact between authorities and communities is increasing mutual understanding of rural access needs and will help support the CMCs in the future after LISA has closed.



C-MAP assessments

Visits were held during January to LSFRP VARs in all three counties to learn about the current levels of fund collection and maintenance management. Using this assessment, plans are being made to reactivate the C-MAPs for all LSFRP VARs.

Technical supervision

This work continues with reviews of VAR designs, tool and material procurement plans, and bridge construction plans, with guidance, training and documentary support provided as required.



TMCs are also preparing detailed budgets and VAR work plans to cover the completion of all VARs within time and budget.

The work plans will also enable C-MAPs to be prepared and introduced while work is still underway, ready for each CMC to take over responsibility as its VAR is finished.

Feeder roads

The feeder road survey during December in the counties of Grand Gedeh, Rivergee, Maryland and Grand Kru showed that Road Fund budget is being well used in the maintenance of feeder roads, in line with the Government commitment to LISA.

Separately to this commitment, the LISA budget includes some funding to carry out spot improvements on isolated defects on the feeder roads which provide access to LSFRP and LISA VARs. LISA engineers spent most of January surveying the feeder roads and designing suitable repairs. This work will be supervised by the TMCs during February, March and April.

Social enterprise and business plans

Late in 2025, the Social Enterprise Specialist assessed a range of potential economic opportunities for communities that will both benefit from the access provided by the VAR, as well as generating funds for the maintenance that will keep the same VAR open and accessible.

Meetings were held to allow communities to select the opportunity most suited to their situation and capacity.

During January, the specialist has prepared a business plan for each community and will return to

to give training in the establishment, implementation and management of their chosen economic opportunity.



Future Plans

First Aid training

After some delays getting training programmes approved and funding arranged to cover trainees' attendance, First Aid training will start in Foya on the 3rd of February. After covering six districts in Lofa in three cycles, the training programme will move to Nimba, and then Bong.

The training is given by staff from the County Health Teams. Community Health Assistants from each VAR community will attend the training and receive a nationally recognized EMS certificate and a First Aid kit.



Research

Research pipeline

A pipeline of priority research topics was established during December. A technical research project covering the design of timber bridges, various measures to prevent steep gradients becoming eroded and slippery, and ways in which good quality hand tools can be assured is currently being commissioned. A further project to assess how the riders and operators of motorcycles and three-wheelers might be brought into the VAR planning, construction and maintenance process, will then follow.

Other projects will include a review of the VAR selection process to make it more amenable to nomination by community members, and the revision of the current VAR manuals into a format and level of detail that will allow future projects to continue the work of LSFRP and LISA.

Challenges

LISA closure and future

The Sida programme in Liberia is due to end in August this year. This is two months after the end date of the current project, so already-agreed project timeframes and budgets will not be affected.

With a fixed end date, the LISA team is now focused on completing VAR construction and maintenance as efficiently as possible, to maximise the time available to support the CMCs as they take over their VARs and manage their C-MAPs.



Equally important, however, is what happens after that. VARs have been trialled and developed over many years in Liberia and the model is very close to what is needed for VARs to be mainstreamed. Knowing that the VAR concept not only works but can make a significant improvement to rural

livelihoods, the team is determined to ensure that the programme will restart as soon as possible.

To this end, firstly the team is looking for agencies that could support a further phase of implementation to prepare for mainstreaming, and secondly is aiming to collate all VAR materials – designs, standards, procedures, costs, tasks, safeguards, guidance – so that this future phase will be able to restart as rapidly and efficiently as possible.



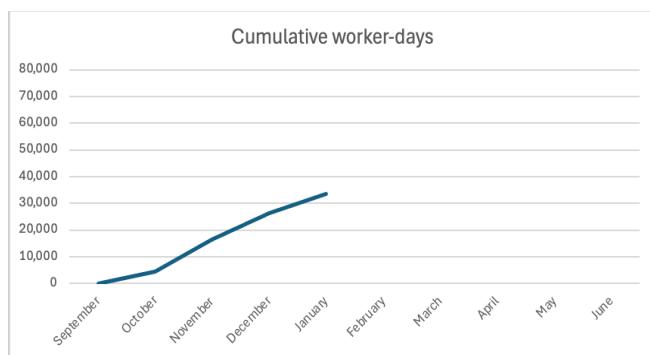
Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Baseline survey

The baseline survey data is currently under analysis, with the report due for submission in early February. Attention will soon turn to the planning of the endline survey, with the specific objectives of identifying the impact of the VARs (albeit with the limitation of these impacts being very short term), and learning lessons for the future.

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 January of almost 35,000 with approximately 40% by female workers.



Person of the month

Hon. Issac N. Vaye, Jr is the current Assistant Minister for Rural Development in MPW. Before that, he played major roles, including Project Director of LSFRP Phase 3, Senior Road Implementation Engineer and Director for Road Maintenance in MPW.

He is the Assistant Minister responsible for the LISA project and has been instrumental in its planning and implementation.

In his current position managing the Bureau of Rural Development, he embodies the central ideology of VARs: bringing together and balancing the technical and social components of community-based rural access.



Highways are constructed and maintained by commercial agencies through contracts with limited community involvement, whereas VAR projects are more community-driven. VARs are chosen based on community needs, constructed and maintained by rural farmers and managed by local leaders and volunteers.

The Assistant Minister believes that following the vision of Hon. Roland Layfette Giddings, the Minister

of Public Works, the Deputy Minister for Rural Development and Community Services, Hon. Jocelia Taplah and all LISA staff will be able to complete the planned work, collate all project materials ready for the future, and find other development partners to take on this work.

The Assistant Minister says:

“The Ministry of Public Works is profoundly grateful to the Swedish Government, through Sida, for the continuous support to the people of Liberia, especially its support to LISA, which is improving rural access and generating income for rural dwellers in Liberia.

“We are also happy with the Project Management Team, including the leadership of the counties, for the coordination, management and implementation of the Project over the past year. We believe that with this PMT, the sustainability of VARs is guaranteed.

“Additionally, VARs could not be successfully implemented without the involvement of the cooperative and hardworking communities, who are managed by competent Liberian-owned Management Consultants. The Ministry is grateful to both the communities and the Management Consultants for their tremendous efforts.

“Finally, as a Ministry, it is our plan that over the coming years, VARs will officially be included in the Technical Specifications of rural roads and additionally VARs shall be considered for funding and implementation in other parts of the country.”