

LISA Monthly Newsletter

April 2026

Liberian Swedish Access Driven Rural Development Programme (LISA)

Key Points

- LISA started in three counties in July 2024
 - LISA involves Ministry of Public Works (MPW), Technical Assistant (TA), three Track Management Consultants (TMCs), County and District officials, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Community Management Committee (CMCs)
 - All work is carried out by members of the communities alongside the VARs
 - USD275,000 has been generated to date for rural economies
 - LISA is due to close in August 2026
- Work activities include:
 - Capacity building of CBOs and CMCs
 - Construction of new VARs
 - Maintenance of VARs from LSFRP
 - Improvement of feeder roads leading to VARs
 - Enterprise development, agriculture support and other training for communities

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 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 and economic growth for all in the community.

Progress

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 the bridges, with an assessment of the bridge deck, piers and waterway, and repairs and clearing carried out as required. Bridge maintenance is particularly important, due to the risk of serious accident and total loss of access after failure.



VAR construction

The TMCs continue to expand their programmes, with work underway on a total of 70 VARs by the end of March. Work on all remaining VARs will start soon. Two selected routes have previously been found to be accessible and used by motor vehicles, so these have been dropped and alternative routes are being identified for upgrading to VARs.

The VARs under construction 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-Finutolee
 - Foequelleh-Vayanhin
 - Gbarnga Siaquelleh-Moses Village
- Yealiquelleh District
 - Voloblai-Gbaito Ta
 - Gwenikalay-Kolliekaju
 - 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
- Kolahun District
 - Fassavulu-Hilgbelahun
 - Fassavulu-Mowulahun-Taninahun
- Zorzor District
 - Zelemai-Kpannazu
 - Zelemai-Popowuzu
 - Zelemai-Zeawutu



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-Nahnlā
 - 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 prepositioning of timbers and boulders, and construction of bridges.

County Administration meetings and site visits

Coordination meetings and site visits with county authorities continue to go ahead. They enhance the level of ownership and understanding at county, district and community levels. During March

meetings and visits were held in Nimba on the 13th, in Lofa on the 17th and in Bong on the 25th.



Work plans

All construction projects need work plans to ensure that resources are available and that work will be completed before the deadline.

Workshops were held with TMCs in all three counties during March. Current progress was determined and work plans were made for all activities: new VARs, VAR maintenance cycles, feeder road improvements, and all associated community training, support and mentoring.



Feeder road improvements

The LISA project budget includes an allocation to be used to improve the feeder roads that connect LSRFP and LISA VARs to the wider road network. Without this connection, agriculture production may not arrive at market and Government services may not reach the communities.

The PMT and TMCs undertook surveys of these critical feeder roads and then identified and measured the required works, most of which are erosion and pothole repair on the road surface and vegetation and drainage clearance alongside the roads.

The TMCs are currently buying tools for the work and recruiting workers, and the work is expected to be completed by the end of April.

First Aid training

First Aid training has been completed in Lofa and Nimba and will start in Bong during April. The Nimba sessions were held in Zorgowee, Sanniquille City, Saclepea City and Beatuo.



All training has been carried out by the respective County Health Teams and all participants – the Community Health Assistants from each VAR community – have received nationally recognized certificates from EMS and a First Aid kit.

The work of all CHTs is noted, particularly the team from Lofa who established the training model and programme that would then be used in the other two counties.



Worker payments

Procedures for worker payment continue to tighten, with problems such as cancelled or duplicated sims being addressed, and delayed payments becoming rare. Cash payments are being made in communities without the network access that is necessary to manage a mobile money account.

A payment assistant has joined the project team to ensure that support can be given to communities while maintaining office support in Monrovia.

Social enterprise and business plans

The LISA social enterprise specialist continued her business training to all CMCs and communities in how to plan and establish their chosen economic initiatives. Given the centrality of income generation to the sustainability of the VARs, this training and support work is expected to continue for the remainder of LISA.



Agricultural support

The LISA agriculture survey continued through March, with a presentation and report at the end of the month giving a large amount of detail on agricultural practices (crops, livestock, mobile or sedentary farming), availability of extension services, and opinions regarding VARs. The survey has allowed several key training topics to be identified, such as timely weeding, pest management and secondary crops. Training preparation is now underway.



Agriculture is, by nature, conservative, with change sometimes hard to trigger. Often a critical mass of farmers is needed if change is to last.

Similarly to social enterprise support, the training and associated support work is expected to continue to the end of LISA.

Future Plans

VAR handover

The first handovers of VARs to the communities are expected during April.

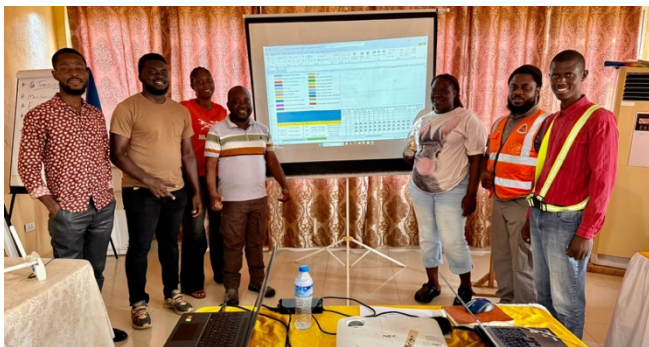
Time will then be spent with each CMC and CBO to check that they are able to raise funds and manage the maintenance of the VAR.



Work plan compliance

Workshops to make work plans were held in March, as described above. All parties made great efforts to ensure that the work plans cover all required activities and that they are achievable.

However, the harder work of following the plans comes next. The plans will be used to allocate resources to each activity in each community, monitor progress, and make adjustments where needed.



Research

Research projects

The head of the Swansea University research team came to Liberia to start one research project – the involvement of motorcycle riders in VAR operations – and discuss the remainder of the research

programme with the PMT: demand-led and inclusive VAR selection; VAR maintenance options for inclusion in C-MAPs; inclusion of different tree species in timber bridge design; improvement and protection measures for steep slopes; and the upgrading of VAR manuals to reflect recent developments and latest practice.



It is expected that the research programme will have filled many of the gaps necessary to produce complete VAR guidance from the first idea to long term sustainable operation.

Challenges

Return of the rains



Rainy seasons are becoming unpredictable as a result of climate change. With VAR construction activities ongoing in April across all counties, if the rains arrive ahead of schedule, recently compacted formation could soften and new drains could erode before the soil can consolidate, grass can grow and surfaces can strengthen. If so, repeated work may be necessary, and working days may also be lost to the rain.

It is the same seasonal unpredictability that will be considered in the VAR maintenance research

project, described above, to ensure that damage from out-of-season rains can still be repaired promptly before any damage can worsen beyond the capacity of the community workforce.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Baseline and endline surveys

The baseline survey, carried out late last year, is expected to report next month. Lessons from the survey and report – logistics, methodology and potential impacts – will inform the endline survey and report, due to be completed in July.

Final evaluation

Terms of Reference for an independent final evaluation have been drafted and approved and will be distributed in a Request for Proposals in early April, with the work to be carried out during May and June.

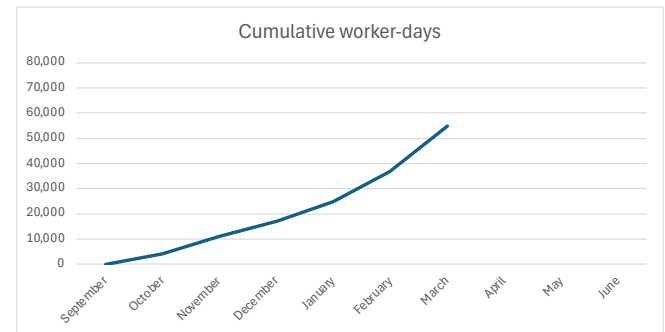
The evaluation will assess VAR construction and maintenance from the Totota pilot, the LSFRP Phase 3 extension and LISA, as well as the feeder road spot improvements to be carried out during April.



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 March of 55,000

with just under half by female workers, generating around \$275,000 for rural economies.



Person of the month

All VAR workers are given PPE and safety instructions but accidents may still happen. With many sites far from health facilities, it is important that treatment can be given quickly and on site. A Community Health Assistant or Volunteer from each VAR community will have been put through a certified First Aid training course and provided with an industry standard First Aid kit.

All training has been provided by County Health Teams to a model agreed and certified by the national agency EMS. This model was developed, and the first training in Lofa was given, by a team led by Michael Supu.



Michael has worked for Lofa CHT for eleven years, with a focus on ensuring that health measures are available to all rural communities, particularly those far from health facilities.

He has visited several VARs and sees them as crucial in providing reliable rural access. He says that it is important that VAR workers, and others, have access to on-site First Aid care and materials. The training and kits allow most accidents to be fully dealt with.

For the future, Michael thinks that First Aiders should have yearly or twice-yearly refresher training, kits should be kept stocked, First Aiders should give safety awareness sessions to their communities, and that communication should remain active between First Aiders and nearby health facilities so that the staff can provide support and monitoring.

“After a First Aid training, it is important to ensure that the knowledge is applied, sustained and improved over time.”