

# LISA Monthly Newsletter

May 2026

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

### Key Points

- LISA brings together Ministry of Public Works (MPW), Technical Assistant (TA), three Track Management Consultants (TMCs), County and District officials, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and Community Management Consultants (CMCs), and workers from the communities
- Work activities include:
  - Capacity building of CBOs and CMCs
  - Construction of new VARs
  - Maintenance of VARs from LSFRP
  - Improvement of Feeder Roads
  - Enterprise, agriculture, gender inclusion and leadership support for communities
- USD355,000 has been generated to date for rural economies
- VARs have been completed and turned over to the CMCs in:
  - Foya District in Lofa County (6 VARs)
  - Salala District in Bong County (1 VAR)

### Background

The LISA project was established within MPW and with Sida support to construct long-lasting 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. The second cycle of maintenance is coming to an end and the third and final cycle will start later in May.



The activities in the third cycle, focusing on readiness for the rains, include vegetation clearing, carriageway surface repairs, and clearing of bridge openings, side drains and mitre drains.

These activities will keep the VARs passable, and protect them from the effects of the rains which are expected soon.



**VAR construction**

The TMCs continue to expand their programmes, with work underway on the entire planned programme of 72 VARs by early May. Recently started VARs are shown in **bold**. The full list of VARs:

**Bong**

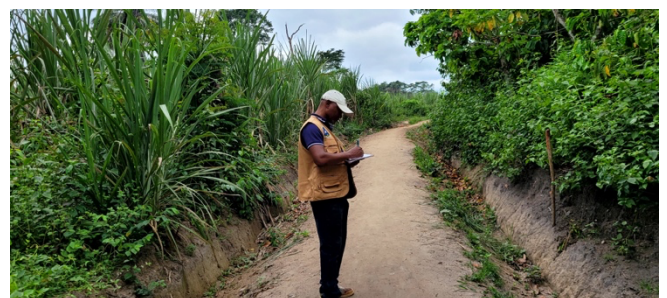
- Salala District
  - Moipata-Buteisue \*
- Suakoko District
  - Nunetulamue-Tomkpolore
  - Ballamah-Claymue
- Jorquelleh District
  - Whomgbeh-Dankpasue
- Zota District
  - Naamai-Jarkai
  - Gbansuesulonmai-Boyanquelleh
- Panta District
  - Gbaita-Wumeh
  - Foequelleh-Gbaita
  - Foequelleh-Vyanhin
  - Gbarnga Siaquelleh-Moses Village
  - **Gbarnga Siaquelleh-Gbaota**
- 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
  - **Fassavulu – George Village**
- Zorzor Dostrict
  - Zelemai-Kpannazu
  - Zelemai-Popowuzu
  - Zelemai-Zeawutu
  - **Kpassagizia-Dorlorzu**



**Nimba**

- Gbehlay-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
  - 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 -Zumba
- Doe District
  - Keinpea – Manlor
  - Nuopea – Toepea
  - Nuopea - Barpea



### Swedish Embassy publicity for VARs

The Swedish Embassy publishes Stories for Change, featuring beneficiaries of the projects that they fund. Two recent Stories for Change present beneficiaries of LISA:

Willita Togbah ([Instagram](#)/[Facebook](#))

Joseph Messah ([Instagram](#)/[Facebook](#))

These Stories for Change and other information can be found on the Embassy’s social media pages ([Instagram](#)/[Facebook](#))



### VAR handovers

The final steps in the completion of a VAR are as follows:

1. Discussion of VAR maintenance and funding with the community
2. Establishment of a C-MAP for each VAR
3. Training in managing the C-MAP
4. Training in maintenance techniques

The construction activities across these VARs include clearing, grubbing, de-stumping, formation, drain opening and bridge construction.

5. Maintenance of the VAR by the community in line with the C-MAP
6. First inspection of the VAR
7. Correction of any defects
8. Final inspection of the VAR
9. **Turnover to the CMC**, after which the CMC is now in charge of the VAR
10. Training of the CBO in financial management
11. Training of District officials in leadership and management
12. **Turnover to the District**, after which the District will now coordinate its VARs
13. **Turnover to the County**, after which the County will take responsibility for all its VARs

There are therefore three successive turnovers, each one indicating a transfer of responsibility from the LISA team to the CMC, then the District, and finally the County.

The first CMC turnovers were carried out in Foya on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of May, and in Salala on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May, on the VARs indicated with asterisks (\*) in the lists above.



All members of the LISA team that was responsible for the completion of the VARs in Foya deserves credit for working together and ensuring that all steps – social and technical – were completed, and that all VARs in the district could be turned over. The District turnover is planned for later in May.

These turnovers are a big achievement. They show that the VARs are complete and that they are now under the control of those who will be looking after them, and benefitting from them for many years.

**Additional specialist support**

After being turned over, a VAR will be managed and maintained by the CMC, with CBO, District and County support.



However, managing a large community asset can still be difficult, so the LISA team are also providing additional support to improve the sustainability of the VAR.

A social enterprise specialist is helping the communities to find and develop business opportunities to increase community and CMC income.

An agriculture specialist and field assistant are training farmers along the VARs in rice and cassava production, good practices such as conservation agriculture, crop rotation and composting, and the EUDR regulations that may affect export crops such as coffee and cocoa.

A gender specialist and field assistants are also giving training in gender inclusion to allow all in a community to benefit from, and contribute to their VAR.

**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.



### Work plans

All construction projects need work plans to ensure that resources are available and that work will be completed on time.

Work plans for all counties were established during March, showing progress to date and plans for all remaining activities: new VARs, VAR maintenance cycles, feeder road improvements, and all associated community training, support and mentoring.



Work plans are monitored daily and then reviewed in formal two-weekly meetings, allowing plans to be rapidly revised as required to keep all work on track.

### Feeder road improvements

The LISA project budget includes a budget to improve the feeder roads that connect LSFRP 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.

Critical feeder roads were surveyed, and works – mainly erosion and pothole repair and drain clearance – were identified. The repairs, referred to as ‘spot improvements’, began in April and are expected to complete by the end of May.



### First Aid training

First Aid training was carried out in two districts in Bong during April: in Yealiquelleh on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, and in Jorquelleh on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>.



A member of each CMC in all three counties has now received training, a nationally recognised certificate, and a First Aid kit, so any minor accident that happens on site can be addressed without a costly and time-consuming trip to a health centre.

The work of all CHTs to plan and carry out this training is acknowledged with thanks.



## Case Study: Johnny Town self-help

LISA is working with over 70 communities to construct VARs. These bring access to the selected communities, allowing produce to be taken to market, social services to be reached and local economies to develop.

There are many more communities across the counties that could benefit from a VAR but project funds are always limited.

So perhaps the most important impact of a LISA VAR may prove to be the inspiration that it gives to others.



The people of Johnny Town in Voinjama District have seen the Vezela-Ballah VAR grow from a small path to near-completion over the past few months. Instead of waiting for a project to maybe come along, they decided to construct one themselves.

With advice from the Lofa TMC and the District Commissioner, they have set up a committee, of two women and two men, and are constructing their own VAR to Joema Town.



They also plan to set up Susu clubs, open a bank account and plant community farms with cash crops. In due course, generated funds will be used to maintain the VAR and build a warehouse for the farm produce. The community is looking forward to the long term benefits of this self-help project.

And, to continue the approach of one community learning from another, they are talking with nearby communities and showing them what they are doing.

In time, from a small seed, the shoots of a network may grow.

## Future Plans

### VAR turnovers

Now that the VAR turnover process has started, it is expected that there will be a succession of handovers to CMCs, districts and counties, and, as a result, a growing self-managed network of rural access, allowing rural communities to better sell their produce. more easily reach necessary services, and develop their own communities.

## Research

### Research projects

A technical research project has recently started under the Swansea University-led research programme. This project will assess a range of locally available timbers to see if the current design guidance can be extended to bridges with spans of 12 metres or more. It will also carry out a desk study of techniques that can be used to prevent or minimise erosion on VAR carriageways and in the drains alongside. With limited funds, alternatives to the sealed surfaces that are often used on feeder roads will be needed. Recommendations may include avoiding routes with steep gradients, aligning a VAR around the site where possible.



Proposals for a final set of projects are soon to be submitted, including the revision of the current social and technical manuals to reflect the wide range of improvements made to VAR implementation during the LISA project.

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

## Challenges

### Return of the rains

The rains are perhaps a little late this year but are likely to start during late May or early June. Most earthworks will have been completed by then, in most cases in time to allow new grass growth to strengthen the soil and reduce erosion.

Nevertheless, all parties will be ready for the rains, to plan work to make up for any lost days and to

prepare VARs well for the inspections prior to turning over to the CMCs.



### LISA end date

All project work must be complete before the end of August, including data collection and closing all sites. The LISA team is confident that all will be complete well before this non-negotiable date.



## Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

### Baseline and endline surveys

The report from the baseline survey, carried out late last year, was finalised during April and distributed to stakeholders. The endline survey is now being planned, in line with the methods used for the baseline, and to identify initial impacts from the VARs by assessing changes between the baseline and endline.

Since only a short time period will have passed between baseline and endline, and VARs are only now being turned over, significant impacts may not be observed. However, the individual interviews and group discussions are likely to reveal changes in understanding and perception that can indicate the commitment of the community and the likelihood of the VAR sustaining into the long term.



### Final evaluation

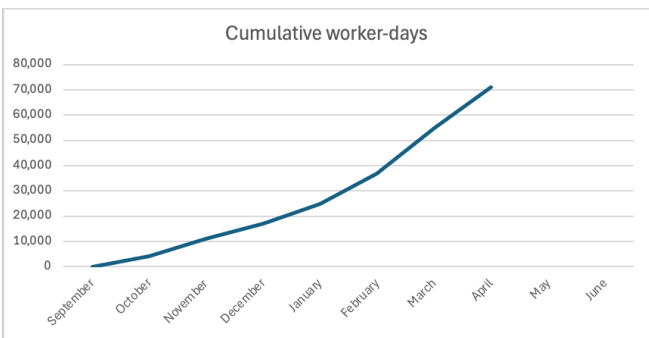
Proposals have been submitted in response to the RFP for the LISA final evaluation that was distributed in early April. These proposals are now being assessed. It is expected that the final evaluation will be carried out during June and July.

The evaluation will assess not just LISA but all VAR projects since 2021, including the Totota pilot, the LSFRP Phase 3 extension, and LISA, thereby evaluating the current VAR implementation model as well as the various developments over time and how they have contributed to what all parties hope will soon be mainstreamed across Liberia.



### 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 April of 71,000 with just under half by female workers, generating around \$355,000 for rural economies.



### Person of the month

Anita Dukly has been working on the Moipata-Butiesue VAR in Salala District, Bong County since it began in October 2025. Whatever the conditions she turns up and completes her daily task with her colleagues and with enthusiasm.



Earlier this year First Aid training was offered to all VAR communities. In the absence of a Community Health Volunteer in Moipata, Anita was nominated and attended the training on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of April. Anita continues her work on the VAR but with the First Aid kit ready in case of any accidents on site. With a recognized role, Anita is now joining the CMC.



Anita is very positive about the difference that the VAR will make to Moipata. She thinks that all in the community will use it to go to their farms, hospital, school and market. She appreciates the support and encouragement from county and district officials and is confident that the community will keep the VAR in good condition.

She makes two very important recommendations for future VAR projects: build the bridges before other work starts, and always pay workers on time so that they will continue working until the VAR is complete. This is good advice indeed.

“If you come back here in five years, you will see new houses and shops from the money that we will get from selling our farming goods.”