

Northern Nimba Landscape Liberia

Protecting the last remnants of the Upper Guinean Rain Forest



FY24 Report

Background

Liberia contains the largest remnant of the Upper Guinean rainforest that once belted the continent. Only a tenth of the original West African ecosystem remains, 40% of which is to be found in Liberia. From satellite imagery, Liberia resembles a green island amongst neighboring countries that are heavily deforested. It is a biological hotspot of global importance, containing endemic and endangered species. The Guinean Forests are home to over a quarter of Africa's mammals, including more than 20 primate species and six endemic species. Liberia's forests provide a wide range of benefits to the Liberian people and the international community such as habitat for globally important biodiversity, ecological services, ecotourism potential, timber and non-timber forest products, and significant input to the national budget through commercial forestry development.

The East Nimba Nature Reserve, which covers 11,530 hectares of the Upper Guinean rainforest, was established in October 2003, and is home to several threatened and endemic species making it a high interest conservation area. Nimba is home to several threatened species such as the Nimba toad, the Nimba otter shrew and the West African chimpanzee. The reserve has thirty-six communities within its fringes. For generations communities living around ENNR have relied traditional practices such as shifting cultivation, hunting and collection of forest products to sustain their livelihoods. Previously nomadic communities that were small in size have now grown and become more sedentary and as a result are increasingly putting pressure on limited forest resources.

Project design

As one of the beneficiary country programs of Daikin Industry funding, CI-Liberia implemented Conservation Agreements to improve local community stewardship and conservation of natural resources. Conservation Agreements make biodiversity conservation a viable choice for local resource users. In a Conservation Agreement, resource users commit to conservation actions in exchange for benefit packages. The central premise is that people will conserve biodiversity if they have the option to do so, and that the benefits of conserving outweigh the costs.

These agreements provided tangible benefits in exchange for the conservation of high priority areas and species. The conservation actions that were undertaken by the resource users were designed in response to threats to biodiversity such as shifting cultivation, hunting and collection of forest products.

To this end, this report highlights the achievements registered during the period of July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024.

FY24 Achievement

The key achievement during FY24 was two-day capacity building workshop for Co-Management Committee (CMC) of the East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR). The CMC comprises representatives from the Forestry Development Authority, and the local communities around the ENNR. The workshop was conducted by Country Representative, Monitoring Evaluation & Learning Manager, and the Sr. Regional Manager of West & Central Africa of Conservation International. A total of 18 people (3 women and 15 men) attended the workshop. The workshop was held in Sanniquellie City, Nimba County, Liberia on February 8&9, 2024.

Workshop proceedings

The workshop took place on February 8, 2024.

Mr. Joe Dayee, Co-Chairman of the CMC, delivered the official welcome remarks, emphasizing his committee commitment to conserving and preserving biodiversity of the ENNR. He encouraged all participants to actively engage in the training session. Following his address, the participants of the workshop introduced themselves.

A PowerPoint presentation by Peter Mulbah was done. In his presentation, he highlighted the importance of the Conservation Agreement model of Conservation International as a mechanism for achieving biodiversity conservation and the management of protected areas within the Northern Nimba Landscape. In addition, he used the opportunity to inform the participants about the Nimba Endowment fund, that would focus on providing sustainable long-term funding to support the management of the ENNR.



Figure 1: Peter Mulbah doing PowerPoint presentation.

A presentation on Project Life Cycle was done by Solomon C. Carlon. He stated that the project life cycle entails sequential and overlapping phases such as the initiation, planning, implementation/execution, and closure. During his presentation, he highlighted the importance of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) to project management. He emphasized that throughout the project life cycle, MEAL should be integrated including from the initiation stage to the completion stage. He further mentioned that monitoring involves tracking inputs, activities, and progress towards agreed outcomes and impacts, while evaluation is a systematic, objective assessment of a project's merit, value, or worth, whether ongoing or completed.

Furthermore, Mr. Carlon stressed the importance of learning, as a cultural and process-driven capacity for intentional reflection. He noted that learning aims to inform smarter decisions. Additionally, he highlighted accountability as a commitment to balance and respond to the needs of all stakeholders, including project participants, donors, partners, and the organization itself.

Mr. Godwill Abiti presented on activities and budget planning, and CI procurement policies. Godwill emphasized the importance of having well-defined and transparent procurement policies to avoid conflicts of interest. He used the medium to drill the participants through different methods for budget calculation, providing them with practical tools and techniques to plan and allocate resources effectively. Also, he highlighted CI's commitment to ensuring transparency and fairness in all procurement processes, including selecting vendors and suppliers based on merit, value for money, and quality.



Figure 2: Godwill Abiti making a presentation

Questions and answers were done at the end of each presentation. Day one of the workshop was concluded by dividing participants into three groups to think about a project related to the management and monitoring of the ENNR.

Day 2:

The session started with a recap of Day 1 by Peter Mulbah. Following this, participants were told to move into their respective groups to start the group discussions.



Figure 3: Group working session

Key takeaways from the group working sessions included the need for Frontline Conservationists to maintain continuous monitoring. As a result of the group exercise, the CMC agreed that short-term support should focus on expanding the current number of Frontline Conservationists to ten for each of the communities around the ENNR. Frontline Conservationists are individuals recruited from each community to serve as community representatives to the ENNR CMC team. Their responsibilities include participating in joint FDA patrols and monitoring activities within the ENNR and adjacent community forests.

Additionally, there should be an emphasis on community outreach and awareness to enhance monitoring and increase overall awareness.

CONCLUSION

Through the two-day ENNR CMC capacity-building training workshop, CI Liberia raised awareness on (i) the importance of biodiversity conservation, (ii) the Conservation Agreement model, and (iii) the role of M&E in project management.

In addition, potential immediate project activities were to support the continuous monitoring and management of the ENNR.

The CMC demonstrated willingness and leadership to work with Conservation International and the support from Daikin to enhance the monitoring and management of the ENNR.