

Liberia  
East Nimba Nature Reserve Forest Conservation Project

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Protecting the last remnants of the Upper Guinean Rain Forest



Reporting period: July 2018 to June 2019



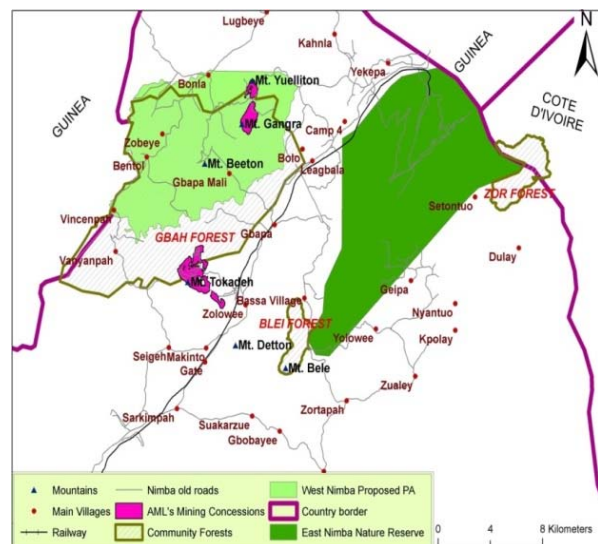
## Background

Liberia lies just north of the Equator in West Africa. It is a relatively small country, ranked 102<sup>nd</sup> in the world in land mass. Most of the virgin forests that once covered West Africa are gone, with only about a tenth of the original ecosystem remaining. Liberia 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. From satellite imagery, Liberia resembles a green island amongst neighboring countries that are heavily deforested. Liberia's forests are important not only for being one of the world's key biodiversity areas; they also form the basis of products important to the livelihood of local people.



The forests of Guinea in West Africa constitute a biological hotspot

The East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR), 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 36 communities within its boundaries. For generations, communities living around ENNR have relied on 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.



ENNR (dark green) and surrounding villages (red dots)

## Activities plan

As one of the beneficiary country programs of Daikin Industry funding, CI-Liberia is implementing Conservation Agreements to improve local community stewardship and conservation of natural resources.

Conservation International (CI) makes use of Conservation Agreements all over the world. Because extremely poor people in certain areas rely much more on short-term income than do those in industrialized countries, they must exploit their natural resources through things like shifting cultivation, poaching, and illegal logging. It is crucial that communities living in such areas commit to preserving nature so that biodiversity and forest protection are realized. Conservation Agreements provide tangible benefits to communities in exchange for the conservation of high priority areas and species. The conservation actions to be undertaken by the resource users are designed in response to threats to biodiversity such as shifting cultivation, hunting and collection of forest products. The benefits must contribute to sustainable development among the communities, who take part in dialogue to decide the preservation activities and benefits of the Conservation Agreements.



Community in the East Nimba Nature Reserve

Under the project, awareness-raising is carried out in the East Nimba Nature Reserve so as to promote understanding of the importance of protecting biodiversity.

## Overview

Two Conservation Agreements were renegotiated and signed with the Gbobayee and Yolowee communities. The benefits under the agreement are piggery, the promotion of farming as a business, lowland rice cultivation, and the renovation of an elementary school. Frontline Conservationists (FCs) are also being trained and have been conducting ongoing patrols. Meetings have also been held with relevant parties.

## **Activities report**

### **Activity 1: Feasibility survey conducted with a view to starting activities in four more communities**

#### **Overall target**

- Raise interest in Conservation Agreements, establish communities capable of conducting preservation activities

#### **Fiscal year target**

- Activity 1 was completed last year.

### **Activity 2: Spreading awareness and implementing Conservation Agreements (already doing so in six villages, with two newly added)**

#### **Overall target**

- All project community members learn about Conservation Agreements, how conservation and livelihoods are related, and how to implement the project so benefits are realized

#### **Fiscal year target**

- Not yet set

### **Activity 3: Signing of Conservation Agreements with at least two more villages**

#### **Overall target**

- In two communities in north Nimba, draw up a Conservation Agreements and build the capabilities to realize improved livelihood and other benefits, and implement the Conservation Agreements

#### **Fiscal year target**

- Not yet set

## **Report**

Two Conservation Agreements were renegotiated and signed with the Gbobayee and Yolowee communities. The signatories included CI Liberia, the Town Chiefs of Gbobayee and Yolowee, the District leadership, Nimba County authorities, the Forest Development Authority, and the ENNR Co-management Committee.



Conservation Agreement signing ceremony

#### **Activity 4: 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Conservation Agreements with communities**

##### **Overall target**

- Achieve tangible results in livelihood improvement and preservation in the two communities through the Conservation Agreements

##### **Fiscal year target**

- Not yet set

##### **Report**

As mentioned under activity 3 above, Conservation Agreements have been renegotiated and signed with Gbobayee and Yolowee.

##### **Benefits realized under the Conservation Agreements**

a) Piggery is practiced as an alternative source of income and protein to local community dwellers, who previously depended on bush meat. This has brought numerous achievements. Twenty-six pig caretakers (12 in Gbobayee and 14 in Yolowee) were trained on improved pig management practices including feeding, hygiene and sanitation of the pig pen, identification of diseases, treatment and vaccinations, and personal safety hygiene. To supplement the pigs' kernel feed, 5.5 acres (2.5 acres in Yolowee and 3 acres in Gbobayee) were prepared and planted with cassava, papaya, and other vegetables. The recently born piglets are growing healthy and strong.





Mother pig and piglets in Gbobayee (left), training of pig care-takers (right)



Cassava garden in Gbobayee (left), papaya plants in Yolowee (right)

b) Farming as a Business (FaaB): Refresher training for 20 farmers (10 from each of the two communities) on FaaB was conducted to ensure the development of constitutions and by-laws for their respective groups. The by-laws and constitutions of the respective communities were developed and endorsed.

c) Lowland rice cultivation: A total of 20 community members (16 males and four females) were trained on improved agronomic practices for lowland rice cultivation in Gbobayee. Nurseries were prepared and nine standard plots were laid out and completed.



Clearing land for rice cultivation (left), laying out the paddy field (right)

d) Yolowee elementary school renovation: The school was renovated, with walls newly plastered and old corrugated iron sheets replaced with new ones.



Yolowee school being renovated

### **Compliance monitoring of Conservation Agreement**

The monitoring of Conservation Agreements is vital to ensure compliance by communities and reduce the number of violations in and around the East Nimba Nature Reserve and the community forests. Monitoring is undertaken by the Frontline Conservationists, who are charged with regular patrol and creating awareness in and around their communities.

In fiscal 2019, two refresher training sessions were conducted for the 25 Frontline Conservationists. In addition, a total of 842 patrols were conducted, and 70 violations (40 in the ENNR and 30 in the surrounding forest) were recorded.



FCs on patrol (left), the head of FCs in Gbobayee gives a report (right)

## **Coordination**

A total of 10 coordination meetings were held to discuss the status of implementation, opportunities, and strategies of biodiversity conservation projects in the Nimba landscape. These coordination meetings have helped avoid duplication of functions by key players in the Landscape and provided a platform for discussing the various strategies for addressing violations of CAs in the communities.

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