

Liberia
East Nimba Nature Reserve Forest Conservation Project
News from the Field

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Conservation International

Conservation Agreement 1: Livestock Production

Pigpen construction began in the communities under the conservation agreement signed in September 2016. The pigpen in Gbobaye has four compartments, and the one in Yolowee has five. The Gbobayee pigpen is nearly finished and just needs the insides built. The Yolowee community has finished the walls and put on roofs. Once construction is complete, each pigpen will house three pairs of pigs.



The pigpen in Gbobayee

The pigpen in Yolowee

Piggery technicians have been hired and one deployed in each town to ensure community members raise the pigs properly. The technicians are now working with the communities providing technical advice on construction of the pens. Currently piglet farms are being visited and surveyed in order to select the three pairs of pigs for the completed pens. Pig-rearing training for community members is scheduled to begin next quarter.

Conservation Agreement 2: Frontline Conservationists

Another key benefit communities receive under the conservation agreements is the hiring of former hunters to work as Frontline Conservationists (FCs). From November 26 to 30, the former hunters underwent training to work as FCs. The training was facilitated by the Forest Development Authority (FDA) which is responsible for managing the East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR) with CI's assistance. The participants learned how to support ENNR management, including participating in patrols, conducting awareness raising, and carrying out demarcation of the border. The following topics were included in the training:

- Introduction to GPS and GPS field exercises

- The importance of biodiversity in the ENNR
- Preparation of community maps highlighting the ENNR and community forests
- Patrol methodology, planning, and coordination
- Code of conduct for FCs

Following the training, the FCs started patrols in coordination with the FDA on December 1, 2016, and at the end of December they received their first stipends.



Classroom training



Practicing how to use GPS



Outdoor training session



Group work

Gbopayee community

Let's look at the history of the village of Gbopayee. Gbopayee was founded in 1914 by a warrior named Chief Gbalasuclule. The word "Gbopayee" means "toilet site" in the local language, Mano. The village is located next to the ENNR, upon which the 181 families of Gbopayee depend heavily for their livelihood.



Scenes of Gbopayee

Gbopayee has two taboos: black snake and palm branches. Community members are not permitted to kill black snakes or bring palm branches into the village, because they believe that bringing these things into the village will cause outbreaks of uncontrolled disease or conflict among prominent citizens.

Gbopayee has only one primary school, which was founded in 1972. There are four teachers and just over 50 students. The village's only source of drinking water is a creek. There is no hospital, so if people get sick, they must be taken to another village or town that has a hospital. People in the Gbopayee community make a living through sugar cane and rice farming activities. Shifting cultivation and slash-and-burn are the most prevalent farming methods used. Hunting is also a major source of livelihood, and it is performed mostly by men using hunting dogs, traps, and guns. Harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) is also carried out in Gbopayee, mostly by women, who gather edibles, medicinal items, and usable materials; for example, rattan, walnuts, and black pepper. These NTFPs are consumed by community members, or sold in markets in larger nearby communities.

Although it is illegal to cut down trees using chainsaws, there are said to be about 4,000 people in Nimba alone doing it for the purpose of supplying domestic timber. Residents of Gbopayee also conduct and benefit from chain-sawing. However, the community has had some success in forest conservation. Decision-making in Gbopayee involves the collective participation of the entire community. It is the responsibility of quarter chiefs to implement and enforce decisions that are reached. As in Yolowee, it is important in Gbopayee to work within the framework of the community's social system if conservation activities are to be carried out effectively.

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