

Liberia
East Nimba Nature Reserve Forest Conservation Project

News from the Field

April 2015
Conservation International

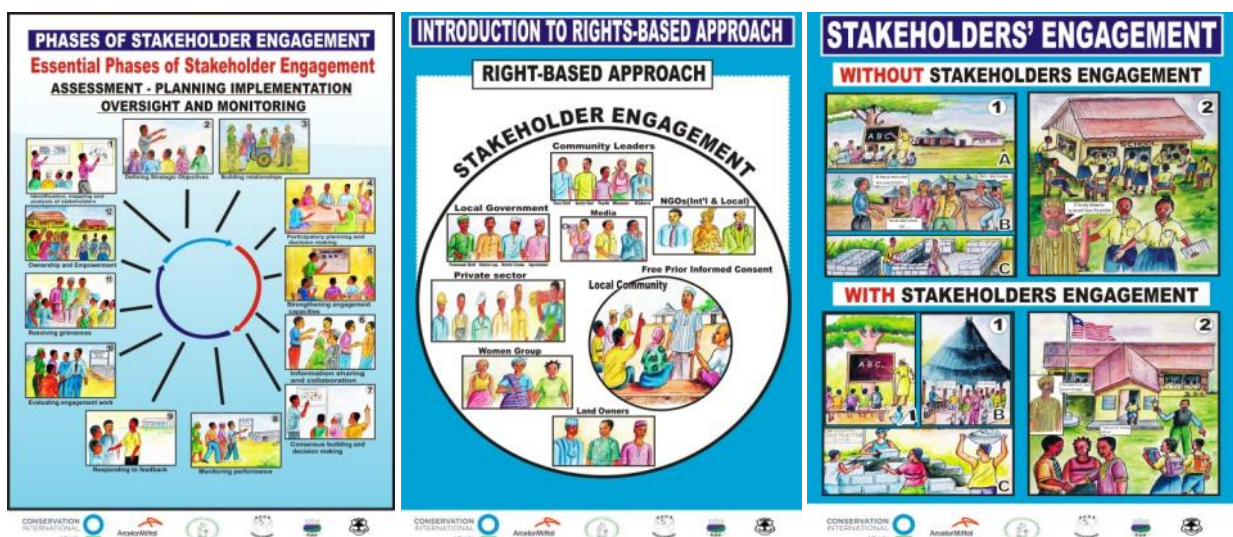
As the Ebola virus health emergency gradually recedes, CI staff are finally able to return to the site and start full-fledged activities in the field with local communities. CI's focus for this quarter includes increasing engagement with local stakeholders, supporting forest governance initiatives and clarifying the boundaries of the East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR), carrying out feasibility assessments for conservation agreements, and sustaining Ebola prevention awareness in the area.

Increased Engagement with Local Stakeholders

During our absence from the field, the local government in Nimba County experienced several personnel changes, including the Superintendent and the Assistant Superintendent for Development. CI considers these officials to be stakeholders who are key in the implementation and success of the project in Nimba. CI staff have worked to develop relationships with these officials and help them understand the work we do in the field with communities. These officials now have a clear understanding of what CI is doing and how it is positively affecting local communities' well-being and natural resource governance around the ENNR.

Supporting Forest Governance Initiatives and Clarifying ENNR Boundaries

The communities themselves are the key agents of forest governance. That is why they have been provided with CI's Stakeholder's Engagement Toolkit, which strengthens their capabilities by making them aware of their rights and by preparing them to take part in the decision-making process for forest governance. To these ends, CI staff and liaisons have been using this toolkit in the ongoing training of community members.

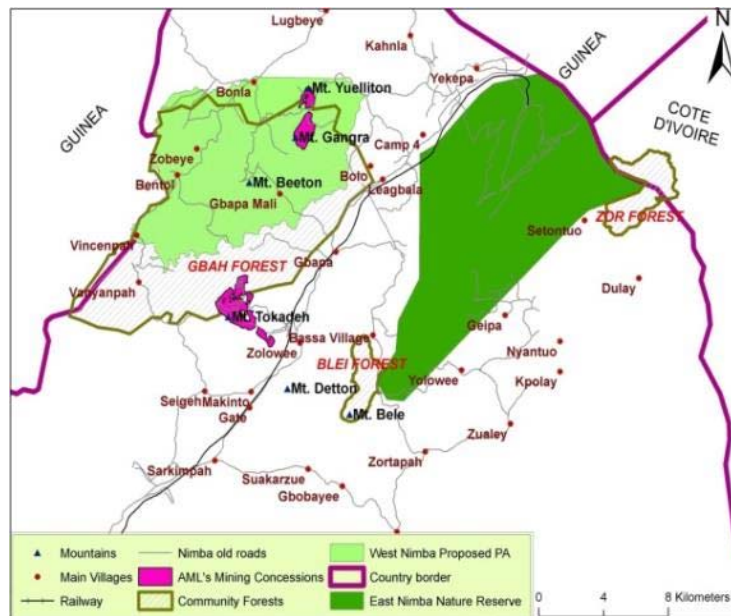


Stakeholder's Engagement Toolkit



A training session at the Sehtontuo community in Nimba

In response to a request from the East Nimba Nature Reserve Co-Management Committee, CI assisted in boundary-clarification. This activity brought together communities and the Forestry Development Authority park rangers to clearly mark the boundaries between the nature reserve and two community forests. Clearly marked boundaries between the reserve and the community forests are important because they prevent any confusion that could lead to illegal logging activities carried out mistakenly in the reserve.



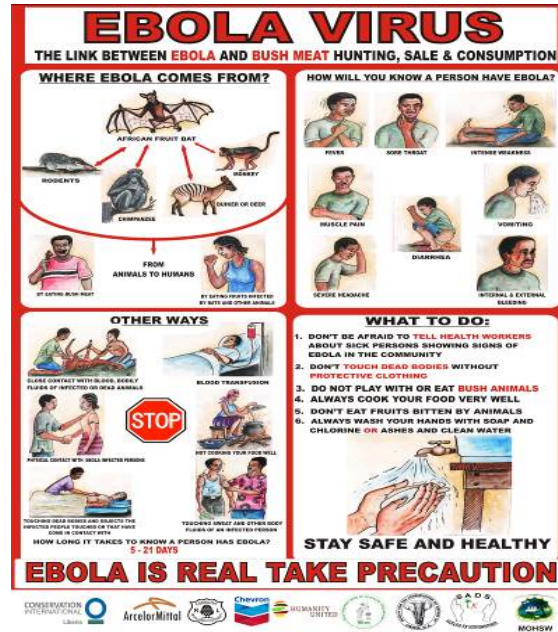
Map of communities Northern Nimba

Feasibility Assessments for Conservation Agreements

Two of CI's partnering NGOs, Skills and Agricultural Development Services (SADS) and Rural Integrated Center for Community Empowerment (RICCE), have been conducting feasibility assessments for potential conservation agreements on an ongoing basis in two new communities (Yollowee and Gonakollie). These assessments will determine whether conservation agreements with these communities will go ahead. We expect to see the preliminary results of these assessments within the coming weeks.

Sustain Awareness of Ebola Prevention

Although Ebola has been contained, communities must remain vigilant. CI continues to collaborate with the Ministry of Health and the Forestry Development Authority to boost awareness of Ebola prevention measures, the importance of protecting biodiversity, and the connection between Ebola and biodiversity.



Challenges

Our absence from the area during the Ebola crisis negatively affected the trust we had built up with local stakeholders prior to the Ebola outbreak. We must now take the time to rebuild this relationship of trust and assure our local partners that we are here for the long term.

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