

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Date: 02/01/2021 - 06/30/2022

CEPF Grant: - 110443

**Volunteers for Sustainable Development in Africa
(VOSIEDA)**

**Mainstreaming Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services into
Community Forestry in Liberia**

I. GRANT SUMMARY:

- **Grantee organization:** Volunteers for Sustainable Development in Africa
- **Grant title:** Mainstreaming Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services into Community Forestry in Liberia
- **Grant number:** CEPF-110443
- **Grant amount (US dollars):** 148,000 USD
- **Proposed dates of grant:** 02/01/2021 - 06/30/2022
- **Country or territory where project will take place:** Liberia
- **Date of preparation of this document:** 10th /01/2021

II. INTRODUCTION:

VOSIEDA has designed an intervention to mainstream biodiversity conservation into Liberia's community forestry policies and operations. We will realize this goal by undertaking policy-relevant research to analyze and document existing gaps, challenges, and opportunities. And further, evaluate the appropriate ways of improving the status in supporting policymakers in putting in place policies that will incorporate biodiversity and ecosystem services in the future. The project will also conduct outreach to inform and influence the national government through the Forestry Development Authority, local communities, and private sector forestry companies to update their community forest operations plans or implement monitoring protocol. Raising key stakeholders' awareness and influencing their behavior is an entry point to incorporating effective biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services into the community forestry administration and management plans.

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) supports this project with the aim of mainstreaming conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services into community forest management and forestry companies' operations and policies at local, sub-national, and national levels in Liberia. The intervention will generate locally relevant information on ecosystem functions in CFs and use said information to influence political and economic decision-making in favor of biodiversity conservation through:

1. Development of biodiversity supplement.
2. Provision of training to improve the capacities of FDA, Liberia Timber Association, Liberian NGO Coalition, and private-sector forestry companies to mainstream and monitor biodiversity in CFs.
3. Update at least five (5) communities' forest management plans to include Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) safeguards.
4. Facilitate partnerships among local communities, civil society, the private sector, and the Liberian government as a demonstrated model for best practice of sustainable community' forest management, biodiversity mainstreaming, and share lessons learned.

This Stakeholder Engagement Plan aims to involve all project stakeholders as early as possible in the implementation process and throughout the project duration to ensure that their views and concerns are made known and considered. The plan will help the project in implementing effective communication channels and working relationships. The Project Management Team will continue to hold consultations, discussion and meetings throughout project implementation as deemed necessary.

III. PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS

The key stakeholder groups who will be informed and consulted about the project are the following:

- Project Management Team (PMT)
- Community Forest Management Bodies (CFMBs)
- Forestry Development Authority of Liberia (FDA)
- Liberia Timber Association (LTA)
- Other Relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies of the Government of Liberia
- Participating CSOs
- Relevant bilateral and multilateral entities
- Local communities
- Media

IV. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Project Management Team (PMT): Project management comprises a balance between programs and operational staff. The team will be responsible for the day-to-day planning and implementation of the project. The team is responsible for developing project work plans and delivering and monitoring performance. The team also takes critical decisions regarding working with partners, staffing, and work plan reviews in consultation with the CEPF team.

Community Forest Management Bodies (CFMBs): Chapter 3 of Liberia's Community Right Law (CRL) gives communities the right to form a Community Forest Management Body (CFMB) - a group responsible for the day-to-day management of the community forest. The Community Assembly, composed of representatives from a community of people who have the right to access and use a forest's resources, empowers the CFMB to do its work. The CFMB must draft a Community Forest Management Plan (CFMP). This plan must ensure the community sustainably manages the forest-based on inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. The plans must then be accepted and agreed on by the Community Assembly and the FDA. The PMT will actively engage the CFMBs at the community and national levels and provide funding to empower them to raise awareness of their members to recognize the importance of ecosystem services in and mainstreaming in CFs.

Forestry Development Authority of Liberia (FDA): The Forestry Development Authority of Liberia is a state corporation established by an Act of the Legislature in 1976 to ensure the sustainable management and conservation of Liberia's forest and related natural resources for the benefit of current and future generations. The FDA operates within the 2006 National Forestry Reform Law's legal framework, the current legal instrument that guides forest resources management in Liberia. The FDA advises the development and approval of all Community Forest Management Plans. The PMT will actively engage the FDA at different levels to influence her behavior as an entry point to incorporate effective biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services into the community forestry administration and management plans.

Other Relevant Ministries, Departments, and Agencies of the Government of Liberia: The PMT will engage the following government agencies during the project implementation. 1) The Environmental Protection Agency; 2) The Ministry of Agriculture; 3) The National Investment Commission, and 4) The Ministry of Internal Affairs / Local Government. The PMT will provide these agencies updates about the project through reports, trainings workshops, meetings, and information sessions.

Liberia Timber Association (LTA): The LTA is an umbrella organization of private sector timber companies operating in Liberia's forestry sector. LTA hopes to engage the government and all stakeholders in constructively seeking new avenues in improving the industry for the betterment of society. The PMT will engage the LTA at different levels, including meetings, consultations, workshops, etc. Moreover, the PMT will primarily facilitate partnerships among the LTA members in targeted CFs

and local communities, civil society, and the Liberian government as a demonstrated model for the best practice of sustainable community' forest management and biodiversity mainstreaming.

Participating CSOs: The NGO Coalition of Liberia is an association of 23 local CSOs and civil society groups working together to empower the disadvantaged communities within the forestry sector while increasing economic opportunity and sustaining natural resources. Over the past years, Liberia's **NGO Coalition** has established itself as an essential platform for Forest and Land governance development in Liberia. The PMT will work with the Coalition and some individual members, especially those directly working in targeted CFs. The Coalition and some of its members CSOs will partner with the project. The PMT will actively engage them through meetings, training, partnership building, networking, Conservation Agreement, etc. The PMT will ensure that CSOs partners are carefully selected based on their track record of working with communities on biodiversity conservation issues.

Local Communities: The PMT will actively engage local communities residing in the project areas, particularly those within and around the ten targeted community forests. We believe that efforts to mainstream biodiversity will only be useful in the long term if they involve the local people who live within those forest areas. Therefore, local communities are both the direct and indirect beneficiaries of this project. The PMT will engage with these communities through town hall meetings, training workshops, awareness-raising, consultations, etc.

Relevant Bilateral and Multilateral Entities: The PMT will engage the following bilateral and multilateral entities agencies during the project implementation, UNDP, European Union, USAID, and the World Bank. Because these agencies are the principal donors currently or have funded projects in Liberia's forestry sector, the PMT will provide them updates about the project through reports, meetings, social media, website, and information sessions.

Media: The media will be an essential partner to help amplify the project objectives and envisaged impact in Liberia and the Upper Guinea Forest subregion. The PMT will design a communication and media engagement plan to engage on social media and traditional media platforms. Various media pieces will be developed and disseminated to the various stakeholders and broader communities. VOSIEDA will also create awareness of the project on its open development platforms.

V. CONSULTATION METHODS

Stakeholders	Engagement Strategies	Engagement Activities	Responsible Parties	Required Resources	Stakeholder already engaged	Stakeholder response
Project Management Team (PMT)	Face-to face and virtual (ZOOM) meetings	Project reports (inception, progress, mid-term, and end of project)	CEPF & PMT	Staff time, logistics and travel supports		
Community Forest Management Bodies (CFMBs)	Face-to face and virtual (ZOOM) meetings, Emails, workshops	Project inception workshop, Research, CFs assessments, training, workshops, follow-on	Project Management Team	Staff time; travel support; meeting and workshops venues and catering for meetings	VOSIEDA has already engaged the NUCFMB	Expressed willingness and commitment to participate in the project

		support activities.		and workshops		
Forestry Development Authority of Liberia (FDA)	Project inception and workshop reports, research findings, biodiversity supplements, periodic update, reports, CFs management plans, Conservation Agreements, final project evaluation report	Emails, face-to-face and virtual (ZOOM) meetings, workshops, and consultations	Project Management Team (PMT) & Participating Organizations	Staff time; travel and logistical support; meeting and workshops venues and catering for meetings and workshops	VOSIEDA has already engaged the FDA through offices of the Director General and Deputy Director for Operations	FDA has expressed willingness and commitment to participate in the project
Other Relevant Ministries, Departments, and Agencies of the Government of Liberia	Project inception, workshop report, periodic update, reports share midterm and final project, evaluation	Emails, face-to-face and virtual (ZOOM) meetings, websites, and social media	Project Management Team (PMT) & Participating Organizations	Staff time; travel and logistical supports		
Liberia Timber Association (LTA)	Project inception and workshop reports, research findings, biodiversity supplements, periodic update, reports, CFs management plans, Conservation Agreements, final project evaluation report.	Emails, face-to-face and virtual (ZOOM) meetings, workshops, and consultations	Project Management Team (PMT) & Participating Organizations	Staff time; travel and logistical support; meeting and workshops venues and catering for meetings and workshops	VOSIEDA has already engaged the LTA through offices of the of Head of Secretariat	LTA has expressed willingness and commitment to participate in the project
Participating CSOs	Project inception and workshop reports, research findings, biodiversity supplements, periodic update, reports, CFs management plans, Conservation	Emails, face-to-face and virtual (ZOOM) meetings, workshops, and consultations	Project Management Team (PMT) & Participating Organizations	Staff time; travel and logistical support; meeting and workshops venues and catering for meetings and workshops	VOSIEDA has already engaged Some participating CSOs including the NGO Coalition the Management Team	Some participating CSOs including the NGO Coalition have expressed willingness and commitment to participate in the project

	Agreements, final project evaluation report					
Local Communities	Range of activities including participatory appraisals and research, training, workshops, townhall meetings, capacity building Conservation Agreement, awareness raising, etc.	Emails, face-to-face meetings, workshops, trainings, coaching, consultations, and networking	Project Management Team (PMT) & Participating Organizations	Staff time; travel and logistical support; meeting and workshops venues and catering for meetings and workshops.		
Relevant Bilateral and Multilateral Entities	Project inception workshop report, periodic update, reports share midterm and final project evaluation.	Emails, face-to-face and virtual (ZOOM) meetings, and consultations	Project Management Team (PMT) & Participating Organizations	Staff time; travel and logistical support; meeting and workshops venues and catering for meetings and workshops.		
Media	Periodic press releases, interviews on Liberia's national TV, awareness on open development platforms, social media including Facebook.	Periodic press releases, interviews on Liberia's national TV, awareness on open development platforms, social media including Facebook.	Project Management Team (PMT)	Staff time; travel and logistical support		

VI. GRIEVANCE MECHANISM:

VOSIEDA has designed its complaint mechanism (CM) to give victims and witnesses of misconduct by staff's members of our organization or projects executed by VOSIEDA a chance to report cases; and enable VOSIEDA's management deal with any complaints in a structured manner. Complaints are an expression of dissatisfaction or discontent about misconduct. Types of complaints may include both operational complaints (e.g., about programs, quality of work, donor registration, project participant selection) and serious complaints (corruption, nepotism, misuse of funds, physical/ psychological/ sexual abuse), etc.

VOSIEDA will make available the contact details of the Regional Implementing Team (RIT) and the CEPF Secretariat to project partners and communities. If a partner organization or community feels unfairly treated by circumstances that infringe on their rights, the community and organization might discuss the situation with the Project Management Team or directly contact CEPF Regional Implementing Team (RIT) or the CEPF Secretariat. The partner may share all grievances in Liberian English or local language.

All grievances received by the Project Management Team, and the responses, will be shared with VOSIEDA management and the CEPF Grant Director within 15 days. As stated above, if the claimant is not satisfied following the reaction of VOSIEDA team or do not feel comfortable sharing with our team, they may submit their grievance to CEPF Executive Director. The email of the CEPF Executive Director: cepfexecutive@conservation.org. Again, as stated above, our project team will make available the contact details for the CEPF Regional Implementing Team (RIT) in Accra, Ghana or the CEPF Secretariat to all partners and communities.

All partners will be made aware of this grievance mechanism during the project inception meetings. Our complain mechanism will also be communicate throughout the local communities. The project management Team will disseminate this instrument to all partners and communities involved in the project.

VII. MONITORING AND REPORTING

The Project Management Team (PMT) will maintain a database and activity file detailing all workshops, follow-on, and grant activities throughout the project. The PMT will periodically evaluate stakeholder engagement with CEPF Secretariat, assisted by the partner organizations, including local communities.

As an add-on, the PMT will communicate the VOSIEDA's Complaints Mechanism (CM's) existence, its purpose, and its functionaries both internally (e.g., through regular staff training, posters, flyers, appraisal meetings) and externally (e.g., meetings with project partners, presentations, local radio, within communities, etc.)

The Project Management Team (PMT) will evaluate stakeholder engagement using the following indicators.

1. Level of understanding and growth of the project stakeholders.
2. Grievances received and how they were addressed; and
3. Level of involvement and awareness of partners and local communities.

To measure the indicators listed above, the PMT will use the following data:

1. Issues and management responses linked to minutes of meetings and discussions.
2. Progress reports and conclusions.
3. Feedback from the primary stakeholder group (s), partner organizations, local communities, and the grievance register.