



# FOREST INCOMES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY (FIFES)

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USAID's Forest Incomes for Environmental Sustainability (FIFES) Activity works to combat deforestation and biodiversity loss while developing rural, forest-based enterprises that provide sustainable economic opportunities for farmers and forest-dependent communities. The Activity contributes to USAID/Liberia's overall sustainable economic growth program to promote equitable and sustainable market-led economic opportunities while improving natural resources management.

FIFES implements biodiversity conservation in 11 community forests (CF) in Grand Bassa and Nimba counties. FIFES also supports local, regional, and national stakeholders to achieve two main objectives:

- 1) Create well-developed rural, forest-based enterprises, which provide sustainable economic opportunities for farmers and forest-dependent communities, while combatting deforestation and biodiversity loss, and
- 2) Enhance the capacity of the Government of Liberia (GoL) institutions and rural communities to sustainably manage and benefit from CF and buffer zone natural resources.

These objectives are reflected in the following three FIFES activity components:

- Sustainable, forest-based enterprises developed and strengthened,
- CF management improved, and
- Cross-cutting themes of gender, youth, and public outreach.

## Current Activities

- Institutional Support: With Pact experts taking the lead, FIFES began integrated technical and organizational capacity assessments (ITOCAs) for 11 FIFES-supported CFs. This second round of assessments showed overall improvements in enforcement strategy, biodiversity inventory and enterprise development, technical knowledge, and community engagement.
- Public Awareness: The CFMB support teams utilized Community Forest Guards to raise awareness about forest management and biodiversity conservation themes.
- Livelihoods: Increasing smallholder incremental sales by identifying new buyers for cocoa in regional markets, and establishing market linkages to help EGs secure fair prices for commodities.
- Resource Inventory: Eight of the eleven CFs have completed boundary line clearing and marking, with the remaining three nearing completion. Inside these boundaries, each CF is taking inventory or has completed forest inventory and finalizing their Community Forest Management Plan.

## Accomplishments to Date

- To further strengthen on-the-ground capacity, FIFES hired and deployed eight recent FTI graduates to serve as community forest technicians in eight non-hub community forests and deployed three FDA staff to assist with coordination, capacity building, and research.
- The FIFES Activity supported the demarcation and cleaning of 280 km of boundary line.
- FIFES adapted the Rapid Assessments and Long-term Ecological Discovery (RAPELD) community inventory methodology to community forests in Nimba and Grand Bassa Counties.
- 54,000 hectares of 11 Authorized Community Forests in Nimba and Grand Bassa Counties under improved natural resources management practices.
- Over \$8,300,000 LD (US \$59,000) in village savings and loans disbursed to help mainly women develop forest enterprises, with the financial knowledge to manage their investments.
- 25 Liberia Forestry Training Institute (FTI) interns deployed to Authorized Community Forests assisting in community engagement, forest inventories, and livelihoods development.
- Cadre of 149 Community Forest Guards recruited and trained to conduct patrols of community forests, protect flora and fauna, and ensure sustainable use of the forest.
- 108 agroforestry and forestry enterprise groups established, with focus on developing a culture of business, savings, and independence.
- Over 2,000 cocoa, pepper, and peanut farmers trained in improved production, harvest, and storage techniques to increase household income.

## Planned Outcomes

- Build a network of thriving sustainable forest-based enterprises and local governance groups made capable of managing forest areas for biodiversity protection and economic benefits.
- Increase the capacity of the Government of Liberia to better regulate and manage commercial, community, and conservation activities in Liberia's forests.

