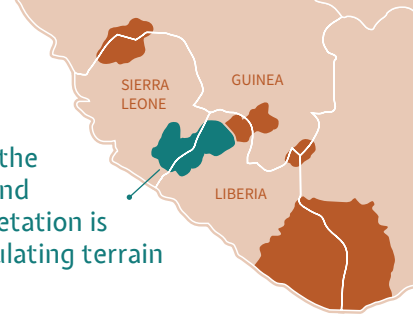


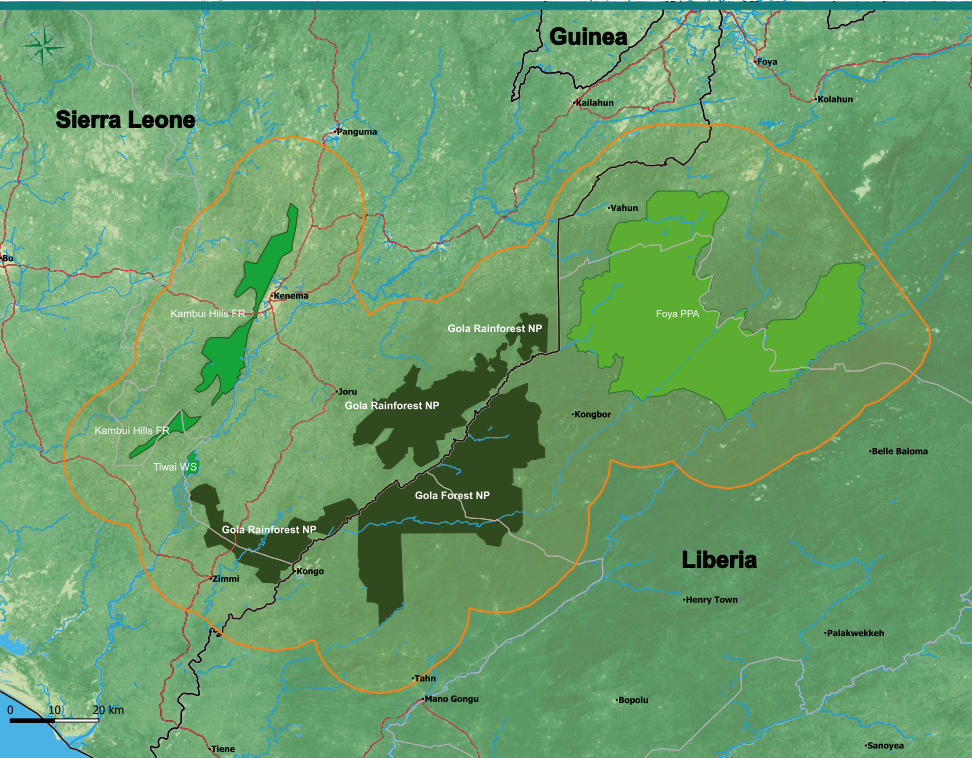
# GREATER GOLA LANDSCAPE



The block of expansive upper Guinean Forest that transveres the boundaries of Sierra Leone and Liberia along the Mano River and associated tributaries constitutes the Gola Landscape. The vegetation is tropical rainforest and comprises relatively flat to slightly undulating terrain with an altitude range between 50-600m asl.

The Greater Gola Landscape is highly rich in biodiversity, supporting viable populations of flagship, endemic and globally threatened species. In 2011, the Sierra Leone and Liberian governments signed a Peace Park Agreement to protect the Landscape leading to transboundary cooperation between the two countries.

The Support for the Preservation of Forest Ecosystems in West Africa (PAPFor) worked with institutions across the transboundary landscape to support protected areas and communities to promote better governance and increased participation in forest conservation.



## Legend

- Water course
- Major road
- International border
- Administrative boundary
- Conservation area**
- Gola-Foya PAPFor Landscape
- National Park
- Forest Reserve/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Proposed Protected Area

## Protected areas

LIB	Gola Forest National Park	National Park	88000 ha
SL	Gola Rainforest National Park	National Park	77000 ha
SL	Kambui Hills Forest Reserve	Forest Reserve	21228 ha
SL	Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary	Wildlife Sanctuary	1200ha
LIB	Foya Proposed Protected Area	Ungazetted	164 000ha

## Main habitats

- Lowland Guinean semi-deciduous forest
- Mid-altitude forest
- Lowland swamp forest
- Savannah of human origin

## Main threats

- Logging (commercial and subsistence)
- Artisanal mining
- Poaching
- Slash and burn agriculture

## Protection targets

- Contiguous mature and secondary lowland rainforest habitat both in protected areas and extending via corridors to community forest areas of the landscape.
- White-necked Picathartes breeding colonies found throughout the landscape, especially within the protected areas.
- Regional biodiversity hotspot including range-restricted species such as Gola malimbe, White breasted guineafowl, white-necked picathartes, pygmy hippo, diana monkey and several unique amphibians.



## PAPFor Programme

Project starting date: January 2020

Project end date: December 2023

Initiative of the WAEMU and ECOWAS Commissions funded by the 11th European Development Fund for support to conservation landscapes in West Africa.

## Implementation

The PAPFor GGL programme was implemented by SCNL, CSSL, GRC LG and the RSPB, active in various parts of the Landscape respectively.

## Partners

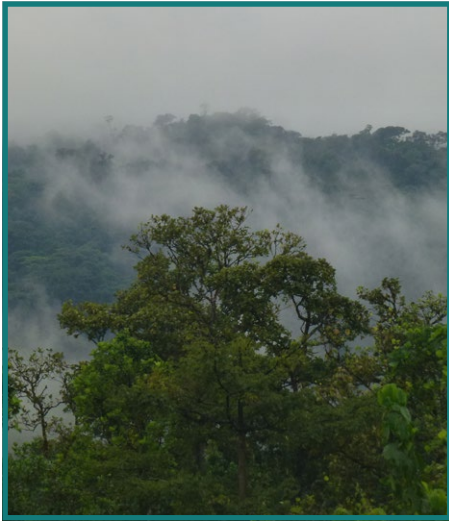
FDA (Forestry Development Authority, Liberia)

NPAA (National Protected Area Authority, Sierra Leone)

Federal Ministry of Environment (Department of Forestry, Sierra Leone)

TIAC – Tiwai Island Administrative Committee

## SOME CONSERVATION TARGETS



### The scale and global importance of the Gola Rainforest

The Greater Gola Landscape is situated at the heart of the Upper Guinean biodiversity hotspot. It is a transboundary region encompassing key protected areas across Sierra Leone and Liberia: the Gola Rainforest National Park, the Gola Forest National Park, the Foya Proposed Protected Area, the Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary, the Kambui Hills Forest Reserve, as well as surrounding areas of buffer zone and community-managed forests. Together these create the largest remaining single block of the Upper Guinean Forest. The total size of this landscape is around 3500 km<sup>2</sup>. The vegetation and soils of the Greater Gola Landscape is a major carbon sink of great value. In 2014, the Gola Rainforest National Park in Sierra Leone was established as the first Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) project in West Africa. By 2021 this will have conserved nearly 5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide by keeping it locked in the forest and soils.

### The unique White-necked picathartes

The White-necked Picathartes (*Picathartes gymnocephalus*) is endemic to the Upper Guinea rainforests and is classified as Vulnerable by BirdLife International on the 2007 IUCN Red List. Unique ground-loving birds, they are resident in lowland forest, hill forest, and secondary scrub with large boulders and caves inside the forest for them to use for nesting and roosting often as a colony. They forage in pairs or groups on the forest floor in a strange bouncing manner and return to rock to roost communally at night. The species now has a highly fragmented distribution, the majority of breeding colonies are extremely small and isolated, and many are close to the minimum for long-term viability. Forest throughout its range is disappearing rapidly, leading to further fragmentation and rapid decline of remaining populations, and trapping is a serious threat. A 2007 survey in GRNP, KHFR and the buffer zone found a total of 109 active nests at 35 active sites, with half the sites located outside the protected areas.

### Stronghold for endemic and threatened wildlife taxa

Conserving the Greater Gola Landscape is also vital to protect its globally important wildlife. Many of Gola's species are found nowhere else in the world, and over 60 species are classified as globally threatened. Over 100 mammals are found in the forest, including the Vulnerable African elephant, the Endangered pygmy hippopotamus, the Endangered western chimpanzee and the endemic and rare Jentink's duiker. The landscape supports 327 bird species, including the Endangered Gola malimbe, the Endangered Timneh parrot, and the Vulnerable yellow-headed picathartes. There are also over 600 species of butterflies and almost 900 species of plants, as well as 43 species of amphibians, 13 species of reptiles and 31 of the available 175 species of freshwater fish are threatened.

The Gola PAPFor Programme implementation was supervised by BirdLife International and managed directly by partners including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Society for the Conservation of Nature in Liberia (SCNL), the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL) and the Gola Rainforest Company (GRC). The PAPFor Programme connected with other Regional Programmes including the Mano River Union (MRU) and the West African Biodiversity and Low Emission Development Programme USAID-WABILED.





# THE CHALLENGES

Rural populations within the landscape are growing significantly, placing more pressure on the Gola rainforest block. Mining and logging interests as well as illegal hunting have also increased in the area and present major challenges for the future of the landscape.

## Challenge 1 : Increased logging and timber extraction

Illegal logging and timber extraction has remained a major threat to Community Forests and sometimes the Protected Areas over a long time. Chainsaw logging poses significant threat to forests and biodiversity on the Landscape. Trees are felled and split into planks. The planks are taken from the forests to the access roads and taken to markets in towns and cities.

Access to forests by chainsaw millers and sellers are made possible by community members who clear new farms.

Felling of trees for charcoal production is also very high, most especially in Liberia. Impacts of tree extraction is also a major issue in the forest edge communities to the National Park in Sierra Leone.



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## Challenge 2 : Artisanal mining inside Protected Areas

Mining for mineral resources (mainly iron ore, gold and diamond) is a major government income earner for both Liberia and Sierra Leone. Gola Forest is known to be occupied with deposits of these minerals. Mining is therefore one of the major sources of threat for biodiversity conservation and forest resources management in the Gola Landscape. It has remained one of the frontline issues of conflict between protected area management, communities, forest management institutions and civil society organisations.

Although the Law of Liberia disallowed mining activities in Protected areas, lack of law enforcement makes it difficult to control the small scale artisanal mining in the core of the National Parks, most especially in Liberia. Industrial mining groups have established camps close to the boundary of the National Parks, posing threat to wildlife populations and impacting negatively on vegetation.



# KEY RESULTS

## Result 1: Land-use planning

Five community land plans and 10 community forest management plans were completed, defining areas set aside for conservation, agriculture or commercial purposes. The combined area under community forest management and with land use planning status is about 79 286 ha, of which about 72 042 ha (90.8 %) is in Liberia and 7 244ha (9.2 %) in Sierra Leone. The development of a strategic land-use plan showed significant progress with the production of key studies and reports, including: a report of the species distribution model, the biomonitoring report from key protected areas in the landscape, restoration opportunities assessment report prepared by Mano River Union, the communities' land-use map and the map of mining concessions and the road network in the landscape.

## Result 2: Protected area management

The project established baselines for measuring the management of protected areas using IMET along with a reassessment at the end of the project. These assessments are now seen as best practice in the two countries. 44 people were trained in using IMET for protected area management.

PAPFor invested in capacity building at different levels; awarding 9 post-graduate scholarships and supporting numerous training events including in land-use planning, GIS and information technology, biomonitoring, and SMART Mobile application and recording.

99 ecoguards and rangers in Liberia and Sierra Leone were trained in using SMART mobile and camera trap information for biomonitoring and law enforcement.

## Result 3: Community forestry and livelihoods

Eleven community forests were established in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. In one of these, Tonglay in Liberia, a sustainable forest management programme was trialled.

In 2021, the project opened a road to the Elephant Falls ecotourism site, consisting of a 7 km earth road and 4 culverts. By the end of the project, Elephant Falls had started to welcome visitors to explore its nature trails, using signposts and nature interpretation boards. The trails were provided by the Liberia Forest Sector Project (LFSP) as part of a contribution to the PAPFor programme. Two ecolodge units were built by the Society for Conservation of Nature in Liberia with the support of the PAPFor project.

The project also helped to boost the visitor experience at Tiwai Island, one of the most visited ecotourism centres in Sierra Leone. It provided a solar powered water system to the research station, which doubles as visitors centre in Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary. The 8 communities that have owner-membership of the island receive annual royalties from the ecotourism fees collected by the centre.



[www.papfor.org/-Gola-Foya-](http://www.papfor.org/-Gola-Foya-)



### Contacts:

BirdLife International: George Ilebo, Africa Forest Coordinator  
george.ilebo@birdlife.org

RSPB: Lilian Goredema, Country manager Liberia  
Lilian.Goredema@rspb.org.uk

SCNL: James P. Mulbah, Project Coordinator, Liberia  
mulbahjamesp19@gmail.com

CSSL: Emurana Sowa, National Project Coordinator, Sierra Leone  
sowaemurana@yahoo.com



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FUNDED  
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### Contact European Union:

Email: [Delegation.LIBERIA@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:Delegation.LIBERIA@eeas.europa.eu)

Website: <https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/liberia>

Facebook: <https://web.facebook.com/EUinLiberia>

