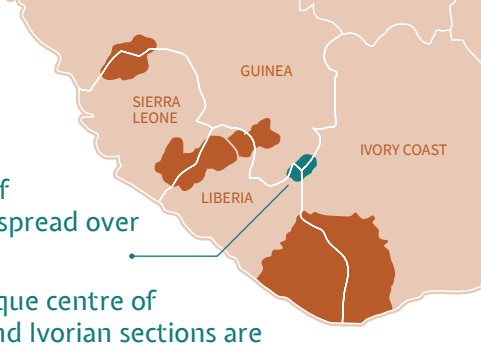
FACT SHEET

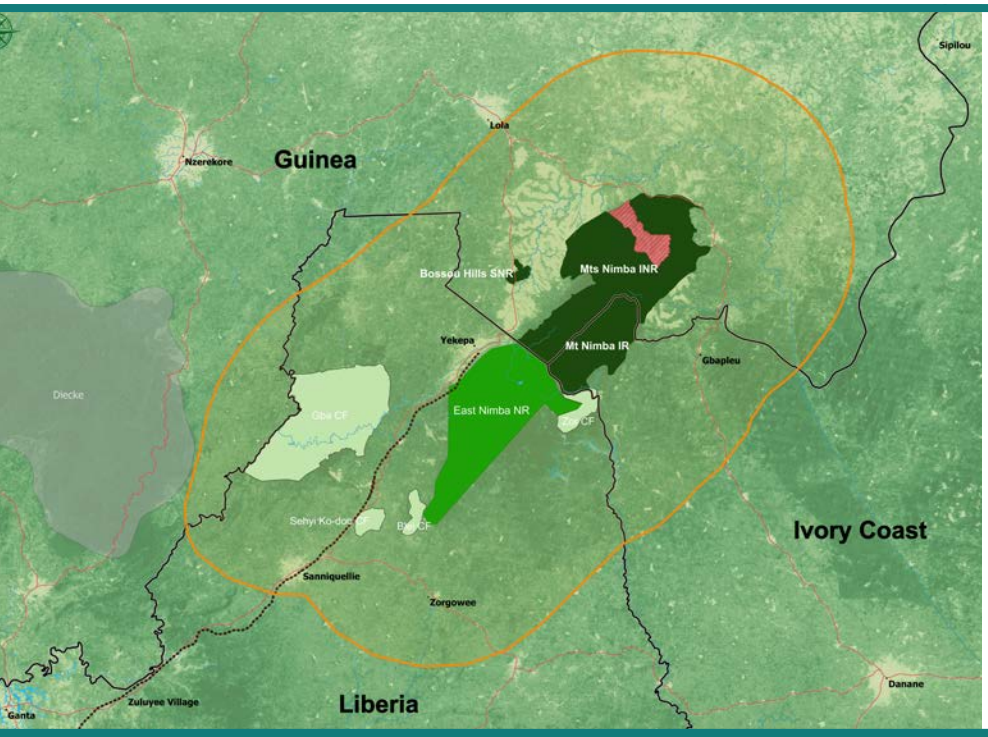
THE NIMBA MOUNTAINS



Divided between Guinea, Ivory Coast and Liberia, the landscape of the Nimba Mountains has a wide variety of habitats, from dense rainforest to montane grasslands, spread over an altitudinal gradient from 400 to 1750m.

The landscape has a strong tourism potential. It is a unique centre of endemism for many plants and animals. The Guinean and Ivorian sections are recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The support Program for the preservation of forest ecosystems in west africa (PAPFor) in support of Protected Areas and cross-border collaboration helps local communities to develop sustainable livelihoods that are compatible with maintaining forest cover.



Legend

- Watercourse
- Main road
- Railway
- International border
- Administrative boundary
- Mining perimeter

Conservation area

- Mt Nimba PAPFor Landscape
- Strict/Integral Nature Reserve
- Nature Reserve
- Community forest

Protected areas

GUI	Mount Nimba Nature Reserve	Strict Nature Reserve	13 000 ha
GUI	Bossou Hills	Strict Nature Reserve	320 ha
LIB	East Nimba	Nature Reserve	13 500 ha
CI	Nimba Mountains	Integral Reserve	5 100 ha

Main habitats

- Lowland Guinean forest
- Mid-altitude forest
- High altitude natural grassland
- Savannah of human origin

Main threats

- Bush fires
- Industrial mining
- Slash and burn agriculture
- Poaching within protected areas

Protection targets

- All species endemic to the Nimba Mountains and the forests of Upper Guinea, and in particular two species of amphibians, bats and the Nimba otter shrew (an African species of insectivorous, semi-aquatic shrew).
- Eleven species of primates and forest duikers (small forest antelopes). More than 400 species of birds, including 16 endangered species : the Black-headed rufous warbler, Sierra Leone Prinia, the Nimba Flycatcher, and the White-necked Rockfowl.
- Low- and medium-altitude forests, with an unbroken altitudinal gradient, from 400m to 1600m.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PAPFor Programme

Project starting date: January 2021

Project end date: April 2024

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 programme in the Nimba Mountains Landscape is implemented by UNOPS, with a field team based in Nzérékoré. Agreements with the agencies in charge of Protected Areas in each of the three countries have been established to ensure optimal ownership.

Partners

FDA-CMC (Forestry Development Authority - Co-Management Committee) : Legislation and management of the forest estate and Protected Areas

OIPR (Ivorian Office of Parks and Reserves): Management of the network of Protected Areas, including the Monts Nimba integral reserve in Côte d'Ivoire

CEGENS (Centre for the Management of the Environment of the Nimba Mountains and Simandou):PBiodiversity protection, management of the Integral Reserve in Guinea

SOME CONSERVATION TARGETS

The altitudinal gradient of the forests of the Nimba Mountains

The Nimba Mountains are among the highest peaks in West Africa.

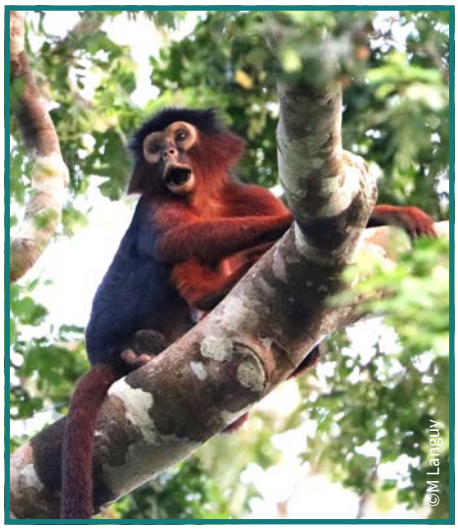
They have an uninterrupted forest on their slopes from 400 m to 1600 m altitude, constituting a unique reservoir of biodiversity that can best withstand climate change. It is home to species typical of lowland Guinean forests as well as plants and animals adapted to mid-altitude environments.

The maintenance of these forests on the slopes of the Nimba Mountains is essential to maintain a continuous flow of good quality (and quantity) water on which the communities depend so much.

The viviparous toad of Nimba

The Nimba Mountains are known as the home to the world's only viviparous toad.

Unlike other toad species that lay eggs (oviparous), this is the only one that develops eggs in its body, thus giving birth to already formed (viviparous) froglets. The Western Nimba toad (Mount Nimba viviparous toad, *Nimbaphrynoides occidentalis*) is a small toad barely 2 cm long that lives in natural highland meadows between 1200 and 1600 m. This unique species is endemic to the Nimba Mountains and is critically endangered because of its tiny species distribution.



Primates endemic to the forests of Upper Guinea

With no less than 11 species, the Nimba Mountains landscape is an important conservation area for primates. These include the western chimpanzee (or West African chimpanzee, *Pan troglodytes verus*), the Sooty mangabey *(Cercocebus atys*), the Diana monkey (*Cercopithecus diana*), Campbell's monkey (*Cercopithecus campbelli*), the western red colobus (*Piliocolobus badius*), and the king colobus (or western black-and-white colobus, *Colobus polykomos*).

In order to ensure better results, the PAPFor programme in the Nimba Mountains, implemented by the United Nations Operations and Services Agency (UNOPS), does not act in isolation. Rather it aims to create synergies. The programme works with the following institutions: CEGENS, OIPR, FDA-CMC.

The programme also interacts with other regional programmes such as WABILED (USAID), FFI (Fauna and Flora International), institutions such as IREB (Institut de recherche environnemental de Bossou), the private sector including SMFG (Société des mines de fer de la Guinée), the NGO GRET and civil society organisations.

CEGENS

OIPR

FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

CMC

UNOPS

THE CHALLENGES

The Nimba Landscape is relatively small and located in a fairly heavily populated area. Population growth and migration linked to economic opportunities presents many challenges.

Challenge 1: Expansion of slash-and-burn agriculture

The fields are usually made on land where almost all the trees are cut down and the vegetation burnt. The first few years the land is fertile, but gradually **the soils become poorer.**

After three to four years, the farmer is forced to **clear another area**.

The initial plot is abandoned, and it takes several decades of fallow state before it is workable again.

In the Nimba Mountains landscape, farmers shorten the fallow period because of the need for land. This makes **crops less productive** and leads to the clearing of new forests, at the expense of the remaining natural forests.

Challenge 2: Industrial mining

Of all the landscapes supported by PAPFor, the Nimba Mountains landscape is the one most impacted by industrial mining.

The Liberian part of the Nimba Mountains was exploited from the 1960s to 1980s. Much of the upper section of the massif was disfigured. This site is no longer exploited but other important forest areas are. On the Guinean side, a mining perimeter in the process of being exploited is at the heart of the massif and is on the immediate border of the Monts Nimba Integrated Reserve, which could threaten the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site. **Close collaboration with the miners is necessary** to minimise the direct impacts (deforestation, diversion of watercourses, pollution) and indirect impacts (workers, increased hunting pressure) of mining.

Challenge 3: Bushfires

In the high-altitude savannahs, fires have **a negative impact on forests where they degrade the forest edges and undergrowth** and also reduce the natural habitat of endemic species. This is particularly the case with late season fires.

The dynamics of fires in the savannahs of the Nimba Massif are still poorly understood. It is therefore essential to **implement a bushfire management strategy using satellite images.**

THE SOLUTIONS

Maintaining forest cover

In a context of strong anthropic and agricultural pressure, it is important to maintain the connectivity between these different forests. «Forest corridors» supported by the PAPFor programme plays this important role.

The programme works with local authorities and neighbouring communities to reforest the area between the Bossou forest and the Integral Reserve. Out of 250 ha, 50 ha have already been reforested by IREB. **The maintenance of this forest corridor is essential for the survival of the small chimpanzee population of Bossou**, that represents a touristic potential from which local communities could benefit.

Support to protected areas

PAPFor provides direct support to the three agencies responsible for managing protected areas. An essential support is to establish or update a Management Plan that serves as a basis for the interventions of these agencies, in collaboration with the local populations. PAPFor also supports **training in the use of management tools** such as IMET (**Integrated Management Effectiveness Tool**). These tools allow monitoring of management effectiveness and of threats and law enforcement activities.

The programme also provides **support for vehicules, computers, field equipment, and surveillance patrols**. A common database is being set up and will allow annual assessments of the reduction of threats to the landscape

Participatory community management

One of the major challenges of the PAPfor programme is to convince the populations **living in the vicinity of the forests to take ownership of the governance of natural resources and to adopt a sustainable development system**. This system should enable income generation for communities and benefits from ecosystem services based on good integrated conservation practices, within the framework of local development plans.

Support in eco-tourism development and water management is also implemented. The project places particular emphasis on a gender approach during the implementation of its activities.

www.papfor.org/-Mt-Nimba-

UNOPS

PROJECT FUNDED BY THE EU

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PAPFor

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