

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NATIONAL
BENEFIT SHARING TRUST
MAY 2018 - JUNE 2022



Vision:

"To be a standard-driven institution that seeks fair play, protection and benefits for all rural community residents that are affected as a result of the usage of their land and/or forest whether by government or concessionaire."

Contents

<i>Message from the Chairperson</i>	3
1. <i>Introduction</i>	4
2. <i>Achievements at a Glance</i>	4
3. <i>Programs</i>	5
I. Stakeholder dialogue (National Forest Forum).....	5
II. Community projects approved and funded.....	5
III. Institutional capacity strengthening: skills for CFDCs and NBST Board.....	6
IV. Monitoring of community projects.....	6
V. Training for CFDCs and the New Board in 2022.....	7
VI. Advocacy and high-level engagements.....	7
4. <i>Financial information</i>	7
I. Income and expenditures.....	7
II. Financial audit.....	8
5. <i>Governance and management</i>	8
I. Board elections.....	8
II. Board: Secretariat and management.....	8
6. <i>Impact/success stories</i>	8
7. <i>Constraints/challenges/problems and solutions</i>	10
I. Delays in the payment of land rental fees.....	10
III. Access to remote affected communities.....	10
V. Delay in the conduct of elections/reconstitution of the Board.....	11
VI. Gaps in institutional policies.....	11
8. <i>Looking forward</i>	11
9. <i>Acknowledgement and appreciation</i>	11
10. <i>Annexes</i>	12
Annex I: Complete list of projects.....	13-12
Annex II: Members of the NBST Board for 2022.....	14
Annex III: Current Secretariat Staff.....	14
Annex IV: Pictorials of some projects funded by the NBST Board.....	14
Annex V: List of policies & procedures.....	20

Tables

Table 1: Summary of total number of projects that have been approved and funded.....	5
Table 2: Summary on the status of projects monitored in 2021 and 2022.....	6
Table 3: Total income and expenditures.....	7

Acronyms

CFDCs	Community Forest Development Committees
NUCFDCs	National Union of Community Forestry Development Committees
PMT	Project Management Team
PMC	Project Management Committees
CHO	County Health Officer
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDA	Forestry Development Authority
NBSTB	National Benefit Sharing Trust Board
NBST	National Benefit Sharing Trust
NFRL	National Forest Reform Law of Liberia
NMSMC	National Multi Stakeholders Monitoring Committee
OCA	Organizational Capacity Analysis
TPRC	Technical Proposal Review Committee
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement
GRM	Grievance and Redress Mechanism
MFDP	Ministry of Finance & Development Planning
MFGAP	Multi Stakeholder Forest Governance Accountability Project

Message from the Chairperson

I am thrilled to have served the National Benefit Sharing Trust (NBST) and affected communities from 2018 to 2021 and to be reelected in 2022 as Chairperson. Thanks to Civil Society and the NBST Board for entrusting me with this role.



In this report, we present to our stakeholders an overview of the work that the NBST Board has undertaken during my tenure. We have outlined areas of work to ensure long-term sustainability and capacity building and highlighted significant efforts undertaken currently and, in the past, to address challenges so that the NBST can become more effective and efficient in the implementation of its mandate.

We wish to especially recognize the efforts of the leadership and the dynamic Secretariat staff. Through positive working relationship and cooperation, the team navigated through some difficulties and I am proud of the achievements in especially accessing and managing the statutory benefits, improving systems and capacity of the NBST and beneficiary communities as well as keeping the Board active and engaged.

We are grateful to all partners and collaborators especially our donor partners for their immeasurable support towards the Board. Additionally, the NBST Board experienced increasing level of support and cooperation from the Forest Development Authority (FDA) and Government of Liberia. We however, continue to call on all partners to do more and encourage the Government of Liberia to do its part to sustain the NBST.

.....
Nora G Bowier
Chairperson, NBST Board

1. Introduction

The National Benefit Sharing Trust (NBST) or the Trust was created by Liberia's National Forestry Reform Law (NFRL) of 2006.¹ The core mandate of the Trust is to receive, manage and disburse revenues from Liberia's forest sector to communities affected by commercial logging. It is also charged with the responsibility of providing oversight on how communities manage the shared benefits through identifying, implementing, monitoring and evaluating community-led development projects. The Trust Board supervises the management of the funds and helps communities to use these funds in an efficient and effective.

The Trust is managed by a sixteen-member Board representing stakeholders involved in the forestry sector including affected communities, the private sector, civil society and government.

To operationalize its mandate, the Trust has three major committees. These include 1) the Proposal Technical Review Committee (PTRC) responsible for reviewing, assessing and selecting proposals; 2) Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) responsible for monitoring project implementation progress and 3) Grievance and Redress Committee responsible for the resolution of all internal grievances². The Board is reconstituted every two years. The day-to-day operations of the Board is managed by a Secretariat. The Secretariat consists of two key staff including the Head of Secretariat and Finance Officer.

The report is prepared in fulfilment of the requirement of Regulations 114 -10 which obliges the "Trust" to provide regular update to stakeholders. It provides an overview of the operations and activities that were undertaken during the tenure of the Board spanning from 2018 to June, 2022, and the outcomes/results achieved and challenges that were encountered. It also provides a financial status of the Trust in terms of the incomes and expenditures.

2. Achievements at a Glance

The Board has been able to achieve the following milestones;

- First National Forest Forum (NFF) organized with key recommendations proffered and being implemented³.
- Through collaboration with other stakeholders, ensured that US\$200,000.00 was transferred from the government of Liberia, being part of funds owed to the affected communities. Currently advocating for the release of US\$ 2.7 Million allocated in the 2022 fiscal budget.
- Funded twenty-four new projects and five ongoing projects totaling US\$371,036.92.00 and LRD 69,144,990.72. This brings the total number of projects funded by the Trust to fifty-three from the time of the establishment of Trust Board to the time of developing this report.
- Provided management support to all NBST funded community projects through project monitoring.
- Developed and rolled out capacity building tools that enhanced the knowledge and skills of the Community Forest Development Committees (CFDCs), Technical Committees and members of the Board.
- Developed and rolled out tools to advance project review and project monitoring including a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and an updated system for project proposal review.
- Supported a process of amending the law on benefit sharing to reflect the channeling of land rental fees to affected communities through a dedicated transitory account.
- Reopened and kept operational the Board Secretariat in spite of limited funding to the Board.
- Enhanced the visibility of the NBST Board and its operations especially at community and national levels.
- First independent financial audit conducted.
- Series of policies being developed for smooth running of the Trust including grievance handling mechanism for the resolution of all internal grievances.

¹ National Forest Reform Law (NFRL) of 2006 Chapter 14, Section 14.2 (e, ii) provides that 30% of the land rental fees (comprising of land area and administrative fees) collected by Government are to be allocated to logging affected communities as benefits.

² The establishment of the Grievance Committee was contained in the recommendation of the Organization Capacity Analysis (OCA) reports.

³ Resolution adopted at the NFF is annexed to this report.

3. Programs

Below is the list as well as the description of the programs implemented and outcomes achieved:

- Stakeholder Dialogue (National Forest Forum)
- Community Projects approved and funded,
- Institutional capacity Strengthening for CFDC and Board members
- Further monitoring and investigation of community projects
- Additional training for CFDC and the new Board of 2022
- Advocacy
- Financial information
- Independent Financial Audit of the Board

I. Stakeholder dialogue (National Forest Forum)

The first National Forest Forum (NFF) was held in March 2020, in Ganta City, Nimba County, in collaboration with the Forestry Development Authority (FDA). The NFF, which is mandated under the National Benefit Sharing Regulation, should be held annually. However, this was the first since the NBST Board was established in 2015. The NFF provided a space for exploring constructive ways to address long standing issues concerning benefits sharing, and also allowed for constructive dialogue and deliberation among government, civil society, communities and private sector players.

II. Community projects approved and funded

Between 2018 and 2021, 29 projects were approved and funded by the NBST Board. The applications approved included 5 ongoing projects and 24 new projects. Applications for ongoing projects were considered in view of the NBST Board's interest to ensure that ongoing projects were completed. As of date, the NBST has funded a total of Fifty-three (53) projects worth **US\$1,310,222.73** and **LRD 81,781,842.72** including twenty-four (24) that were funded in 2016. (Table 1 depicts a summary of projects funded by the NBST Board.), Full list of projects can be seen in Annex I.

Table 1: Summary of total number of projects that have been approved and funded

Project Type/Titled	Total Number of funded projects	Total cost in USD	Total Cost in LRD
Construction of schools in affected communities	15	279,353.51	26,640,391.43
Construction of Vocational Training Center	1	46,341.00	0.00
Construction of Guest Houses	11	285,289.52	7,190,624.52
Construction of health care centers/clinics	7	352,879.52	8,698,920.00
Drug Revolving Fund ⁴	1	0.00	1,200,000.00
Drug revolving, furniture and compensation	1	10,225.25	5,000,332.00
Construction of homes for vulnerable citizens ⁵	1	46,341.00	1,152,000.00
Rehabilitation/zincing of vulnerable homes	1	0.00	9,435,600.00
Construction of Health Post	1	62,463.31	0.00
Construction of Market halls	2	52,500.00	7,353,872.11
Rehabilitation of feeder/community roads	3	103,854.50	0.00
Construction of community bridge	1	48,500.00	0.00
Construction of teacher's residence	2	11,500.00	3,029,600.00
Construction of town halls	3	44,185.12	12,080,502.64
Renovation of Community radio station	1	5,000.00	0.00
Rice Mill	2	7,591.00	0.00
Total	53	1,310,222.73	81,781,842.72

⁴ A business model that ensures there is continuous supply of drugs for clinic operations. The Board provided funds for the initial purchase of drugs. The clinic charges minimum fee for the drugs and uses the income generated to refill its drug supply.

⁵ Target beneficiary include the elderly, widow and people with disability

III. Institutional capacity strengthening: skills for CFDCs and NBST Board

In 2021 the Board was awarded a grant of One Hundred and One Thousand, Six Hundred and Forty-five USD (US \$ 101,645) by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) to implement a one-year project titled “*Strengthening the Capacity of the National Benefit Sharing Trust Board (NBSTB) to effectively monitor and evaluate projects awarded to Affected Communities*”. The objective of the project was to strengthen the capacities of the NBST Board to enable them effectively carry out their project management and monitoring oversight functions. It also provided for the training of the CFDCs and provision of tools on community project design, evaluation, selection, management and sustainability and gender mainstreaming.

Through the support of this grant, the following capacity building activities were undertaken:

1. A capacity and systems gap analysis of the current systems for the review, approval and monitoring of CFDC project proposals. The assessment led to identification of capacity gaps (skills, knowledge and systems) and tools to address the gaps.
2. The project produced a comprehensive training manual for NBST Board and CFDCs on project proposal writing and management, sustainability, gender mainstreaming, financial management and reporting.
3. A Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop for NBST Board members and Secretariat as well as selected CFDCs members using the developed training manual, and three regional trainings for Ninety-six CFDC members. The project also helped in the development of:
 - a. An updated guide for CFDC’s project proposal review and assessment for use by the Proposal Technical Review Committee (PTRC).
 - b. Development of M&E Framework for use by the Board’s Project M&E Committee.

The grant by the FAO also afforded the Board the opportunity to fully communicate through information sharing, awareness raising and visibility activities at community and national levels. Overall, twenty-four radio talk shows were held within the counties (Grand Bass, Rivercess, Grand Geddeh, Nimba, Sinoe, Lofa, Grand Geddeh, Rivergee, Maryland, Gbarpolu) and two at national level. The Board reported monthly updates on projects progress, successes, risks and success stories to the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) National Multi-Stakeholder Monitoring Committee (NMSMC). The Board also conducted two rounds of monitoring and assessment visits of twenty community projects within ten counties across three CFDC regions. The aim was to test the tools developed and determine success and risks factors. This has helped inform the NBST and stakeholders on the implementation of the respective projects and provided feedback to the community project teams.

IV. Monitoring of community projects

The NBST Board through its 2022 annual plan prioritized actions to address issues surrounding uncompleted projects before funding new applications. To this end, in 2022 March, the NBST Board conducted another round of monitoring visit targeting twenty community projects and a follow-up investigation of ten specific projects that were monitored in 2021. The investigation visits were supported by the FAO grant while the monitoring visits were supported by Forest Trend. The investigations sought to assist the collection of additional information on the situation surrounding these projects and the complaints reported from the last monitoring visits. It targeted stakeholders and influential actors some of whom were not met during the last visit including members of the CFDCs, Contractors, government actors and members of beneficiary communities.

Table 2: Summary on the status of projects monitored in 2021 and 2022

Project	Number
Project fully Completed and in Use	20
Projects completed but not in use	05
Project not completed but in use	10
Project not completed and not in use	15
Project not started/collapse	03

V. Training for CFDCs and the New Board in 2022

With funding from Forest Trend and to enable the efficient review, monitoring & evaluation of community projects, the Board has built the capacity of the newly empaneled Board members and Committees and provided

orientation to the general body on their respective roles and functions. The Board further strengthened the capacity of CFDCs to effectively develop and manage projects on-behalf of their affected communities in a sustainable and impactful manner. A total of 60 CFDCs members were trained in March and April of 2022 with funding provided by the Multi-Stakeholder Forest Governance Accountability Project (MFGAP).

VI. Advocacy and high-level engagements

With support from MFGAP, the NBST Board participated in series of legislative dialogues held in 2021. These sessions brought stakeholders including the House and Senate Committees on Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery, FDA, Civil Society, Community and Private Sector representatives to discuss solutions to the issues of and prolonged delay in disbursing the portion of land rental fees paid by forest license holders belonging to affected communities. In 2022, the Board met with the FDA, Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and MFGAP and provided inputs to the draft MOU intended to put in effect changes related to the establishment of a transitory account, set up for direct payment of community funds to the NBST from companies. Currently, MoJ and FDA lawyers are working together to update the draft MOU.

The NBST Board in 2021 supported dialogue initiated by the National Union of Community Forest Development Committees (NUCFDCs) in demand for land rental fees arrears owed by the Government of Liberia. The Board participated in meetings with the MFDP, FDA and other government entities, released press statements that were published in the print and electronic media and conducted an interview with West African Democracy Radio (WARDA), a regional media outlet based in Senegal to highlight the community concerns.

The NBST Board has also been engaged with the REDD+ working group in making interventions to secure the rights of forest dwellers and equitable distribution of benefits from forest resources. The intervention has been centered on holding national discussions with state actors to initiate the development of an equitable benefit-sharing framework for carbon payments. At this forum, the NBST Board shared its experiences (pitfalls and opportunities) on the implementation of the existing frameworks that promote equitable benefits sharing of forest resources.

4. Financial information

I. Income and expenditures

The NBST has received land fees paid by Government of Liberia for community projects as well as funding provided by donor partners to support NBST activities. The table below shows a summary of all income received and expended between 2015⁶ and June 30, 2022.

Table 3: Total income and expenditures

Source	Purpose	Amount Received		Income expended		Balance	
		USD	LRD	USD	LRD	USD	LRD
Government of Liberia/Land Rental Fees Payment	Community Projects – 2015 - 2021	2,425,784.38	131,179,000.00	2,248,483.67	127,881,645.20	177,200.71	3,297,354.82
VPA Support Unit	Financial Audit of the NBST Board 2018	5,000.00	0.00	5,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Union of CFDC/VOISIDA	Cost to Cover Technical Proposal Review Meetings 2018	1,500.00	0.00	1,500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
FAO	National Forest Forum 2020	10,821.00	0.00	10,821.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	NBST Capacity Building Project 2021	101,645.00	0.00	101,645.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Support to NBST Operational Plan for 2022	15,000.00	0.00	15,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Forest Trends	National Forest Forum 2020	26,972.00	0.00	26,972.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

⁶ The Board received for the first time a payment of community share of land rental fees from the government in 2015 even though the board was established in 2011.

	Support to NBST Operational Plan for 2022	27,500.00	0.00	21,630.00	0.00	5,870.00	0.00
MFGAP	Closing meeting of the Board and support to the implementation of NBST Operational Plan for 2022	30,910.00	0.00	24,910.00	0.00	6,000.00	0.00

II. Financial Audit

According to the FDA Benefit Sharing Regulation No 114-10, conduct of an independent financial audit is an annual requirement. In 2018 the Board commissioned its first independent financial audit for the period covering January 2016 – June 2017. The purpose of the audit was to have an independent professional opinion expressed on the financial position of the Board and to ensure that the funds utilized have been used for their intended purpose. Due to funding limitation, no CFDC project was audited.

The audit findings showed no significant risks and that the potential for underperforming and lack of transparency and accountability remains mostly moderate or low. The audit provided recommendations that are being used to improve the financial procedures and management practices in the use of community funds. To strengthen internal controls, corrective measure that is been taken include establishing a fix asset registry and tracking system for all NBST verifiable assets and detail financial procedures, regular reconciliation of all bank accounts whether dormant or not.

The audit report was shared with FDA and other stakeholders upon release.

5. Governance and management

I. Board Elections

Elections of the Board is conducted every two years. In May 2018, the NBST Board convened for a two-day retreat in Sinkor, Monrovia for reflections, planning and Board elections. The two-day event which was attended by stakeholders from the VPA SU, SGS, FDA and the NGO Coalition of Liberia presented an opportunity to take stock and allow participants to share experiences and perspectives with respect to the management of projects and other related functions of the Board. The retreat was climaxed by the elections of Board officers and induction of its members. (See Annex II)

In 2021, one non-voting member resigned from the Board

The Board was reconstituted in February 2022 bringing on 11 new voting members replacing those whose tenure expired. Two existing board voting members were reappointed. (See Annex II)

II. Secretariat and Management

Regular monthly Board leadership meetings were held. The Board held 3 meetings of the full membership. The Board Project Technical Review Committee met several times to review community project proposals. The members of the M&E Committee engaged in field monitoring activities.

Two new secretariat staff including Head of Secretariat and Finance and Administrative Officer were hired in January, 2021 to coordinate and facilitate activities funded by the FAO grant as well as the general activities of the Board. The leadership of the Board provides oversight supervision of the Secretariat.

6. Impact/Success Stories

Communities appreciate the management of the benefit sharing funds by the NBST

With the efficient and accountable management including disbursement of over US\$200,000.00 provided by the government of Liberia through the NBST in October 2021, we have been able to address key social and development challenges affecting forest communities.

- I. The Yolo Town Guest House project is now complete, dedicated and turned over to the community. Since the handover, the community has generated significant revenue which they can plough back into other community projects. Yolo Guest generated an estimated annual income of US\$ 10,000 and Pyne Town Guest has generated more than US\$15,000.00 and currently has US\$15,000 in the community guest house account. Both guest houses are part of projects that were funded by the Board in 2016.

“Our Guest House gets a monthly average of 5 guests. We use the income generated from the Guest House to maintain the premises, and 50% is turned over to the community to assist members in times of need. Women and youth are actively engaged in the management of the Guest House.” (CFDC Leadership in FMC I- Pyne Town, Sinoe)

- II. Out of the 16 new primary schools that have been constructed with support provided through the NBST Board, a total of 14 are now in use, including those that have not been fully completed. These schools combined benefit approximately 1,500 pupils and provide access to education in some of the remotest parts of Liberia. For example, the Fayanpolu in FMC A Gbarpolu Public School hosts an estimated student population of 226. The structures are also attracting an increasing enrollment of pupils.

- III. *“Since the construction of this school (though not complete) there has been an increment in student population with current enrolment at 226 students. We are appealing to the NBST Board and the CFDC leadership to make all efforts and get the project to its full completion”.* –**David F. Korvah, Acting Principal of Fayanpolu Public School, FMC-A Gbarpolu County.**

- IV. Two Teacher Quarters were constructed in Gangolota and Kparyarquelleh, near FMC-A, Lofa County and have helped to attract and hosts teachers in these communities for longer periods. Prior to the construction of these facilities, teachers (especially those from outside of these communities) could not afford to offer their services because of the lack of housing. These communities generally do not have the needed qualified teachers. Teachers assigned by government are often recruited from outside.

- V. The Kparyarquelleh medical clinic was funded from the community’s share of land rental fees through the NBST. Since its completion, the sustainability of staff including the provision of drugs have been done by the community through a Drug Revolving program with funding from the community’s share of land rental and cubic meter fees. Patients are charged a small amount for drugs and the clinic uses the money collected to replenish the drugs. This has been one of the most successful and sustainable approach we have observed. The clinic also provides free service and benefits to more than 1,903 community members from seven communities in Salayea District, Lofa County.

The clinic service is currently being upgraded to address community needs but the community indicated that it will require some additional support to carry out the action. Tokpah Y. Kennedy, OIC of the Kparyarquelleh Clinic stated that *“the clinic provides free delivery services and vaccines to citizens” but due to the distance that many patients have to cover to access the facility, a maternity waiting home is being built to host pregnant women before their delivery”.*

- VI. The efforts undertaken during the period including a gap assessment, project monitoring has enabled important lessons to be learned but also actions to strengthen the Board. For example, the Board set up new systems and tools including TORs for Board executive members and Board technical Committees, which has provided clarity to Board members on their roles. New Board members are also in better position to do their job based on training. Moreover, improved and standardized tools for project monitoring have strengthened capacity in project data collection and the training framework will enable more thorough review of community project proposals.

- VII. To address community grievances, the Board established a direct communication link between the communities and the NBST Board. Every community identified now has 2 or more person communicate directly with the NBST and report on issues affecting the implementation of community projects. The increased fund raising and the presence of a new Secretariat guided by leadership from the Board has kept an engaged and functional Board.

- VIII. As a result of advocacy efforts, **US \$ 200, 000.00** was released by the government. Additionally, **US \$ 2.7 million** was allocated in the national budget for 2022. This shows some level of recognition and good will from the government to meet up with its obligation by law.

7. Constraints/Challenges/Problems and Solutions

In spite of the many results achieved, the Trust and its operations still continued to face challenges. These included;

I. Delays in the Payment of Land Rental Fees

Accessing the community share of land rental fees from the national government has been a concern for beneficiary communities and all stakeholders. Despite the release of US\$200,000.00 in late 2021, the government still owes communities an outstanding arrear of over US\$5.5 million as at July 2022. The government is legally obliged to provide the communities' share of the land rental fees paid by logging companies on a quarterly basis but the government has not fulfilled these obligations. Political commitment is weak despite some positive actions taken by the government in response to pressure from stakeholders.

The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP), FDP, the FDA and Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA) promised in late 2021 to meet with the NUCFDCs, NBST Board and other stakeholders to harmonize land rental fees records (arrears and new collections) among government entities and come up with a payment plan for outstanding arrears. This process which is led by the MFDP is yet to be finalized. Additionally, some companies are still owing land rental fees while there have been complaints of companies moving their operations to community forest with no actions taken against them.

II. NBST Funding Gap and Sustainability Issue

Prolonged delay in the payment of land rental fees by the government continues to affect the Board significantly and poses serious challenge to its effectiveness. In 2018 when the new Board took over, only US\$5,000.00 was available to fund operational cost. Without any external support at the time there was no means to fund staff salaries, rent, and activities. The lack of funding also led to temporary closure of the Secretariat. Additionally, community projects monitoring was not conducted as required and monitoring plans were further delayed until 2021. Project proposal review meetings were funded through the CFDCs. In 2022, the Board was compelled to relocate to a new office due to funding constraints. Out of US\$200,000.00 paid by the government in 2021, US\$10,000.00 (representing 5% of the disbursed amount as per regulation) was allotted to the Board to fund its operations. This amount is far below the required amount needed to fund the Board's annual operations. The 2022 NBST operational budget is estimated at US\$98,074.94.

Also importantly is how the NBST can be sustained in the long-term. Many TSCs have expired while FMCs concession companies are now turning their focus to Community Forest. Moreover, the government in 2013 took a decision to waive some of the land rental fee taxes which has significantly affected the income of the Trust⁷.

III. Access to remote affected communities

The poor state of roads especially in rural Liberia, poses significant challenge in accessing community project sites. During monitoring visits, the team observed substantial deterioration of roads and bridges due to heavy rains, lack of maintenance, and overloaded trucks. Due to these challenges, the monitoring team had to travel by means of motorcycle and sometimes walked for hours in order to access project communities. Current road conditions may also affect usage of some projects.

IV. Community projects implementation

The Board has observed challenges with the implementation and sustainability of projects. Out of the 53 projects funded, the Board has found out through its monitoring exercises that about 50% (27) out of 53 projects are not complete. One project collapsed completely.

The predominant and most significant factors affecting the implementation and success of the projects include weak community engagement, outreach, and information sharing; limited collaboration between the CFDC and key actors (County authorities for example); external influence in awarding of contracts resulting in selection of a single contractor to implement multiple projects; and inadequate funding/under quote of cost of work listed in the project Bill of Quantity (BoQ). Other factors include loss of funds due to fluctuations in exchange rate between LRD to USD, high transport costs in rural communities, high levels of theft of project construction materials, and a lack of clear arrangement for projects co-funded by government.

(Blundell, 2020)

Findings from monitoring reports highlighted issues such as deviation from the original project design, dissatisfaction with the quality of projects among communities (for example the Gbonyea Market Hall in Salayea Lofa where despite being turned over to the community, the community is not utilizing the structure for its intended purpose). The community also complained about the lack of concrete tables and cracks on the floors. There were also doubts in many of the communities that the projects represent their monetary values.

Some communities are also challenged in sustaining projects particularly running and managing guest houses and providing technical maintenance to machinery. For example, the Sokpo Community Rice Mill associated with TSC A9 in Grand Cape Mount County is broken and has not been functional for over two years due to a lack of technical maintenance. There are also concerns about the lack of government support towards running and operationalizing schools and clinic projects. During the selection of schools and clinics project, the CFDC obtain authorization from relevant government agency and written commitment indicating that government will provide staff and other support to sustain the project. Out of 9 clinics built, only one (the Kparyarquelleh Clinic) is operational and run by the community through drug revolving support, while the other 8 are not being utilized. Seven (7) out of 16 schools have been taken over by government. Even in schools where the government has taken over, there are limited number of teachers many of whom are not yet on government payroll. The Board has decided that going forward it will focus mainly on existing schools and clinics.

V. Delay in the conduct of elections/reconstitution of the Board

The COVID 19 pandemic started in March 2020 and subsequently, restrictions were imposed by government to curtail the spread of the virus. As a result, the Board elections could not be held in May 2020 as scheduled. The lack of funds further affected the timely conduct of the elections. The elections were finally held on February 17, 2022 with support from MFGAP.

VI. Gaps in institutional policies

Lack of various internal policies and procedures contributed to the performance gaps at the NBST. With the completion of the organizational capacity assessment of the Board, several capacity and policy gaps were identified and recommendations aimed at closing those gaps. Currently, significant efforts have been made to close these gaps. Through Forest Trends support, the Board is developing relevant systems and policies. A list of polices developed and to be developed is attached in the annex.

The current composition of the Board provides that the Union of CFDCs is represented by 6 persons out of 13 voting members. This creates the possibility of potential conflicts of interest given that there are at least two persons from the Union of CFDCs that are appointed on the PTRC with the responsibility of reviewing and approving project proposals emanating from the CFDCs. To address this issue, during the last retreat the number of CFDC on each committee was reduced and chairs of technical committees were selected from other stakeholder's representatives.

8. Looking Forward

The Board targeted series of actions in its 2022 operational plan. Several of the actions have been completed and captured in this report. The Board will continue to work on the implementation of activities that have not been completed. To improve its governance and help implement Board's functions, a series of operational policies identified in the gap analyses report are being developed (see annex VI). The Board continues to lobby concerning the payment of communities' 30% share of land rental fees and is exploring opportunities to engage in research efforts and dialogue on other benefit sources and potential revenue streams like REDD+. Other key actions that are ongoing and will be undertaking in the coming months include follow-up with individual CFDC on actions to address incomplete projects

9. Acknowledgement and Appreciation

We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the following donors and partners who provided support to our work;

- I. *The VPA Support Unit provided funds to support the conduct of financial audit of the Board and donated 10 office chairs and two office desks.*

- II. The Union of CFDC and VOSEIDA provided financial support to enable the Board sittings and project review meetings.
- III. Through the FAO, a grant was provided to undertake series of capacity building initiatives as mentioned in this report.
- IV. Support for the NFF was sponsored by Forest Trends (FT), the FAO and Liberia forest Sector Project through FDA REDD Implementation Unit. Forest Trend is currently funding the Board activities including monitoring and policy development and providing technical support.
- V. The MFGAP assisted the Board to organize a closing meeting and leadership elections of the 2022 reconstituted Board, and funded a regional capacity building training for CFDCs.

10. Annexes

Annex I: Complete List of Projects

No.	Project	Location	Date of Award	Project Cost ⁸		Current Status
				USD	LRD	
1	School	Fasawalazu, FMC-A Lofa	2016	15,000.00	0.00	Completed and in use
2	Teacher Residence	Ganglota, FMC-A Lofa County	2017	11,500.00	929,600.00	Completed and in use
3	Guest House	Gorlu, FMC-A Lofa County	2017	11,500.00	926,600.00	Completed and in use
4	Zinc to vulnerable homes	Kpowansanyea, Kpekeyea, Barquelleh, FMC-A Lofa County	2017	0.00	9,435,600.00	Completed and in use
5	Market Building	Gbonyea Town, FMC-A Lofa	2018	11,500.00	958,600.00	Incomplete but in use
6	Clinic	Kparyarquelleh, FMC-A Lofa County	2016	45,000.00	0.00	Completed and in use
7	Clinic Drug Revolving Fund	Kparyarquelleh, FMC-A Lofa County	2019	0.00	1,200,000.00	Completed and in use
8	Teacher Residence	Kparyarquelleh, FMC-A Lofa County	2019	0.00	2,100,000.00	Completed and in use
9	Guest House	Beyan Town, FMC-A Lofa County	2017	11,500.00	929,600.00	Incomplete
10	School	Taigay-ta Village, FMC-A Gbarpolu	2016	36,423.00	0.00	Completed and in use
11	School	Geleyansiasu, FMC-A Gbarpolu	2018	0.00	5,533,688.50	Incomplete but in use
12	School	Fanyanpolu, FMC-A Gbarpolu	2018	0.00	5,533,459.50	Incomplete but in use
13	School	Forkpata, FMC-A Gbarpolu	2018	28,652.25	198,823.25	Incomplete but in use
14	Road Rehabilitation	Gbarngay Town, TSC-A7, Gbarpolu	2016	4,000.00	0.00	Completed and in use
15	Rice Mill	Wayamah, TSC-A6, Gbarpolu	2016	3,591.00	0.00	Completed but not in use due to technical breakdown
16	Guest House	Zimmidandae, TSC-A10, Grand Cape Mount	2016	4,018.50	0.00	Incomplete
17	Guest House	Varguaye Village, TSC-A11, Grand Cape Mount	2016	4,000.00	0.00	Incomplete
18	Rice Mill	Fornor, TSC-A15, Grand Cape Mount	2016	4,000.00	0.00	Completed but not in use due to technical breakdown

⁸ The USD and LRD constitute the total project cost. Project funds were paid to CFDC in both currencies where applicable.

19	Guest House	Bo-Mafar TSC-A16, Grand Cape Mount	2016	4,018.50	0.00	Incomplete
20	School	Benduma, TSC-A9, Grand Cape Mount	2018	4,000.00	0.00	Collapsed
21	School	Fanetoe, FMC-P, Grand Kru County	2016	59,850.00	0.00	Completed and in use
22	Market Hall	Buahgeeken, FMC-P, Grand Kru County	2019	41,000.00	6,395,272.11	Incomplete
23	Town Hall	Feloken, FMC-P Grand Kru County	2018	0.00	9,815,022.64	Incomplete
24	School	Gbarzon Village, FMC-P Maryland County	2016	21,211.50	0.00	Completed and in use
25	School	Dugboken, FMC-P Maryland County	2018	1,500.00	4,901,858.18	Incomplete but in use
26	Rehabilitation of Community Radio Station	Glofaken, FMC-P Maryland County	2019	5,000.00	0.00	Completed and in use
27	School	Betto Town, FMC-P Maryland County	2016	59,850.00	0.00	Incomplete
28	Road Rehabilitation	Kanweaken Gbeapo, River Noh, FMC-P, River Gee County	2016	20,425.00	0.00	Completed and in use
29	Guest House	Paroken, FMC-P, River Gee County	2019	12,180.00	0.00	Incomplete
30	School	Nyounken, FMC-P, River Gee County	2019	22,963.26	0.00	Incomplete
31	Clinic	Free Town, FMC-F, River Gee County	2016	56,723.69	0.00	Incomplete but in use
32	School	Kilepo Kanweaken, FMC-F, River Gee County	2019	18,718.00	7,423,134.00	Incomplete
33	Deabo Health Post	Deabo Parken, FMC-F, River Gee County	2016	62,463.31	0.00	Incomplete
34	Guest House	Pyne Town, FMC-I, Sinoe County	2016	43,177.50	0.00	Completed and in use
35	Clinic	Pellokon, FMC-I, Sinoe County	2018	20,450.05	1,866,440.00	Completed and in use
36	Guest House	Putu Jarwodee, FMC-I, Grand Gedeh County	2016	63,099.00	0.00	Completed and in use
37	School	Gbolue, FMC-I, Grand Gedeh County	2018	6,267.00	2,633,976.00	Incomplete
38	Guest House	Twarbo/Billibo, FMC-F, Grand Gedeh County	2018	13,234.52	5,334,424.54	Completed and in use
39	Guest House	Zieh Town, FMC-F, Grand Gedeh County	2016	86,013.00	0.00	Incomplete but in use
40	Road Rehabilitation	Polar -Gboe Zammie Towon, FMC-K, Grand Gedeh County	2016	79,429.50	0.00	Completed and in use
41	Construction of Homes for vulnerable citizens	Senewon and Karr Town, FMC-K, Grand Gedeh County	2021	0.00	1,152,000.00	Incomplete
42	Town Hall	Dougee Town, FMC-K, Grand Gedeh County	2018	9,712.00	2,265,480.00	Incomplete
43	Clinic	Tiah Town, FMC-K, Nimba County	2016	100,274.31	0.00	Completed but not in use
44	Drug, Furniture & Compensation	Tiah Town, FMC-K, Nimba County	2018	10,225.25	5,000,332.00	Has not started
45	Vocational Training Center	Yarpah Town, FMC-B, Rivercess County	2016	46,341.00	0.00	Completed and in use for academic classes
46	Bridge Construction	Zor Town, FMC-B, Rivercess County	2019	48,500.00	0.00	Has not started

47	Clinic	Jerry King Village, FMC-B, Rivercess County	2018	20,000.00	6,832,480.00	Completed but not in use
48	Guest House	Yolo Town, FMC-K, Rivercess County	2016	33,088.50	0.00	Completed and in use
49	Clinic	Karchucon, , FMC-C, Rivercess County	2016	47,770.00	0.00	Incomplete
50	Town Hall	Bodo-whea Town, FMC-C, Rivercess County	2016	34,473.12	0.00	Incomplete
51	Clinic	Garpu Town, FMC-C, Rivercess County	2018	62,661.47	0.00	Incomplete
52	School	Zogar Town, TSC-A2, Grand Bassa County	2016	4,018.50	0.00	Incomplete but in use
53	School	Saul Town, TSC-A3, Grand Bassa County	2016	900.00	415,452.00	Incomplete

Annex II: Members of the NBST Board for 2022

No.	Name	Role	Represented by Group	Term
1.	Nora Bowier	Chair- Person	Civil Society	2 nd term
2.	St. Solomon S. Peters	Co- Chair Person	Affected Communities	1 st term
3.	Isaac K. Kipi	Secretary	Forestry Development Authority	1 st term
4.	E. Ekema A. Witherspoon, I	Treasurer	Liberia Timber Association	1 st term
5.	Losine N. Sanyon	Member	Ministry of Internal Affairs	1 st term
6.	Philajua Boima	Member	Ministry of Finance & Development Planning (MFDP)	1 st term
7.	Chief Bob Kofi Zah	Member	Council of Chiefs & Elders	1 st term
8.	Chief Haji Abraham Sombai	Member	Council of Chiefs & Elders	1 st term
9.	Jebbeh E. Quoi	Member	Affected Communities	2 nd term
10.	Moses G. Blayon	Member	Affected Communities	1 st term
11.	James S. Beyan	Member	Affected Communities	1 st term
12.	Frederick B. Soloe	Member	Affected Communities	1 st term
13.	Abraham Quehn	Member	Affected Communities	1 st term
14.	Geraldine Brown	Nonvoting Ex officio member	Academia/University of Liberia	N/A
15.	Alexander Kingston	Nonvoting member	International Donor Organization (USAID)	Resigned and need to be replaced
16.	John T. Woods	Nonvoting Ex officio member	Academia/University of Liberia	Resigned and need to be replaced

Annex III: Current Secretariat Staff

No.	Name	Position	Date hired
1.	Roberto Kollie	Head of Secretariat	January 2021
2.	Samuel Varmo	Finance and Admin officer	January 2021

Pictorials of some projects funded by the NBST Board



Yarpah's Town Vocational Training Center (now used by the Elementary Division of the Yarpah's Town Public School), FMC-B, Rivercess County



Fayanpolu Public School, FMC-A, Gbarpolu County



Garpu Town Clinic Project (still under construction), FMC-C, Rivercess County



Dugboken Public School (still under construction) but already imparting the community, FMC-P, Maryland County



Karchucon Clinic Project, FMC-C, Rivercess County



Bodo-whea Town Hall Project, FMC-C, Rivercess County



Pyne Town Guest House, FMC-I, Sinoe County



Beyan Town Guest House, FMC-A, Lofa County



Deabo Parken Clinic Construction, FMC-F, River Gee County



Buahgeeken Market Hall under construction, FMC-P, Grand Kru County



Dougee Town Hall Construction, FMC-K, Grand Gedeh County



Fanetoe Adm. District School, FMC-P, Grand Kru County



Feloken Town Hall under construction, FMC-P, Grand Kru County



Forkpata Public School, FMC-A, Gbarpolu County



Kparyarquelleh Clinic, FMC-A, Lofa County



Gbonyea Market Hall, FMC-A, Lofa County



Pellocken Clinic, FMC-I, Sinoe County



Zieh Town Guest House, FMC-F, Grand Gedeh County



Free Town Glarro Clinic, FMC-F, River Gee County



Jerry King Village Clinic Project, FMC-B, Rivercess County



Teah Town Clinic Project, FMC-K, Nimba County



Nyounken School Project, FMC-P, River Gee County

List of Policies & Procedures

Document	Status
Monitoring Tool	Developed and in use
Financial Policy	Draft completed and pending validation
Integrated Proposal Development Note	Developed and in use
NBST Regulation	Developed and in used
Practical Guide for NBST Proposal Development	Draft completed and pending validation
Communication Strategy	To be developed in Q3 of 2022
Grievance Handling Mechanism	To be developed in Q3 of 2022
Performance contract with CFDCs	To be developed in Q3 of 2022
Procedures for regular fixed assets monitoring	To be developed in Q3 of 2022
Code of Ethics for NBST staff and Board members	To be developed in Q3 of 2022
Advocacy Strategy	To be developed in Q3 of 2022