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## Mount Nimba Ecosystem

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Liberia, Ivory Coast and Guinea

Size: Total 3 countries: 29,093 ha (290,93 km<sup>2</sup>)

Guinea: 12,540 ha, Côte d'Ivoire: 5,000 ha, and Liberia: 11,553 hectares



Participants in coordinating the ongoing transboundary cooperation:

National Government:

- Liberian (Forestry Development Authority (FDA))
- Guinean (CEGENS)
- Ivorian Government

Local Government:

- Nimba County

Protected area administration:

- East Nimba Nature Reserve Management (ENNR)
- ENNR Co-management Committee

International NGOs:

- Conservation International
- Fauna and Flora International

National NGOs:

- East Nimba Nature Reserve Co-management Committee (CMC)
- Skills and Agriculture Development Services (SADS)
- Rural Integrated Center for Community Empowerment (RICCE)

Local NGOs:

- Agriculture Relief Services (ARS)

Intergovernmental organizations:

- Mano River Union (MRU)

Multi-National Corporations:

- United National Development Program (UNDP)

Community-based Organizations:

- Gbalay-geh Youth Association

**Objectives:** The Transboundary Collaboration is characterized by a composition of natural ecosystems evolving from several ecological and geo- physical processes that have obtained to the creation of many habitat types such as montane gallery forest, secondary thickets, or woody grass land, secondary hill forests, moist evergreen forest, swamp or wetter secondary forests. As a result of the diverse vegetative uniqueness of the site, accommodation is provided for many species of conservation relevance including the endemic Nimba Toad, endangered Nimba Otter Shrew, and African Swallow-tail butterfly; socially the area main habitants are the Mano and the Gio. Despite of the three countries they have the same culture and are intermarriage. Very common and spongy borders and conduct their local trade by frequent crossing and transacting their economic activities.

**Values and importance:** Located on the borders of Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, Mount Nimba rises above the surrounding savannah. Its slopes are covered by dense forest at the foot of grassy mountain pastures. They harbour an especially rich flora and fauna, with endemic species such as the viviparous toad and chimpanzees that use stones as tools. Its unique geographical and climatic location combined with it's biogeographically background provides the Nimba chain with one of the most remarkable diversities of the

whole West African region. It is also one of the only sites of the Gulf of Guinea with a strong endemism potential.

**Aspects of transboundary cooperation:** The Mount Nimba Transboundary Cooperation main objectives are to conserve the ecosystem, protect the Mount Nimba Ranges within the three countries, exchange of scientific information obtained from research and staff visitations to the three sites and strengthening the sub-regional organization the Mano River Union (MRU) in the area of biodiversity conservation and maintaining the remaining block of the Upper Guinea Forest Block. The process of harmonization of existing policies, laws and regulations to enable the creation of a single management approach for the sustainable management of the Transboundary Area.

**Stage in the process:** Tri-National Agreement signed on December 12, 2012, the Governments of the Republic of Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea jointly signed a framework agreement "for integrated and sustainable conservation of the Nimba Mountains".

The three parties recognized the Nimba Mountains Massif as a common biosphere reserve with a cross-border status, to be integrated to the Afri-MAB network and the Global Network of Biosphere Reserves. In this regard, a Tri-National Committee for the monitoring and implementation of the Framework Agreement was established.

A Vision was developed at the December 2013 Meeting of the Tri-National Committee: "Nimba Massif biodiversity is conserved effectively for the wellbeing of current and future generations of all stakeholders and contributes to regional peace and security."

**Date established:** December 12, 2012

**Official Protected Area Designation:** Part of the Mount Nimba Range is protected as a trans-boundary reserve between Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, supporting an exceptional variety of forest and savanna habitats and biodiversity.

- The Guinean and Ivorian part of Mount Nimba have been declared as UNESCO World Heritage Site: Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve
- The Liberian part, ie the East Nimba Nature Reserve (ENNR) has been established in 2003, and in 2016 the Government of Liberia started to work on the UNESCO World Heritage Site nomination process for ENNR as well.

**The Catalyst:** The Mount Nimba Forest Ecosystem is one of the remaining blocks of the Upper Guinea Forest belt which contains many endangered and threatened species of both fauna and flora. Based upon this the three countries initiated the Transboundary collaboration to save the motane forest.

**History:** Language is the major barriers in this collaboration as the two countries beside Liberia are Francophone and Liberia is an Anglophone nation, also the harmonization of existing Laws, Policy and Regulations serves as major barriers.

There are working groups and steering committees set up to design strategies and find solutions. Protected Areas Managers are closely working through bilateral meetings, exchange of staff and community leaders to experience individual management strategies and collaborate as well as build synergies for the sustainable management of the Transboundary.

### **The Governance and Management Structures**

- **Cooperative relationship:** The overall cooperative relationship in the Transboundary conservation initiatives are at various levels:
  - The Tripartite Initiatives which is a legally agreement at the government level for conservation of the Mount Nimba Ecosystem
  - Cooperation and Collaboration between Protected Areas Management Administrators for on the ground activities including joint patrols, monitoring and law enforcement
  - Staff exchange program for hand on experience
- **Legal basis for cooperation:** Tripartite Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- **Governance structure:** Steering and joint monitoring Committee made up of local authorities, joint security and management authorities of the protected areas.
- **Cooperative management arrangement:**
  - Awareness Creation
  - Joint Monitoring and fact finding committee
  - Joint patrols activities
  - Quarterly Collaborative meetings to discuss unfolding events,
  - Continue exchange of communications and information shearing.
  - Law Enforcement
  - Strengthen Capacity of Management Institutions

**Results:** The region is known in West Africa as the Mano River Union (MRU) which include four countries Guinea, Cote d' Ivorie, Sierra Lone and Liberia. The specific area where the initiative is located is in one of Africa remaining Forest block within the West Africa, the Upper Guinea Forest Block.

## For More Information

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