



Sustainability action · Project Forest and Land use

Gola REDD project, Sierra Leone

The Gola REDD project is the first REDD project to be developed in Sierra Leone. The project demonstrates that protecting forest resources can be both socially and environmentally beneficial, by providing local communities with a sustainable alternative to forest conversion and biodiversity loss.

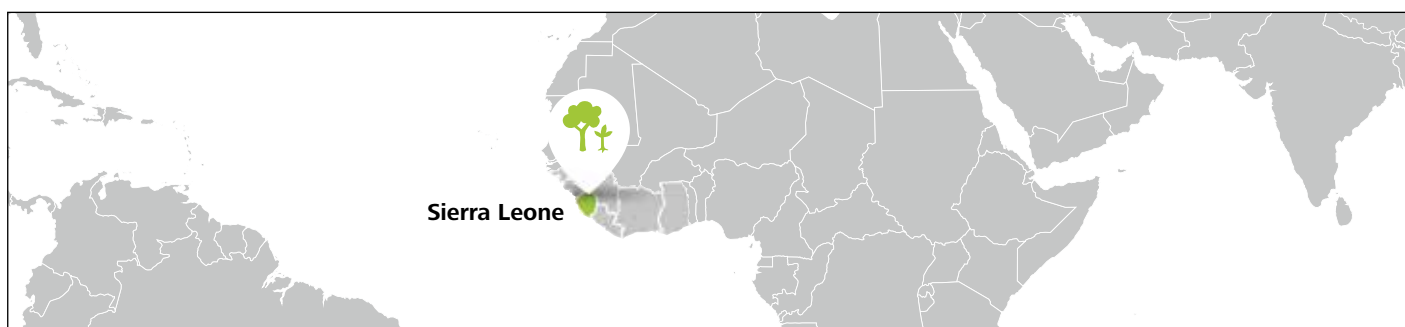
Project

The Gola REDD project reduces greenhouse gas emissions by conserving the forested areas of the Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP) in Southeast Sierra Leone. The forests in the GRNP and surrounding areas are the largest lowland tropical forests remaining in Sierra Leone. In addition, the forests form part of the Upper Guinea forest ecosystem, which is classified as one of the 34 most important biodiversity hotspots in the world. The forests have a unique biodiversity stronghold for a large number of threatened bird and mammal species, including 60 threatened, eight

endangered and one critically endangered species. Conservation actions as a direct result of the Gola REDD project protect these species, preserving 68,515 hectares of tropical forest and saving approximately 500,000 tCO₂e on an annual basis.

The GRNP is under the threat of deforestation through the conversion of forest into agricultural lands. For 90% of the population in the forest edge communities around the GRNP, subsistence agriculture forms the basis for their livelihoods. Many of the once productive cocoa plantations around the national park were abandoned due to the civil war. Education and training initiatives have been established to encourage the local communities to restore and rehabilitate the plantations. The farmers are taught valuable skills that help them to improve the quality and volume of their yields and establish a strong and sustainable local cocoa market.

Checklist	Additionality and permanence	3 rd party verified	Transparency	Annual CO ₂ -reduction	Social and environmental benefits	Marketing material
Project 301 882	According to the rules of the VCS Standard	By the Rainforest Alliance	Provided by APX Registry	500,000 tCO ₂ e	As documented in our database	Pictures available



Location

The Gola REDD project is located in the districts of Lailahun, Kenema and Pujehun in Southeast Sierra Leone, 260 km east of the capital Freetown. Sierra Leone, which is one of the least developed countries in the world, ended a devastating 11 year long civil war in March 2002, which heavily effected the project area. Today, the forests form part of a larger 'trans-boundary peace park' established by the governments of Sierra Leone and Liberia to assist in maintaining permanent peace in the previously troubled region.

Project achievements

Socio-economic impact

- The project fosters sustainable resource management throughout the project area by providing workshops on sustainable agriculture for farmers in 114 impoverished communities. For example, farmers receive education on how to optimise crop yields and revenues from cocoa production on existing land through cooperatives and/or certifications.
- Saving and lending schemes have been established to ensure that farmers have the means to finance alternative livelihoods and that the area is being protected from further degradation.
- The project has generated employment opportunities for the local community: a team of 50 park rangers have been employed to patrol the National Park and prevent illegal poaching and encroachment.
- The project promotes access to education in the region by funding education scholarships for bright students from impoverished backgrounds.

Environmental impact

- The project contributes to an estimated annual emission reduction of 500,000 tCO₂e.
- The forest serves as an important carbon sink by storing up to 1065 tCO₂e per hectare.
- A safe refuge has been created for threatened wildlife, which protects endangered animals from widespread poaching.
- The project reduces deforestation in the region: deforestation would occur at a rate of 1.62% per year, leading to the loss of 1,041 hectares of rainforest per year, if the project had not been implemented.
- A conservation trust fund has been established to ensure that conservation actions last beyond the lifetime of the project.

