

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STATE PARTY

Sierra Leone

STATE, PROVINCE OR REGION

Kenema and Kailahun Districts of Eastern Province
Pujehun District of Southern Province

NAME OF NOMINATED PROPERTY

Gola-Tiwai Complex

GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES TO THE NEAREST SECOND

The geographical coordinates of the central points of Gola Rainforest National Park and Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary are as follows:

PROTECTED AREA	BLOCK	DISTRICT	COORDINATES
GOLA RAINFOREST NATIONAL PARK	GOLA NORTH	KAILAHUN	7° 32' 37.5756 N; 11° 20' 57.0588 W
	GOLA CENTRAL	KAILAHUN / KENEMA	7° 21' 22.3704 N; 11° 10' 52.2336 W
	GOLA SOUTH	KENEMA / PUJEHUN	7° 39' 5.9364 N; 10° 52' 12.99 W
TIWAI ISLAND WILDLIFE SANCTUARY	N/A	KENEMA / PUJEHUN	7° 48' 26.946 N; 10° 39' 44.7408 W

TEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY

The Gola-Tiwai Complex is a serial property consisting of four component parts, namely the Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary and the three blocks of Gola Rainforest National Park:

1. Gola North
2. Gola Central
3. Gola South

The *Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary* consists of the whole landmass of Tiwai Island in the Moa River commencing from the northernmost tip, following the east bank of the Moa River southwards to the southernmost tip of the landmass and thence following the west bank of the Moa River northwards to the northernmost tip of the landmass. The area of TIWS above the rainy season river level is 1251 hectares.

Gola North comprises an area of 5,368 hectares situated in the northeastern corner of the Malema Chiefdom in the Kailahun District. It is bounded to the south by the Morro River and the Peyama and Levuma communities. To the west the forest block abuts the boundaries of the Seiyama and Makpoi-ma communities. The eastern boundary is an almost straight longitudinal line running parallel to the border with Liberia approximately 2.5km to the east.

Gola Central extends over an area of 38,572 hectares across the Malema Chiefdom in the Kailahun District, and the Gaura and Nomo Chiefdoms in the Kenema District. It is separated from the Gola North forest block in the east by the small village of Dukor. An enclave of 248 hectares was excluded from the National Park in the area surrounding the village of Wagikor in the northeastern corner of this block. The southern boundary of this block runs parallel to the Morro River, separated by a series of forest-edge communities from Yollo in Malema Chiefdom to Waima in Nomo Chiefdom. The western boundaries roughly follow the contours of the valleys created by the Kuadi, Koya and Mahoi Rivers in Nomo Chiefdom wrapping around the village of Waiyehun situated on the Koye River. From the southern boundary of Gaura Chiefdom, the park boundary follows a bearing of 47 degrees towards the village of Lalehun. From Lalehun the boundary extends towards the Waye stream on a bearing of 52 degrees, then follows this river for approximately 1.5km before extending northeast on a bearing of 30 degrees creating a small 4km x 1.5km protrusion of the boundary between Patama and Golala villages. From Patama in Malema Chiefdom the boundary continues on a bearing of 66 degrees towards Jagolahun before meeting the Komboya stream by Dukor village.

Gola South comprises an area of 26,012 hectares situated largely within the

Tunkia and Koya Chiefdoms in the Kenema District and Makpele Chiefdom in Pujehun District. The eastern boundary of this block abuts the border between Tunkia and Nomo Chiefdoms, the boundary then follows the Morro River to the south until it meets the Mano River. It follows the Mano river for approximately 2.5km. The boundary line then passes around the village of Tolo situated on the Mano river before rejoining the river for approximately 7km. The boundary then passes around the village of Wunde in Makpele Chiefdom before rejoining the Mano River for a further 1km at the block's southernmost extent. The boundary continues westwards for close to 4km before turning northwest at the village of Vaama. After crossing the Mahoi River the boundary meets the Joru-Zimmi Highway close to the village of Gbekpa. The boundary proceeds northwest to the border between the Makpele and Barri Chiefdoms, following this boundary northeast until it meets the boundary with Tunkia Chiefdom. The boundary then continues northwards into Tunkia Chiefdom around the villages of Golawoma and Bunumbu before meeting the Moa River in Koya Chiefdom. The boundary follows the Moa river north for 1.3km and then arcs eastwards reaching its northernmost point 3km south of Tiwai Island. The boundary then proceeds southeast from the border between Koya and Tunkia Chiefdoms on a bearing of 153 degrees towards Nemahugoi-ma village where it again crosses the Joru-Zimmi Highway. From here it turns further east for 6km until it reaches the Mahoi River. It then proceeds on a bearing of 65 degrees towards the western border of the Nomo Chiefdom with a small deviation around the villages of Makondema and Fargolahun.

CRITERIA UNDER WHICH PROPERTY IS NOMINATED

The Gola-Tiwai Complex is proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List under Criteria (xi) and (x) of the Operational Guidelines.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

No.

DRAFT STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

BRIEF SYNTHESIS

The Gola-Tiwai Complex is a serial site consisting of four component parts in two protected areas located in the Eastern and Southern Provinces of Sierra Leone: the Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP) and the Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary (TIWS). GRNP consists of three blocks – Gola North, Gola Central and Gola South – and TIWS of a single block bounded by the Moa River. Together, they cover an area of 762 km². GRNP and TIWS are part of the Greater Gola Landscape that extends eastwards into Liberia and constitutes, as a whole, the third largest and remaining forest block in the highly fragmented Upper Guinean Forest (UGF). In contrast with other sites in the UGF, deforestation in the Gola-Tiwai Complex is extremely low. It is also a stronghold of the Critically Endangered Western chimpanzee and pygmy hippopotamus, of the iconic white-necked picathartes, and of Cichlid fish and other freshwater taxa.

CRITERION (IX)

The Gola-Tiwai Complex lies within the area of highest rainfall in the Upper Guinean Forest zone. It is the westernmost surviving block of intact moist tropical forest in the Guinean Forests of West Africa biodiversity hotspot. As a result of the unique hydrological conditions, the Northern Upper Guinea area has been designated as a distinct freshwater ecoregion characterised by tropical and subtropical coastal rivers with an intricate hydrological network. Classified as Continentally Outstanding, the Northern Upper Guinea freshwater ecoregion has a distinct fish fauna and high levels of endemism in other taxonomic groups.

While forest structure in the Gola-Tiwai Complex shares many characteristics with the broader Upper Guinean Forest coastal belt in which it is located, it also shares plant species with Mount Nimba and other forests to the northeast and with remaining forest fragments to the northwest that are not present at sites further east. This suggests that the Greater Gola Landscape – once part of a single contiguous forest extending to the northwest, northeast and southeast – thanks to its central location shares characteristics and species with remaining fragments that they do not share with each other. The probable reason for this is the expansion and contraction of forests over time caused by changes to the global climate. This evolutionary process helps explain the high species richness and endemism of the Greater Gola Landscape and provides continued resilience in the face of climate change and the continuing fragmentation of the UGF.

CRITERION (X)

As a result of the landscape characteristics and ecological processes described above, the Gola-Tiwai Complex is correspondingly unique when it comes to the diversity of its habitats and wildlife species, notably of its freshwater fish, bats, butterflies and orchids. The most important family of freshwater fish in the GTC are Cichlidae, consisting of the two genera *Tilapia* and *Sarotherodon*. Eight *Tilapia* species occur in the average Sierra Leonean river basin, while in the whole of the Congo Basin there is only one *Tilapia* species, and in Lake Malawi, renowned for its Cichlid diversity, just six. The regional rivers of the Upper Guinea freshwater ecoregion, including those of the GTC, are a cradle for *Tilapia* evolution.

Primate biomass in the GTC is among the highest in the world. The only Critically Endangered chimpanzee sub-species, the Western chimpanzee, whose populations are declining elsewhere in its range, occurs there at a higher density than in any existing World Heritage property. It is one of just seven exceptionally stable or high Western chimpanzee density sites and is an important area for the survival of the sub-species. The Greater Gola Landscape, of which the GTC is part, is also a stronghold for the Critically Endangered forest elephant in west Africa. The rich avifauna of the Gola-Tiwai Complex includes up to 448 species including globally important populations of the white-breasted guineafowl, the Timneh parrot and the flagship white-necked picathartes which nests on rock faces under the forest canopy and whose survival in this landscape may be due in part to its cultural significance for the local Mende people. Thanks to its steep slopes and rocky outcrops, the GTC includes an abundance of habitats suitable for *Picathartes* nests.

STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

The majority of the Gola-Tiwai Complex consists of primary moist or semi-deciduous tropical rainforest that has never been commercially exploited. The remaining area consists of secondary vegetation that is regenerating naturally since commercial timber extraction and shifting cultivation ended in 2003. Deforestation rates are low compared to the UGF more broadly. The four forest blocks that constitute the GTC are sufficiently large together, and ecological connectivity between them sufficiently intact, to maintain viable populations of all but the widest-ranging species. Inventories and monitoring conducted at Gola and Tiwai since the 1980s indicate that all the species that would be expected in a block of Upper Guinean Forest in this location are present and their populations stable.

Activities within the formal buffer zone and the sustainable collection of non-timber forest products within the protected areas are governed by agreements signed with local communities and enforced using the authority of the Paramount Chiefs, Section Chiefs and Village Chiefs. Bushmeat hunting and

artisanal mining were widespread in the past but occur now only at very low levels. Surveys of primates since 2012 indicate that, even for taxa that were heavily hunted during the civil war period, populations have returned to similar levels to those observed in the 1980s and – in terms of biomass – are once again among the highest in the world. Forest elephants too have returned, having abandoned the site altogether during the civil war.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

The effective protection and management of the GTC is assured by the National Protected Area Authority of Sierra Leone, which has delegated the day-to-day management of the sites to the not-for-profit Gola Rainforest Conservation company (GRC-LG) and the Tiwai Island Administrative Committee. The four directors of the GRC-LG include the Government of Sierra Leone, the representatives of two national and international non-governmental organisations, and an elected representative of the Paramount Chiefs of the seven chiefdoms around GRNP. At both Gola and Tiwai, the close engagement of local communities in the management of the protected areas is one of the reasons for their survival into the 21st century in a part of the world where habitat fragmentation over the past two centuries has left very few large forest blocks intact.

Protection and management of GRNP is funded in part by carbon revenues from a Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) project that supports park management as well as the livelihoods of communities in the buffer zone. In addition, major donor agencies (notably the EU and USAID) continue to provide financial support for the conservation of the GTC, indicating strong interest on the part of the global conservation community. Monitoring of biodiversity and park management indicators is conducted regularly and will be extended in coming years to include TIWS. Baseline monitoring data on biodiversity and the state of the forest dating back to the 1980s is available for both sites.

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION OF OFFICIAL

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MAP(S) OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY, SHOWING BOUNDARIES AND BUFFER ZONE (IF PRESENT)

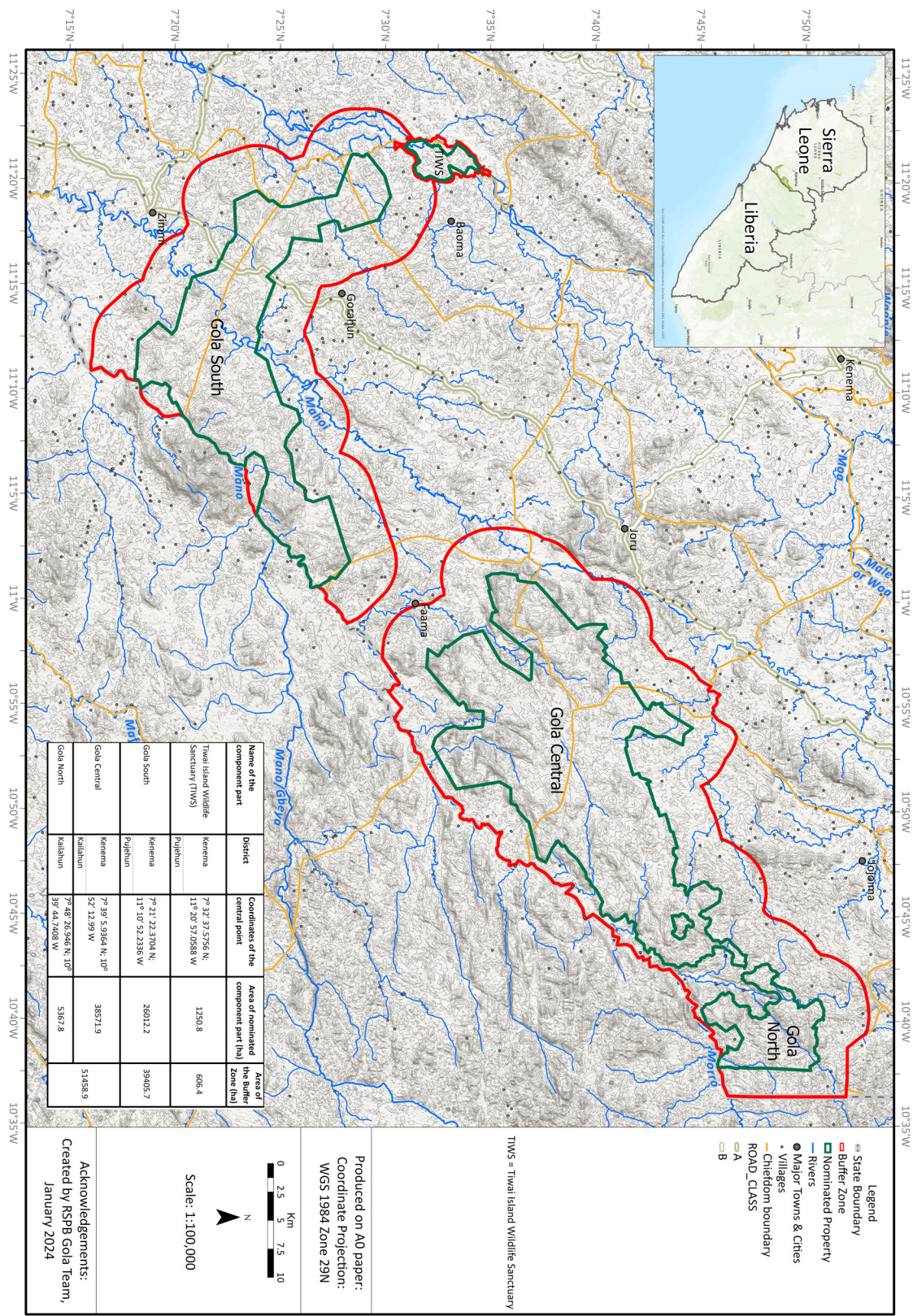


Figure 1.1: Gola-Tiwai Complex

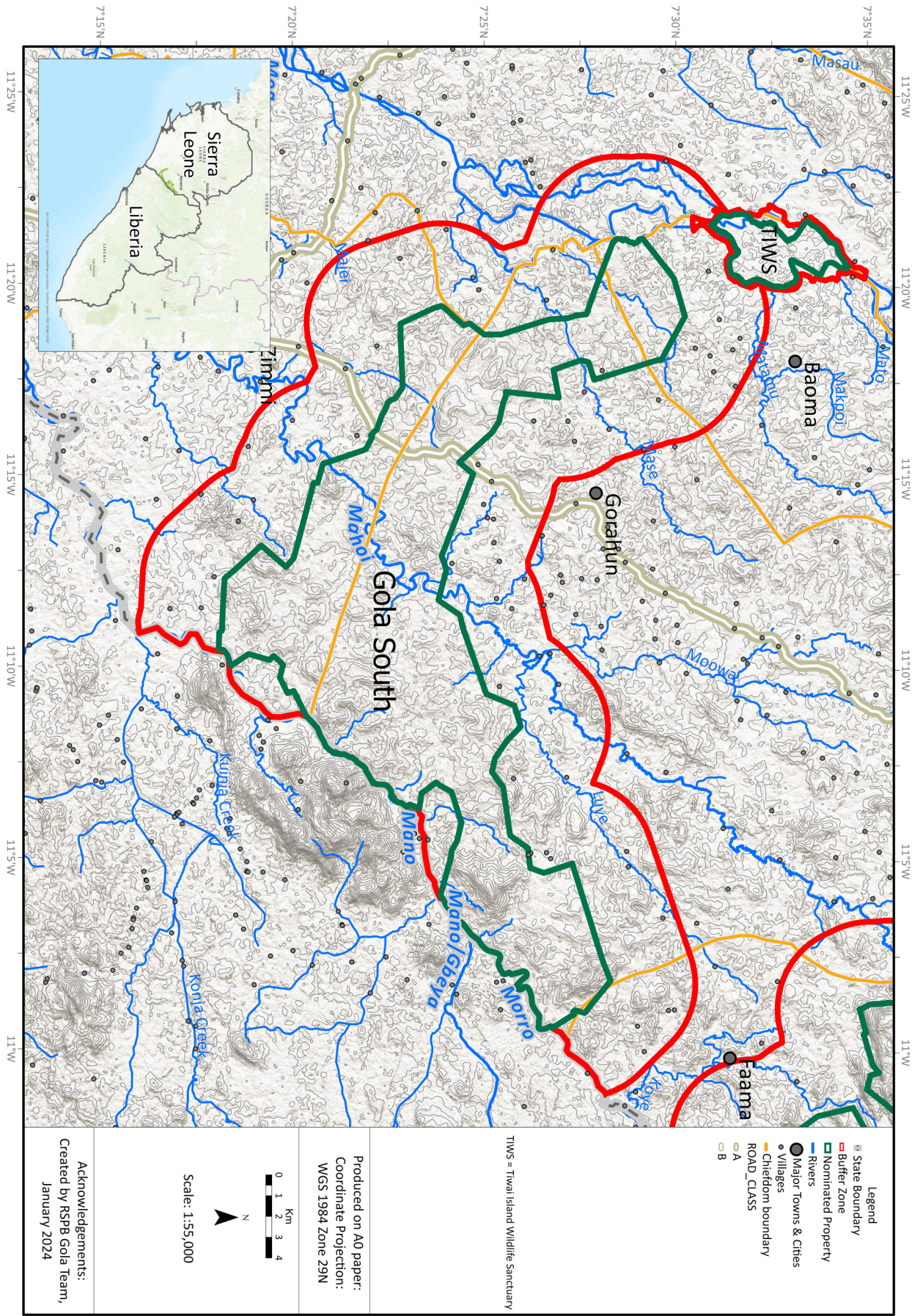


Figure 1.2: Gola South and Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary

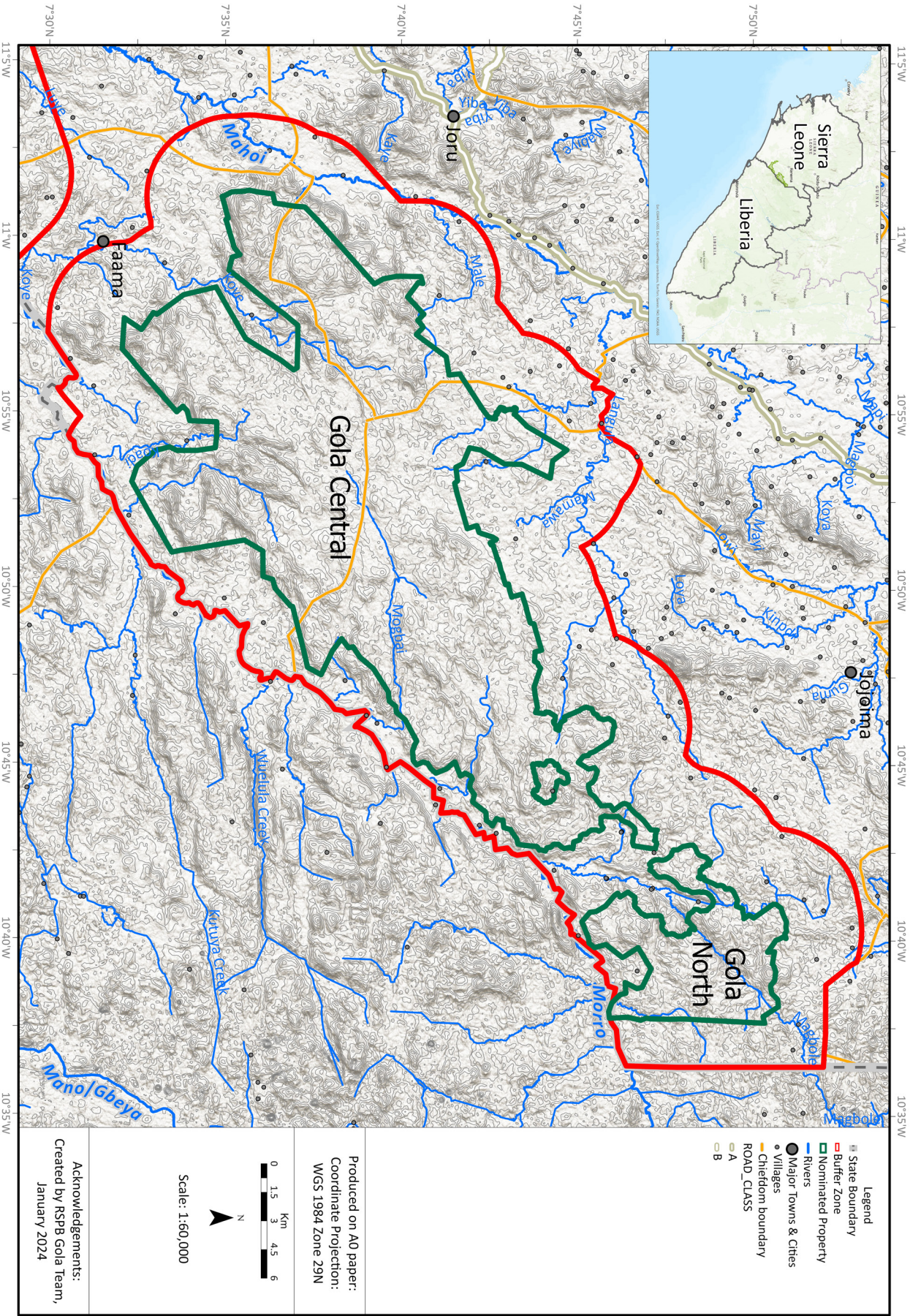


Figure 1.3: Gola North and Gola Central