

SUPPORT TO THE AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS UNIT REPORT (Business Development and Oversight Unit)

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Focus Area:	Agricultural Business Development

I. Project Summary

- Project title:
Support to the Agricultural Business Unit (ABU)
- Key partners
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS)
- Budget/contributions: (US\$ 385,000)
UNDP: US\$ 66,667
Irish: US\$ 318,333

II. Background/Context

Agriculture is the largest economic sector in Sierra Leone. Nearly two-thirds of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood and it is responsible for almost half of the country's GDP. The majority of poor people live in the rural areas and they largely depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Developing agriculture will therefore directly reduce hunger and poverty in rural areas.

Empirical evidence has also shown that agricultural growth is at least 2.5 times more effective in increasing available expenditure for the poorest third of the population than investment in other sectors in the economy. In addition, it is widely recognized that developing agriculture will empower women and create opportunities for their children.

Despite its potential, subsistence farming has been the norm in Sierra Leone, making small scale farmers vulnerable to the fluctuation of agricultural production caused by the changes of season and climate. Further, the recent price increase of agricultural products has affected the livelihood of urban poor, who largely depends on the local markets to purchase food. The support to the Agricultural Business Unit directly responds to these challenges and opportunities.

III. Project Design and Implementation

The objective of this project is to establish the seamless and sustainable value chain from food production onto marketing in order to reduce poverty in selected communities, and prevent the vicious circle of food insecurity in Sierra Leone.

Activities includes:-

- 1: Providing training on food crop and livestock production
- 2: Provision of financial and managerial training to develop entrepreneurial agro-business
- 3: Procurement of necessary equipment to increase processing and marketing capacity

Before the commodity price increase, already 26 % of the population did not meet the minimum daily calorie requirements. It is estimated that additional 150,000-200,000 (2-3% of the population) joined this group since the commodity price started to increase in mid 2007. By targeting the farmers' group, this project directly addresses the individual and collective food security and mitigates the impact of the food and economic crises in Sierra Leone. In terms of its contribution to climate change, there is a direct relationship between developing agriculture and sequestering carbon emissions, managing watersheds and preserving biodiversity.

IV. Project Results (please provide statistics wherever possible)

Direct beneficiaries of the project in 2008 were 120 farmers in the 5 villages who participated in Farmer Field School, of whom:

- 34% of participants were youth (20% male: 14% female)
- 72 % of participants were female (17% youth: 59% Adult)
- 60 % of participants were illiterate (6% male: 54% female)

The 120 farmers in 5 villages are now better equipped to exercise their potentials to make more productive agricultural products and earn additional income and get themselves out of poverty. Increased productivity helped farmers to move from subsistence to surplus production, providing the income to begin to save and invest in their own futures, and cope with the increasing commodity price. In addition, increased productivity has impact on the supply of agricultural products in Sierra Leone, thus on the local food price.

The support to the agriculture has been identified as the main growth sector in the PRSP (2009-2012). The project objective therefore converges with the national priority, and strong national ownership is fully ensured. In terms of capacity building, the project's main objective is to develop farmer group's capacity to increase the productivity and management effectiveness to earn a better living.

As noted earlier, the project's activities have a direct impact on the MDG Goal 1, 3 and 7.

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

Skills and techniques obtained through the training will have a longer term impact on the way these farmers organize themselves and undertake day to day farming activities. Even after the current fund runs out, the capacitated farmers will continue to be a driving force in their community to promote the farming as business and encourage other local farmers for sustainable agricultural production.

It is already being replicated in the nation-wide response to the food price increase. The similar method could also be adopted in other developing countries with a good potential for agricultural production.

VI. Photos:

Handing out agricultural tools to the graduates of the Farmer Field School (by UNDP Sierra Leone)



Vegetables produced by the graduates (by UNDP Sierra Leone)

