



## RURAL POOR STIMULUS FACILITY PROJECT

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# RESPONDING TO FOOD EMERGENCY

The Ministry of Agriculture with support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) remains proactive in meeting the food and nutritional needs of the Liberian people. In a collaborative effort, the ministry and IFAD reallocated funding from the Tree Crop Extension Project

(TCEP) to support the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility Project (RPSF) to support farmers in Nimba and Lofa Counties affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 affected the global movement and shipment of agricultural implements and inputs due to lockdowns and inactivity of shipping industries.



**Deputy Minister Robert Fagans presents Farming inputs to farmers in Kluka, Lofa County**



**Asst. Minister Ernest Clarke presents farming inputs to farmers in Nyao, Nimba County**

The launched of the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility Project was intended to ensure the continuous supply and availability of farming tools, seeds, fertilizers and other farming inputs for the farmers. The project had a duration of one year and direct support was provided to 6,700 farmers in the two counties. The project supported 1700 vegetable farmers, 2000 upland rice farmers, 2000 lowland rice farmers and 1000 cassava farmers. The RPSFP was launched in Kluka, Voinjama district by Deputy Agriculture Minister for Planning and Development Mr. Robert K. Fagans. He said “the emergency support to farmers is in support of the government’s program to stimulate agricultural development in the country. Agriculture is a major priority of this government’s Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD)”.

The project formally closed in December 2021 but notable progress was made in the communities in which the project operated. In a recent visit to the project locations in the two counties, farmers were very appreciative to the Ministry of Agriculture and IFAD for stimulating agricultural growth and development in their counties.

Madam Martha Belleh, 67, is Chairlady of the Manpia-Mahn Rural Women Cooperative. The group has a membership of 2,020 consisting of 83 men and 1,937 women from 27 different towns in

the district. The group has a well-managed bank account established in 2012. The group is involved in the production of rice, cassava, honey and animal husbandry. “We benefitted from seeds, fertilizers, hoe, diggers, shovels and other tools. We have divided ourselves onto various farming groups. Some people are doing vegetable, while others are doing rice and cassava. The farms belong to the group and after the harvest, we take the goods to Monrovia for marketing. There is no fixed price. The red-light women usually determined the price because the goods are perishable, we cannot afford to bring them back to our county. We are planting cabbage, okra, bitter ball, cassava and cucumber” she noted.

“We are sad that the project is ending at this time because we have not reach to the point we intend to reach. Our cooperative has been operating a rice mill for the last four years where we clean our rice and take it to the market for sale but this mill is not as functional as it use to be so we are appealing for support to replace the mini-rice mill”.



**Martha Belleh, Chairlady of Manpia-Mahn Rural Women Cooperative**



**Beans growing on beneficiary farm**



*Vegetable garden in Lofa*



*Harvesting cabbage in Kpain, Nimba County*





*Mayarmu Sayon*

Vegetable farmer in  
Lofa County



*Mawolo Kennedy and  
partner on farm in  
Zozoma*



***Nancy L. Flomo, Kpain Township Farmer***

Mr. Nancy L. Flomo is a young farmer residing in the township of Kpain in Nimba County. According to him, he grew up in Kpain as a young man and later pursue his education at the State-run University of Liberia where he earned a degree in Agriculture and Forestry. After graduation he decided to return to home and organize his people to work together to increase agriculture production and provide better livelihood for the people and this is how the Slazo Vegetable Group was established in 2017. The group had a membership of 55.

“We came together as a group and we jointly decided on the types of crops to plant so we decided to go into vegetable production and cassava. At the moment, we are planting pepper, cabbage, bitter ball and okra. We benefitted from the RPSFP. They supplied seeds, insecticide, watering cans and a water pump. Production has been very healthy but we were affected this season by the continuous sunshine creating a drought situation on our farm. As we received seeds and other inputs from the project, we distribute them to individual farmers to plant but we have a group farm that we all worked on every Thursday of the week”. He said the marketing of their product remains a major challenge.

“We usually carryout huge harvest of our crops because we do not have the market to sell. Our prices are usually compromised or negotiated downwards to our disadvantage because we do not have storage facilities to secure our crops. We want to appeal for storage facility because this will help us realize the fruit from our labor” he concluded.

The Ministry of Agriculture remains the pillar of the RPSFP from the very inception to the closure. In the Secleapea Mahn district, the District Agriculture Officer George Matiah has been involved from the identification of farmers to the input and seeds distribution. “The criteria for the selection of farmers for the project was based on their involvement in farming activities. It was a challenged to meet the target of recruiting 40% female and 60% male in some areas. We also endeavored to recruit people with challenging physical disabilities. In my district, we recruited 410 farmers. It is difficult to show the impact of the project at this point because impact is a process but for quick impact, I can safely say that the knowledge that has been transferred to the farmers are skills that they never knew before. They never knew how to use water pump, processing vegetable but today they



***George Matiah, District Agriculture Officer***

have that knowledge so that is commendable”.

He said they have stated training in the construction of solar dryers for the farmers and after the training, the farmers will be building their own solar dryers. “The solar dryers will help the farmers to dry their pepper, bitter balls, okra and other vegetables to store them and sell them when the market demand is high”.

He said as District Agriculture Officer, he try as much as possible to reach all his farmers by scheduling his daily activities while at the same time making the time to perform other duties in his office in Sanniquellie.

He said even though the project has ended, the farmers in the district have survived on vegetable farming for many years so he is optimistic that they will continue with their farming activities. The project has just boosted their production capacity he noted. “One farmer was able to stand in my presence and boast that he has \$350,000 Liberian Dollars in his personal bank account from his farming activities and this is very unprecedented” he concluded.

While in Wliah town, the area considered as the cabbage producing belt along the Gbarnga – Ganta highway, we met Mrs. Fatu Adolphus. Mrs. Adolphus belongs to a group with a membership of 60 persons and this group is sub-divided into three groups of 20 persons. She said the project has been helpful in changing their livelihood condition but



*Mrs. Fatu Adolphus, Vegetable farmer*

she complained that they sometimes feel cheated by the business women who come from Monrovia to buy because they have no other alternative. “Gardening is labor intensive so we ourselves want to enjoy the fruits of our labor”. She says gardening is their way of life so they will continue to make vegetable garden after the project but she appealed for more seeds, fertilizers, power tiller and hand pump to reduce the labor intensity.





**Mayarmu Sayon, Vegetable & Rice Farmer**

In Lofa County, 3350 farmers received support and Mayarmu Sayon is one of such farmer. In fact, Mayarmu can be described as our “unsung heroes” because of what she is doing in the Voinjama District. With the little support from the project, Mayarmu has increased her cultivation area from 1 ha to 5 ha. On a daily basis, she hires 15 men to work on her farm. “I am planting beans, corn, bitter ball, rice, yam and okra. The project help me with power tiller to cultivate my land and this is very helpful to me. Because of the lack of rain fall during the planting season, we are going through hardship to get water for the plants. I want to appeal for a water pump to help safe the plants from destruction”. According to Mayarmu, she pays daily wage of \$300 Liberia Dollars to each of the 15 men working on her farm. She said most of her customers come from Monrovia and neighboring Guinea to buy her vegetable after the harvest. “The price is usually negotiated, so I don’t actually feel cheated”, she concluded.

Mr. Mawolo Kennedy is a cassava farmer in Zozoma town, Voinjama District. He heads the “Tabotakeh” cooperative group with a membership of 32 consisting of 21 female and 11 male. The group is involved in cassava farming and processing. “I encountered one of the technicians from the project who took interest in my products.

When he visited my farm, he decided to enroll me into the project. In our group of 32, each member has their own farm but we have a group farm that we all worked on every Wednesday. We just completed harvesting before the coming of the project”.

According to Mawolo Kennedy, they expect a bigger yield this year because the agro-inputs provided to his group has help to increase their group and individual farm sizes. He said the project has provided one cassava processing mill and they are now producing high quality and huge quantity of farina for the market. This has also help to alleviate the hardship of piling cassava manually which resulted into numerous injuries in the past from the sharp knives they used. Before the cassava processing mill was provided, his wife use to make fufu and the excess cassava was sold on the market in Voinjama. “Today we are selling farina on the market for \$80.00 Liberian Dollars per kilo and we determined our own price on the market. We benefitted from 5 days training when the project delivered the cassava processing mill. We were taught on the usage and maintenance of the mill for operational safety of all our members who are designated to operate the machine”. He emphasize that even though the project has ended, they will continue to work together as a group and support each other.



**Mawolo Kennedy, Zozoma Cassava Processor**



Tamba Joseph is a 28 year old cassava farmer in the Kunduma Community in Foya district. He has been involved with cassava planting for the last five years. He is grateful to be recruited as part of the project. “I have received cassava cuttings, cutlass, watering can, hoe, tie wire and file. As a result of this support, I am making bigger farm today as compare to the past years. I have gone from 1 ha to 2 ha in the last eight months”. He said as individual farmer, he does not have a cassava processing mill so this is limiting the processing of the cassava or to add value to his cassava.

Mr. John Zaza is the District Agriculture Officer in Foya District. He played a key role in the identification and recruitment of the farmers who benefitted from the project. He has worked in the district for the last five years and is very familiar with the farmers. Working with the project team, they were able to identify 434 lowland rice

farmers, 54 cassava farmers and more than 400 vegetable farmers. “One of the criteria during the selection is the involvement in farming activities. The project was able to provide improved seeds varieties to the farmers. I have been able to monitor all the farms because of the motorbike provided to me through the TCEP-II project.”



*Mr. John Zaza, District Agriculture Officer Foya District*