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Priority areas for FAO Sierra Leone

Country Programming framework - 2017 to 2019

- ◆ Improved livelihoods and nutrition outcomes through improved productivity and diversification along the food system value chain using a responsible agribusiness development approach;
- ◆ Responsible governance and sustainable management of natural resources promoted;
- ◆ Increased resilience and social protection for vulnerable groups.

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Key issues for this period

- ◆ FAO Sierra Leone sets three priorities for the next three years;
- ◆ Supporting women farmers to increase production and value for better price;
- ◆ Promoting tree planting to protect the environment;
- ◆ Strengthening laboratory capacity to conduct efficient surveillance;
- ◆ Increasing the production and marketing of small ruminants;
- ◆ Strengthening collaboration for a successful implementation of the National Land Policy;
- ◆ Diversifying the income of mineral-rich communities;

FAO embarks on fishpond construction in Kono District

- ◆ Restoring the socio-economic activities of farmers severely hit by the Ebola disease outbreak;
- ◆ Solidifying collaboration on One Health approach

FAO Sierra Leone sets three priorities for the next three years

The Sierra Leone representation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has set out three priorities in its new Country Programming Framework (CPF) to guide its partnership and support with the Government of Sierra Leone and other development partners from 2017 to 2019.

The CPF was prepared following consultation and agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, the Ministry of Land, Country Planning and Environment, United Nations agencies, food security stakeholders, resource partners and Civil Society organizations.

Improved livelihoods and nutrition outcomes through improved productivity and diversification along the food system value chain using a responsible agribusiness development approach; Responsible governance and sustainable management of natural resources, and increased resilience and social protection for vulnerable groups constitutes the three priorities under this CPF

Aligning the CPF with government and global priorities

The CPF is specifically aligned to four government priority areas in the Agenda for Prosperity – Economic diversification to promote inclusive growth, managing natural resources, labour & employment, and social protection. The CPF priority area one is aligned to government pillar 1 and 5, CPF priority 2 is aligned to government pillar 2, and priority 3 is aligned to government pillar 6 while government pillar 8, Gender equality and women's empowerment, cuts across all the CPF priorities. → **Page 2**



Staff of the FAO Sierra Leone discussing the new priorities of the Representation

Within this CPF, FAO Sierra Leone will align its programmes and projects to the three regional priority areas that were identified and agreed upon during the 28th FAO's Regional Conference for Africa. The Regional Initiatives (RIs) include: renewed partnership for a unified approach to end hunger in Africa by 2025 under the Framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme; sustainable production intensification and value chain development, and resilience building in drylands of Africa.

Out of the 17 (seventeen) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), FAO Sierra Leone is directly working on Goal 1, End poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 2, End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Goal 6, Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; Goal 7, Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all; Goal 8, Decent work and economic growth; Goal 12, Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; Goal 13, Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; Goal 14, Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development; and Goal 15, Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

These pillars are critical for agricultural inclusive growth, sustainable use of natural resources and reduced vulnerability, building the foundations for agricultural transformation and equitable and sustainable economic growth.

Implementing and achieving the priorities

FAO will, among other things, employ rights-based perspective, and will use responsible inclusive and gender equitable agribusiness development approaches that aim to create better job opportunities and decent rural employment for women, men, and youth.

The Organization will strengthen the policy enabling environment, governance mechanisms and advocacy for the sustainable and equitable manage-

ment of land, fishery and forest sectors, and seek to bring together different interest groups and advocate for improved access to, and control over natural resources for vulnerable or marginalized groups, including women and youth.

Strengthening collaboration for a successful implementation of the National Land Policy

The Ministry of Lands, Country Planning and the Environment has expressed determination to closely work with parliamentarians to achieve the required legal reforms for the successful implementation of the National Land Policy.

The Ministry acknowledges that the existing laws and policies governing the land system in Sierra Leone are outdated and in need of reform.

This plan was revealed by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Barba Fortune during his keynote address on behalf of the Minister of Lands, Country Planning and the Environment, at a one day training session organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with a civil society network, Action for Large-scale Land Acquisition Transparency (ALLAT) and the Ministry. The session was held, among other things, to provide a better understanding for the parliamentarians on the National Land Policy and the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) principles.

The desire for a better land administration

“By 2027, we expect to have an integrated, secure, transparent, affordable and efficient administration in management of the land system that underpins the growth, social stability and sustainable resource development in Sierra Leone”, he wished. The Chairperson for the Committee of Lands in parliament, Honorable Rosaline Smith stated that the increased demand for land, either for large-scale investment, public goods, agriculture, fisheries and forests, or for private construction, has resulted in recurrent conflict. “This has necessitated reform for the land administration and tenure system in Sierra Leone”, she said.

She expressed hope that the new National Land Policy would bring about the review of current laws and the enactment of new ones in order to reflect the policy and the VGGT principles and standards. —————> **Page 4**



L-R Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Lands, Babar Fortune, Chairperson for the Committee of Lands in parliament, Honorable Rosaline Smith and the Assistant FAO Representative for Programme, Joseph Brima

In his presentation on the civil society position on the status of the country’s land sector reform, the Coordinator for ALLAT, Abdulai Bun Wai, described the land sector as confusing, and claimed that the confusion is as a result of too many players working independently of each other with no proper communication.

The need for a sustainable collaboration

The Assistant FAO Representative for Programme, Joseph Brima informed the gathering that Sierra Leone is recognized as a successful example for implementing the VGGT through a multi-actor and multi-sector approach.

For that reason, he encouraged the parliamentarians that, it is better for high-level discussions on tenure governance to continue; an institutional framework to be established to foster ownership and action; capacity development and awareness-raising activities be continued, and the strong political will and buy-in from the government be built upon.

Presentations and discussions were focused on the implementation of the VGGT in Sierra Leone; the National Land Policy implementation framework, and generally, on the issues that surround land, fisheries and forests in the country.

It is expected that the parliamentarians will be in a better position to debate in favour of land related bills in Parliament, and that their knowledge of the National Land Policy and VGGT will enable them to educate their constituents, participate in negotiations for land acquisition or leases and protect the natural resources in the various constituencies.

Restoring the socio-economic activities of farmers severely hit by the Ebola disease outbreak

On 7 November 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Sierra Leone free of Ebola Virus Disease. The regular disease monitoring update by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation revealed that the country recorded 3,589 confirmed deaths and 4,051 survivors during the outbreak.

The declaration of the end of the Ebola Disease outbreak brought relief to the country. However, the disease outbreak left several sectors of the country affected. Agriculture, which is the traditional revenue generation source of the country was not spared. The situation was more severe because of the measures – movement restriction, closure of periodic markets, and ban on public gathering – enforced to stop the spread of the virus.

These measures resulted to the disruption of farming activities, reduction in labor force and the depletion of revolving funds of individual farmers and groups.

Considering the adverse effects of the disease outbreak on the country, the Government of Sierra Leone launched the President’s Recovery Priorities, which represent a multi-stakeholder programme of investment, intended to drive sustainable socio-economic transformation in Sierra Leone. The Programme outlined seven key areas, including Social Protection and Private Sector Development, which intended, among other things, to increase agricultural production and productivity of targeted crops & livestock, and enhance commercial agriculture development.

In support of this, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), with funds from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), implemented the *Post Ebola Recovery, Agribusiness, Food Security, Women’s Empowerment Disaster Risk Reduction* project with an objective of restoring basic socio-economic services and lifting economic growth rate by motivating economic activities to increase food security and nutrition, and increase private sector role in agriculture sector and women’s empowerment.

The Gbortima Agribusiness Centre (ABC), which is located in Njala Mokonde, South of Sierra Leone is one of the 12 ABCs that were supported by the project to increase production and marketing of small ruminants. → Page 5

The membership of the Centre is made up of seven Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs) with 210 farmers. Before the disease outbreak, the membership was mainly engaged in rice, vegetable and backyard rabbit production. Their major sources of income were proceeds from the sale of their products and monthly contributions to their Village Savings and Loan Association (VLSA).

The Centre was very renowned for rice production and improved agricultural practices. It was a supplier to the national seed bank, Seed Multiplication Centre. In 2012, the membership was awarded tractor by the Government for being the largest NERICA Rice producer and technology farmers in the country.

However, the progress made by the Centre was disrupted by the Ebola Disease outbreak. According to the Chairman of the Gbortima ABC, Saffea Torto, the ABC was on the height of land preparation to embark on a seventy-acre rice production when the Ebola Disease break out.

“During the outbreak, the prices of foodstuff increased and some were not even accessible. So, we fed on our reserved seeds. Most of the seed loans that we gave out to farmers were not refunded as they complained of low yield because of the disruption in farming activities”, he lamented.

He added that, their savings have been exhausted because, the contributions to their VSLA stopped for nine months and most of the debtors did not repay the loans that they took from the ABC. According him,

they ventured into small ruminants production by buying shares with the remaining money in their account.

The project gave SSL 81,978,000, equivalent to USD11 000 as cash transfer to the management of the Gbortima ABC to increase the production and marketing of small ruminants, trained three community animal health workers, provided one solar fridge for preserving vaccines, bought spare parts and repaired wrecked machines that were under-used during the Ebola outbreak, trained machine operators and conducted blanket vaccination for the animals in the communities where the FBOs are located.

The Chairman revealed that the recovery support that they received from FAO greatly revived activities at the Centre and encouraged more members to come onboard.

He explained that the operation of the repaired machines have not only revived the income generation at the ABC, but also provided job to twenty youth. He added that, the small ruminant production has helped in diversifying their economy and the nutritional balance of the community.

Torto revealed that the blanket vaccination greatly helped to save the lives of animals in their community, as the vaccination period coincided with the outbreak of Newcastle Diseases in the community.

Strengthening laboratory capacity to conduct efficient surveillance



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The ECTAD Country Team Leader, Tesfai Tseggai explaining to the U. S. Ambassador, John Hoover, Minister of Agriculture Prof. Patrick Monty Jones and the FOA Representative, Nyabenyi Tipo about the expected outcome of the rehabilitation exercise

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) on Thursday, 8 June 2017 held a groundbreaking event for the refurbishment of the Teko Central Veterinary Laboratory.

The activity is part of FAO's efforts to strengthen laboratory capacity at country and district levels to conduct surveillance of priority zoonotic diseases under the project, *Supporting the Global Health Security Agenda to address zoonotic diseases and animal health* which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Addressing the audience at the groundbreaking event at the Teko ground in Makeni, Bombali District, the Minister of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security, Patrick Monty Jones stated that livestock development is special to attaining protein level and food sufficiency in Sierra Leone.

"We need a functional laboratory to carry out diagnoses on animals and possible zoonotic diseases", Jones stressed.

He told the audience that the essence of the laboratory will surely be noticed in a not too distant future, when it will be equipped and capacitated enough to detect and prevent potential threat to the country. "If this station was effective, maybe, we would have detected the emergence of the Ebola virus disease was coming", he lamented.

The FAO Representative in Sierra Leone, Nyabenyi Tipo said that the rehabilitation exercise is a clear demonstration of the good partnership between FAO, the Government of Sierra Leone and the United States of America.

"Successful operation of the Teko Laboratory will not only depend on the administrative structure and the capacity of its personnel, but on the sustained supply of samples from the field", she noted. Tipo explained that FAO follows a holistic approach

to developing the livestock sector, including support in the areas of policy, animal health, production and productivity. She informed the gathering that FAO has earmarked additional equipment and reagents that are essential for bringing the lab back to a fully functional central national laboratory offering services to livestock owners in Sierra Leone.

The United States Ambassador to Sierra Leone, John Hoover expressed satisfaction to being a partner in helping to rebuild the Sierra Leone's animal health sector, which can enable the country to stop future outbreaks before they become epidemics.

The Teko Central Veterinary Laboratory located at Makeni was established in the 1949 to provide animal health services to farmers in Sierra Leone, especially in the North. The laboratory became renowned in the areas of bacteriology, parasitological, haematology, histopathology, serology, production vaccine against Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia (CBPP) and research, which made it one of the major referral centres on animal health in West Africa.

Suddenly, work in the lab declined due to the destructions caused by the civil conflict, and consequently, the lack of constant funding, lack of maintenance of equipment, lack of reagents, consumables and staff attrition.

With the funding from USAID, FAO is undertaking a major renovations, including structural changes on the building, construction of perimeter fences, provision of water and electricity, adequate disposal of hazardous materials. FAO will equally equip the laboratory with essential consumables and simultaneously train staff in consultation with MAFFS. Once completed, the refurbished Teko laboratory will be the central point of contact for samples collected for diseases such as rabies, avian influenza and anthrax and other priority zoonotic diseases, and diseases of high economic impact.

Preparing communities to respond to disaster in Sierra Leone

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with the Office of National Security (ONS) has trained District Disaster Management Committees (DDMCs) on 'Strengthening preparedness and planning for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management in agriculture in Bo, Bonthe and Pujehun districts'.

The training was held from 15 to 19 May 2017 in the Njala University Campus in Mokonde, and it is part of FAO's flood response through the project, *Emergency agricultural support to flood-*

affected households in Bo, Bonthe and Pujehun districts. It aimed to initiate the planning process for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM), focusing on agriculture sector, with potential to applying the same methodology to other economic sectors.

The training brought together representatives of local councils, paramount chiefs, security sector, agriculture officials, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the media, who are mostly members of the disaster management committees in the three districts. —————> **Page 7**



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Stakeholders and members of the disaster management committees from Bo, Pujehun and Bonthe Districts discussing disaster response strategies for the three districts

Officially opening the session, the FAO Representative in Sierra Leone, Nyabenyi Tipu told participants that the Organization places premium on disaster response by including, “Increase the resilience of livelihoods from disasters” in its priority objectives. Tipu explained that FAO is helping countries govern risks and crises, watch to safeguard, prevent and mitigate risks, and support countries’ preparation and response. “The Organization has many other good economic practices in the field, and most of them are aligned with country priorities as shown in our Country Programming Framework”, she added. The Deputy Director, Disaster Risk Reduction in the Office of National Security, Nabieu Kamara acknowledged that the country has a minimal capacity to manage disaster due to low finance and logistics.

He therefore commended the training to be timely and very relevant for the communities. “The gains in disaster risk reduction are enormous and greater than its responses”, he said.

The Representative of the District Councils and Chairman of Bo District Council, Joseph Munda Bindi stated that disaster management responsibilities are been delegated to local councils, but they do not have the required resources to execute such

function. “Our experience from the September 2015 floods made us realize that both the central and local governments were not prepared enough to handle disaster”, he lamented.

Other representatives from the various sectors, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), acknowledged the relevance of the training.

As part of its recovery response, FAO in partnership with MAFFS, in the 2016 planting season distributed farming inputs and other starter kits to 1,781 households that were affected by the flash floods.

At the end of the training, participants were familiarized with the main Disaster Risk Reduction and Management terms and concepts; gained new knowledge and examples of institutional Disaster Risk Management system arrangements; conducted participatory vulnerability assessment based on their districts; assessed hazard impacts and vulnerability of agriculture sector in the three districts; defined status of preparedness, response, recovery and rehabilitation capacities of the District Disaster Management Committees in the districts; and initiated development of Disaster Risk Management Plans of Action for the three districts.

Promoting tree planting to protect the environment

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with the Forestry Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) on Monday, 5 June 2017 held tree planting events in four communities in Bo and Moyamba Districts.

The event marked the commemoration of World Environment Day, and is a key activity in the FAO led pilot implementation of the Sierra Leone Community Based Forestry (CBF) Concept. The CBF project aims to strengthen forest tenure rights in order to generate meaningful social, economic and environmental benefits from sustainable forest management. Furthermore, the implementation of the CBF Concept in Sierra Leone is expected to improve food security and strong community institutions which will go a long way in securing and increasing the forest resources and hence, enhancing the environmental services they provide.

The symbolic tree planting event took place at Gbaima Songa, in Bo District, southern Sierra Leone. It garnered the participation of central and local authorities, development partners, community based organizations and the inhabitants in the beneficiary communities. A total of four thousand seedlings of fast growing Nitrogen trees are to be planted in Gbaima Songa, in Bo district, and Bama, Pambela, and Domboma communities in the Dasse Chiefdom, Moyamba District.

The Chairman of Bo District Council, Joseph Munda Bindi described the event as a moment of reflection on the impacts of human activities towards the environment and the necessary actions that need to be taken to minimise the negative impacts. "Our daily activities are responsible for climate change. Therefore, we all have the responsibility to fix the problems that we have caused to the environment", he encouraged.

He recounted that there used to be varieties of animal species, including Elephant and Baboon in the Bo District, but most of them can no longer be found in the communities because of deforestation. He pledged to work with the communities to institute bye-laws that minimise deforestation.

The District Agriculture Officer of Bo, Rashid Ha-

run Kamara lamented that deforestation has contributed greatly to low agricultural yield in recent times. He advised the farmers to divert their activities to the inland valley swamps instead of upland farming.

The Natural Resource Management Officer of FAO, Christian Schulze informed the gathering that the CBF Concept originated from the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), and that the project aims at ensuring local control and management of forest resources.

Schulze recalled that, in one of the project's community mobilization meetings in the Dasse Chiefdom, the community people clearly outlined the many benefits, including food, water, medicine and furniture that they get from their forest, but also, acknowledged the degradation of the forests by fire outbreak, floods, storm and other disasters caused as a result of human actions.

He congratulated the communities for providing meaningful leadership and willingness in offering their tropical forests for inclusion in the CBF pilot.

The Paramount Chief of Gbo Chiefdom, Ruth Fawundu Songa IV expressed gratitude to FAO and MAFFS for taking the initiative to protect their community forests, and disclosed that it was an action that the chiefdom authorities have long been yearning for because of the adverse effects that deforestation has caused to them.

She expressed the willingness of her chiefdom to participate in the CBF pilot, and disclosed that they have set a committee to stop charcoal burning, which is a major problem for the chiefdom.

Several stakeholders, including the Environment Protection Agency, lamented on the climate impacts on the communities, and recommended for urgent actions to be taken to prevent the occurrence of severe disaster.

Sierra Leone was originally a forested country with over 60 percent of its land covered by closed high forest or moist evergreen and semi-deciduous types. However, less than 10 per cent of the original primary forest cover remains today, as a result of deforestation attributed to the shifting cultivation practiced by more than 75 percent of the country's population, growing populations and shortening fallows.

The tree planting event was simultaneously done in the four communities.

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Increasing the production and marketing of small ruminants



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The Chairlady of the Yormata group, Juliet Alie, opening the ranch for the goats to go out for grazing

Juliet Alie, 32, is very much optimistic, more than ever, in her venture in raising livestock because of the impressive amount of goats and vaccines that her group, Yormata has benefited from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

The Yormata group is attached to the Lei Agribusiness Centre (ABC) in Kono District, Eastern Sierra Leone. The group is made up of 28 females and two males, who had been mainly engaged in rice farming and petty trading.

According to Juliet, the group's main source of income was its savings and loan scheme, towards which every member contributed SLL 1000 per week, and the proceeds from the sales of their products. It was from their savings that they used to embark on joint investment and also gave out loans to members.

However, the Ebola Disease outbreak caused setback to their activities and greatly ruined their income. "In 2014, each member received SLL 400,000 loan from our savings for investment, but most of them have not paid anything as a result of the Ebola impacts", she disclosed. She attributed their loss to the measures – movement restriction, closure of periodic market and ban on public gathering – taken by government to stop the virus transmission.

According to her, the constant reminders for members to refund the loans had scared away most of them from participating in their weekly meetings and other activities of the group. "I am just too excited about their participation since we received these recovery support from FAO. We now have our weekly meetings with maximum attendance, and we even have interested persons who want to join our group", she stated. —————> **Page 10**

FAO in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), with funds from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), for the implementation of the Post Ebola Recovery, Agribusiness, Food Security, Women's Empowerment Disaster Risk Reduction gave SSL 81,978,000 as cash transfer to the management of 11 ABCs to increase the production and marketing of small ruminants.

The project also trained three community animal health workers, provided one solar fridge for preserving vaccines, bought spare parts and repaired wrecked machines that were under-used during the Ebola outbreak, trained three machine operators and conducted blanket vaccination for the animals in the communities where the FBOs are located.

The Lei Agribusiness Centre, to which Yormata group belongs, benefited 140 Goats as part of the Ebola recovery support provided by FAO. Juliet is

rearing 25 goats out of the lots, and some have started multiplying. She is very much impressed with the development.

She recounted that, she used to own 15 goats, but they remained seven because the others got sick and died. "The death of my goats pained me so much because they were my major source of income then", she lamented.

According to her, most of their livestock have died previously by unknown sickness because they do not have a qualified veterinarian in their community and that, they have not been vaccinating them. "The blanket vaccination exercise conducted by FAO and the supply of drugs at our centre have really assured us of the health of our livestock and have motivated us to own more", she stated.

Juliet, like many other beneficiaries, is hopeful that their livestock will multiply to earn them more income and improve their nutrition intake.

Diversifying the income of mineral-rich communities

FAO embarks on fishpond construction in Kono District



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The Deputy Director of Fisheries, Lahai Sesay demonstrating to the youth the appropriate way to level the bonds

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership with the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, is constructing 24 fishponds in selected communities in Kono District.

The fishponds are being constructed under the project, *Enabling Sustainable Livelihoods through Improved Natural Resource Governance and Economic Diversification in the Kono District, Sierra Leone* with support from the Sustainable Development Goal Fund. The project is implemented in the framework of a UN multi-agency Area-Based Development (ABD) approach in the Kono district, eastern Sierra Leone.

The project focuses on two broad, interlinked intervention areas that aim to enhance sustainable, inclusive governance of natural resources as well as diversification of sustainable livelihood opportunities in one of the most mineral-rich, but least developed areas in the country. It is designed with a strong focus on achieving tangible results by building on and complementing previous or ongoing activities of UNDP, FAO, and other partners.

With the technical guidance from staff of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, the construction exercise is championed by women and youth, in the various communities, that are the targeted beneficiary groups.

According to Hawa Ghandi, a member of the Bassama Group in Samie Village, Lei Chiefdom, they are very much excited about the fishpond construction because it will have direct benefit to their community, especially the women, who are normally strained to access fresh fish to cook for their families.

“Our major source of fish is from traders who buy from the capital, Freetown, and most of the good ones are being sold in our district headquarter, Koidu. By the

time they reach to us, their prices would have increased and some even gone bad”, she lamented.

Samie Village is 23 kilometres away from Koidu Town and costs SLL20 000, which is about USD2.6, for the villagers to reach there if they needed fresh fish and other imported goods. Ghandi stated that the fare can feed a family of five for two days, and that, it is even difficult for some families to earn that.

The Chairman of Motoryorma Group in Kangama Gorama Village, Komba Saffa also expressed delight over the fishpond construction and very much hopeful that it will be beneficial to his group and community.

The Motoryorma Group is made up of 16 males and 14 females who are mainly engaged in farming and community development activities. Like many other groups in the district, this is their first venture into fish farming.

Saffa disclosed that the fishpond project has revived the group and encouraged communal labour, as most members had gone apart or slowed down their participation. “We are very much eager to have this fishpond because it will reduce the burden of access to fish and even create employment for some of our members who will be manning it”, he expressed hope.

The promotion of Aquaculture is given a high priority by the Government of Sierra Leone for food security, job creation and income generation as well as improved nutrition. The Agenda for Prosperity – the country’s development policy document – expresses the need and importance of providing affordable fish to all Sierra Leoneans. Fish farming can be a viable alternative, not only for increasing fish availability, but also potentially making important contributions to household economy and employment.

Solidifying collaboration on One Health approach

Partners and stakeholders in the agriculture, health and wildlife sectors on 29th June 2017 discussed and validated a document with a title, *A Handbook for Basic Animal Healthcare in Sierra Leone*.

The handbook is a training manual for Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) with added One Health (OH) focus, and it contains infor-

mation and tested techniques aimed at providing both training and reference materials for trainers and the CAHWs. The OH focus is reinforced by the inclusion of modules that address supplementary zoonotic diseases for application during sessions when CHW and Game Guards will be trained together with the CAHW.

The validation workshop took place in Sussex Village, in the Western Rural district. —> **Page 12**

It brought together key partners and stakeholders, mainly from the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), the National Protected Areas Authority (NPAA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other partners in the One Health network. The meeting was a joint collaboration among FAO, Post-Ebola Resilience Team (PERT) and MAFFS in Sierra Leone.

In his opening statement, the Acting Deputy Director of Animal Health and acting CVO in the Livestock Division of MAFFS, Amadu Jalloh told participants that the meeting was expected to be an interactive experience between the presenters and the attendees. “This manual is building upon the previous edition, now with a One Health and CAHW focus”, he stated.

He explained that the modules regarding Conflict Resolution, Wildlife, trigger events, Bio-Safety and Bio-Security, Animal Health Surveillance, and the One Health Module are new modules added to the manual. Other modules were modified or updated to become more self-sustaining.

The Country Team Leader for the Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD), Tesfai Tseggai, informed the gathering that the Emerging Pandemic Threats phase 2 (EPT-2) program, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) addresses the continued threat and drivers of emerging and re-emerging diseases under the overall programmatic support of the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), by implementing inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral collaboration at country and at zone levels. “This is the first project of its kind in West Africa, where Human Health, and Wild Life personnel, participate in CAHW training after the launch of the National OH Platform on 23 June, 2017”, Tseggai said.

The Deputy Chief Medical Officer in the Ministry of Health and Sanitation Sarian Kamara discussed the importance of collaboration between the Community Health Workers and Community Animal Health Workers because so many diseases that affect humans originate from animals. She stressed

that it is crucial to address issues that prevent future epidemics by strengthening animal health care at a community level.

The PERT Coordinator, Niccolo Meriggi supported the importance of all stakeholders being on the same page, especially when launching a new program. “The times for a one handed approach are gone, now it is time for collaboration and cohesion”, he added.

The revised manual contains topical issues on animal health management including, the roles and responsibilities of CAHWs in animal production, health of farm animals, biosafety, record keeping and reporting, and One Health.

The key comments and input received from the participants during the validation session will be included in the final draft of the CAHWs manual.

Serving Country and People- “My work in Sierra Leone”



David Mwesigwa

Recently, one of the key members of the FAO Sierra Leone team, David Mwesigwa departed the Representation for another assignment (within FAO) in Lesotho. He spent seven years working in Sierra Leone in different capacities, including Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator, Head of Programme Implementation, Deputy FAO Representative and Chairman of the UN Deputy Representative's Group.

This piece provides an account on his mission in Sierra Leone and working for FAO. It is presented to you in a Question and Answer format.

Keifa Jaward: How can you describe your stay in Sierra Leone?

David Mwesigwa: My stay in Sierra Leone from August 2009 to May 2017 was a very productive and rewarding experience. The seven years that I spent in Sierra Leone were marked by hard work, progress and moving the Agriculture sector in the country forward. During that period, FAO supported the government to spearhead major initiatives that placed Agriculture agenda in the limelight. As part of the management of FAO, I was happy to be associated with this growth in partnership with International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Bank, European Union (EU), African Development Bank (ADB) and other development partners. Together, we supported the government's effort in spearheading the Smallholder Commercialization Programme (SCP) that later became the government's flagship programme under the Agenda for Change and later the Agenda for Prosperity, which are the country's poverty reduction strategies.

K. J: When you first got the appointment to work in Sierra Leone, what came to your mind? What was your perception about the country and the assignment that you were tasked with?

D. M: I came to Sierra Leone in August 2009 when I was appointed by FAO headquarter to work as the Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator of the European Funded Food Facility (EUFF) Project. The programme was responding to the high food prices that affected most growing economies in 2008. I knew this was an important assignment to the country. I was introduced to the Hon. Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, his two deputies and the Director General within the first two days of my arrival in the country. I came with a determination to serve and make a difference. Although I was a professional staff of FAO, I was asked to sit and work in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, at Youyi building. I was later fully integrated into the Senior Management structure in the Ministry.

I had read that Sierra Leone's Agriculture contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had been on average about 51.8 percent since 2003, when the country first started showing signs of recovery after 10 years of destructive civil war. With the intervention of the World Bank and other development partners under the Integrated Development Project (IADP), agriculture's contribution jumped from 47.9 percent in 2003 to 54.5 percent in 2009 before declining slightly to 52.8 percent in 2011. This indicated to me that agriculture was central to the growth of the overall economy. My assignment was key to this overall growth.

With the EU Food Facility, we were able to start the National Programme of the Smallholder Commercialization Programme (SCP). I was privileged to have served in the capacity of coordinator to one of the projects that funded this important Programme with over 75 percent of the budget coming from the EUFF project.

K. J: So, what changed your perception, or what was the reality on the ground after spending some time in the country?

D. M: I came to Sierra Leone with managed expectations. I was coming from another assignment in Sudan – from the Darfur region to be specific. I had experienced life in a post war area including my own country, Uganda that had experienced prolonged civil wars. I knew the country was recovering from the ravages of war. It was not a shock to get electricity for few hours of the day in Freetown. Water, essential commodities, medical and good education facilities were in short supply. The government departments were weak and lacked mobility and were characterized

by varied capacities both human and institutional. This was the very essence why FAO programme was there to provide support wherever necessary. So I came with all these expectations in mind.

I was expecting to find pockets of insecurity and thuggery in the city. Later I came to realize that Sierra Leone was a very peaceful country and its people were adorable. If you are a peace maker you will live a peaceful life in the country.

K. J: Your task as an Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator was crucial in the reconstruction of Sierra Leone, especially the agricultural sector, after the civil war; how did you go about it, and who and what made you succeed in it?

D. M: My job as the Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator was indeed central in the reconstruction of the agriculture sector in the country. Although the funding provided to the country came under the Emergency window, the government made a strategic decision to utilize these funds totaling to over USD\$28 million for recovery and rehabilitation of the key infrastructure that could boost the smallholder agriculture commercialization drive.

The funding was channeled through an investment plan that FAO investment center facilitated to put together. This plan translated into the Smallholder Commercialization Programme. Under this programme, the government in agreement with the donors decided to construct and equip a total of 193 Agricultural Business Centres (ABCs) across the country. These centres were designed to be managed and owned by community Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs) that had been formed over the past years.

I was given this enormous task of presiding over this important facility project under the preview of the FAO Representative, the Minister of Agriculture and the Head of the Smallholder Commercialization. As part of a team, we were successful in working with the different arms of government, district, community and household level structures to ensure proper delivery of the project. Good discipline, hard work and good coordination was key in implementing that programme. The project started in August 2009 and ended in July 2011.

The programme was also reported on a quarterly basis to the Presidential Task Force on Agriculture that was chaired by his Excellency the President of the republic of Sierra Leone Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma at the Statehouse.

K. J: Kindly outline your key successes in Sierra Leone and their rewards.

D. M: The key successes that I contributed to during my stay in the country include the following:

- ◆ Leadership in the construction and equipping of 193 Agricultural Business Centers in all 149 chiefdoms in the country;
- ◆ Supporting the establishment and strengthening of over 390 Farmer Based Organizations in the country;
- ◆ Coordinating the European Food Facility Programme that led to the successful design and formulation of the USD50 million Global Agriculture Food Security Programme;
- ◆ Establishment of the Food Security Working Group in 2015 that was coordinated by FAO and brought together over 25 partners in the sectors of Agriculture, Nutrition, Food Security and Natural Resources;
- ◆ Support to grass root farmer institutions to increase production, productivity and agribusinesses village, community and chiefdom levels. That led to the recognition of my efforts by one of the Chiefdoms in Bombali District that unanimously agreed to bestow upon me the honorary title of Pa Kombra Bai Kokora II of Leibeseigahun Chiefdom, Bombali District;
- ◆ Head of Programme Implementation of FAO Sierra Leone from 2013-2017.

K. J: How did your success add value to FAO, and by extension, positioning it as a leading UN agency in the fight against hunger and poverty?

D. M: FAO's active role in the formulation and implementation of the Smallholder Commercialization Programme was recognized by the government, the development partners and by the benefiting communities themselves. Through this programme, FAO was able to demonstrate that smallholder farmers once supported can come together to produce enough food for their families and even have surplus to sell. The Programme enabled us to experiment on several initiatives. These included the farmer Field Schools, the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of tenure for Land, Forests and Fisheries (VGGT), the Mainstreaming of Food and Nutrition Security into the Smallholder Commercialization Programme, and support to the agribusiness sector and others. All these were building blocks on the foundation that we laid under the EU Food Facility and sister projects that FAO implemented between 2009 and 2013.

As a result FAO was made the Co-Chair of the Agriculture Advisory Group (AAG) – a body that was responsible for providing direction and guidance to the Agriculture sector in the country.

K. J: You continued to stay in Sierra Leone – switched to another assignment – after the first one, what motivated you to stay?

D. M: As a UN staff, you are an international civil servant and should be ready for deployment at any time as long as your employer and the host government is happy with your performance. I came into the country as an out posted staff from FAO Headquarters in Rome under the Emergency Division. After serving for 2 years as the Emergency and Rehabilitation Coordinator, FAO decided to decentralize all posts of Emergency team and I was reassigned to the Sierra Leone Country Office to lead the Programme Implementation Unit. I also acted as the Deputy Representative for Sierra Leone on very many occasions.

This new role expanded my scope and horizon and motivated me to stay and serve the country and its people. I came into this position with great energy after working inside the Ministry of Agriculture for two years and interacting with most stakeholders and understanding the challenges and opportunities that were available to the sector. I served in this position till May 2017 when I was transferred to Southern Africa in Lesotho.

K. J: What were the key challenges in your assignment, and how did you overcome them?

D. M: Every country of assignment presents to you both challenges and opportunities. The main challenge in Sierra Leone was the ability to raise sufficient resources to tackle the problems faced by the Agriculture and rural development sector. The donor base was very narrow. There were very few donors in the country.

Other challenges were operational in nature. Accessibility to beneficiaries and project sites was a problem. Programme monitoring was limited. Capacity of government to provide timely and quality support to farmers was limited. Much of the work force was aged and about to retire. There was a challenge of training and retraining to sustain good extension services in the country. Private sector is still at its infancy.

The other big challenge was the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease in May 2014 that devastated all the sectors of the economy including Agriculture. The EVD reversed a lot of gains that had been made over the years in agriculture. I stayed the entire time in Sierra Leone fighting the virus disease.

K. J: How best can you remember Sierra Leone?

D. M: I will always remember Sierra Leone for its good people and places. My job was field based and it took me to all the 149 chiefdoms in the country. I was privileged to meet very good and motivating people, including my own people from the Loko tribe in Leibeseigahun Chiefdom, Bombali district. I worked with government staff and trained farmers and field staff. We held endless meetings with MAFFS colleagues and shared great moments together. I will remember the women vegetable growers in Kabala; the honey producers of Musaia led by Pastor Kamara; the cattle and goat keepers of Lei and Nimikoro chiefdoms in Kono and vegetable growers in the Western Rural of Freetown. Most importantly, I left the country better than I found it in many aspects.

I worked with a very dedicated team at FAO. They will always be part of me. We will grow together along our professional career path. I enjoyed great support from the FAO Representative and staff and my work was very interesting and enjoyable. I am proud to have been associated with the UN Country team where I served as the Chair of the UN Deputy Representatives for two years.

As a crowned Paramount Chief, I carry my title everywhere I go. I will always have Sierra Leone at the center of my heart. All these memories will remain with me for years to come in addition to my personal memories of sharing great moments with close families and friends that I came to associate with during our 7 years in the country with my family.

K. J: What needs to be done for Sierra Leone to achieve food security by 2025 as targeted by the Africa Union?

D. M: Sierra Leone needs to increase its level of investment in Sustainable Agriculture and utilize the natural resource base that is so abundant to its people. The country has big perennial rivers that can offer irrigation opportunities. Almost over 80 percent of its arable land still not utilized. The current policy on investing in small, medium and large scale farming is the right direction. The investment policy needs to be implemented carefully to ensure that all its people contribute to and benefit from these resources. It is possible for Sierra Leone to attain food self-sufficiency and be a net exporter of rice and other agricultural commodities by 2025.

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