

USAID'S FOOD AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR LIBERIA (FED)

BI-WEEKLY REPORT: AUGUST 1 – 15



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COVER PHOTO: The Bayleglay Women’s Group, Goat farmers in Nimba, pictured in front of their newly completed goat shelter.

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Summary

During the first two weeks in August the FED program saw the beginnings of promising harvests in both the PUA and cassava value chains. Throughout both upland and lowland rice sites work has intensified with canal, plots and bund construction ongoing and widespread seed transplanting taking place throughout FED's six counties of operation, Margibi, Montserrado, Bong, Lofa, Nimba and Grand Bassa.

6 Goat feeders have been distributed this month to lead farmer sites throughout FED's counties of operation and 178 goats were treated and dewormed this period. 18 participants were trained in the advantages of mineral salt lick usage at their sites.

At 30 PUA sites layouts have been taking place and planting of corn, peanuts and beans is underway.

Work on preparations for the input supply pilot voucher program is ongoing and is scheduled to roll out next month across Nimba and Lofa.

On August 2, FED was informed by United States African Development Agency (USADF) that they are awarding grants to four beneficiaries in cassava processing due to FED's assistance. Estimated grant amounts are \$50K USD each (\$200K USD Total). This was a culmination of activities organized by FED to support the development of cassava processors to supply the HANDS project with gari.

Between August 1-15, FED along with Grand Bassa Community College (GBCC) and USAID's Advancing Youth Project (AYP) 12 GBCC students learnt crucial leadership skills.

August 1-15 Activities

Component One: Increased Agriculture Productivity

Input Supply

- Meetings were held during the week of August 12 among six farmer groups in Bong and Nimba counties for the preparation of the list of voucher recipient to be provided to four agro-dealers. The pilot voucher program activity is scheduled to take place during the months of August and September.
- The voucher designs have been finalized and extension materials are being developed with graphic designer. A local printer is being identified to print vouchers.
- Training was carried out at Buchanan and Compound 3 locations for six private sector agriculture equipment manufacturers. Two motorized cassava mills and three manual rice threshers were fabricated with the use of local materials and will be demonstrated at public markets.

Rice

- Three communities in Nimba (Payee-kolakeh, Boweh-lolewon and Dumpa) signed the partnership agreement/MOU in the rice processing center activity which outlines the specific roles and responsibility of each party (FED and Farming groups) in the setting up of rice mills and community warehouses/stores.

Bong County

Lowland Rice

- FED is working with 26 lowland rice groups. All of these groups have cleared and laid out their fields with inner canal, plots and bund construction ongoing. Most of these groups are currently transplanting rice seedlings.
- The 11 UDP groups have completed planting all UDP demonstration plots and their work on adoption fields is ongoing.
- The Kukatonon lowland rice group has increased their membership from 71 to 157 members after the transplanting of rice in the UDP site. They are presently expanding their rice production to adjoining fields.

Upland Rice

- All 16 upland rice groups have cleared their fields and are planting the improved variety. New methodologies are being applied such as seed drilling and planting.

Grand Bassa County

- The plowing and leveling of swamps plots, and transplanting are ongoing on all 12 lowland sites.

Lofa County

- Weeding activities were carried out on 11 hectares for 10 upland sites already transplanted with rice seedlings.
- In rice lowland areas there has been 6.13 hectares transplanted, and land preparation work ongoing on 22 sites.

Nimba

- At NCCC and in Payee rice planted in UDP plots is experiencing slow growth; suggesting a case of worm attack. This problem will be addressed by temporary field draining and application of Deltamethrin pesticide. Weeding and clearing of paddy bunds at all UDP sites in Nimba is ongoing.
- Progress on fish ponds construction at NCCC has been slow; a meeting has been scheduled with the IP (ADRA) and the NCCC to identify the cause of the delay.
- B and C rice sites are currently carrying out a mixture of land preparation, nursery construction, bunds construction and transplanting.

Cassava

Bong

- The cassava activities have focused on the 17 cassava groups. All of the groups have cleared their fields and currently planting cassava cuttings on ridges and mounds as appropriate.

Grand Bassa

- The following communities received cassava cuttings and were trained on the improved technology practices of handling and planting method. These communities include: Compound # 2, 6 bundles on 0.17 ha; Jeremiah Gardee 27 bundles on 0.75 ha; Jeremiah Gardee Town, 33 bundles on 1.0 ha

- 18 demonstration sites in Districts 1,3, and 4 have prepared land areas and are awaiting new cuttings.
- Four farmer groups: Wheagblankon, Moncray Town, Neorpeh Town, and Quepue Town are ready for harvest and FED are providing assistance in market linkages.

Lofa

- There has been 1.9 ha of cassava planted on 20 cassava sites in Lofa between August 1-15. Field preparation continues for expanded planting of field areas.

Nimba

- All 23 cassava demo sites have been planted. Replacement of dead cuttings and weeding is ongoing.
- Five out of seven cassava demonstration groups from year one are currently harvesting their crop. The M&E and ED teams are working with the groups to gather yield and sales record.

Peri-urban Vegetables

- 4 ICA's were subcontracted August 12 to carry out seedling production training to 24 seedling producers in FED's six counties. Identification of seedling producers will commence August 26, 2013 with coordination from county managers. Selection criteria are as follows: Female participation, evidence of producing vegetables for sale to vegetable farmers, located close to a community market, willingness to keep records.

Montserrado

- Extension officer William Dent visited the Johnsonville Women's Group project called the Women's empowerment for livelihood and sustainability that was established in 2011 with a membership of 38 women cultivating vegetables and cassava on 4 hectares of land. They have expressed interest of being part of the FED's program and an initial assessment is ongoing with the group for selection
- Weeding was carried out in 2 plots of corn and cowpeas, layout was completed at an additional 2 plots and 55Kgs of hot pepper were harvested and sold for 4,400LD at the Kpomai vegetable site in Montserrado.
- Weeding of three plots of cowpeas took place at the MOWEDE vegetable site.

Margibi

- Two nurseries (1x10m) were constructed at the Kakata demonstration site and vegetable seeds sown into nurseries for production. Green field located in compound #2 carried out field maintenance of 4 plots (10m²) of corn while Kuwaki vegetable farmers' laid out four plots of peanuts and harvested 7Kgs of fresh pepper.

Bong

- The six vegetable farmers' groups have completed clearing and layout of sites. Currently, Corn, Peanuts and Beans are being planted by these groups:
 - 'Development and Progressive Action' site: 0.2 hectares have been cleared and laid out. This group is now planting the beans, corns and peanuts.
 - Melekie Vegetable Farmers Association has cleared 0.09 hectares and 5 plots (10m×10m) laid out.
 - Welekermah- has cleared and laid out 0.06 hectares. Planted 6 plots using 10m×10m.

- Iyallakermana has cleared and laid out 0.3 hectares. Currently, they are planting beans, corns and peanuts.
- Gbaota –Yalafama has cleared and laid out 0.02 hectares. Planting of seeds is ongoing.

Grand Bassa

- Between August 1-15 the PUA value chain has made significant progress with all eight group production sites active in the planting of peanuts and maize.
- Own Your Own vegetable producer group have reported sales of 280 kg of maize for revenues of \$4,365LD (\$55.00 USD)

Lofa

- There has been 2.53 hectares of rainy season crops planted among seven PUA sites in Lofa. Additional field work is being carried out for the planting of peanuts and peppers.

Nimba

- All eight PUA groups in Nimba are actively planting peanuts, cowpeas and maize for rainy season cultivation. Surplus produce will be sold in local markets.

Goats

Bong

- August 1-15 saw fence construction for the maternity shelter, and training for mineral lick blocks for 18 participants.
- A two-week training was held in Gbargna, Bong for 36 community animal health workers (32 men and 4 women) for subjects in animal health management. The workshop was sponsored by Land O' Lakes, and facilitated by experts from Makerere University in Uganda.

Grand Bassa

- Fencing of two shelters commenced in two communities: Blaybahn and Neorpeh Town
- Follow-up on the construction of goat shelters in seven of the project communities is ongoing (Goinjay, Duwein, Judges Village, Dewor, and Gorgbahn).
- Between August 1-15 six wooden feeders were distributed to three goat communities (Gorgbahn, Blaybahn and Neorpeh Towns)

Lofa

- Completed the cutting of fencing materials for the goat shelter in Kpandu
- Goat feeders distributed to Betijama goat site
- The construction of shelter is almost complete at Satia Goat Site

Nimba

- A total of 178 goats has been dewormed and treated.

COMPONENT TWO: STIMULATE PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

- On August 1, the ED vegetable team held a focus group discussion with 10 members (3 female, 7 male) representing the Monrovia Vegetable Seller's Association to determine major constraints facing traders when dealing with fresh vegetable marketing. Three major constraints were lack of storage, consistency and availability of produce at certain times of the year, and ad-hoc communication/distribution channels between farmers and first and second buyers. The information will be used to develop improved linkages between the farmers and buyers for the produce that is most demanded on the market.
- On August 2, the ED cassava team was informed by United States African Development Agency (USADF) that they are awarding grants to four beneficiaries in cassava processing due to FED's assistance. This was a culmination of activities organized by FED to support the development of cassava processors to supply the HANDS project with gari. In February, FED concluded a Pilot Youth Business Plan training, mentorship, and competition with 28 youth representing 11 business ideas from local universities. The winners of the competition wrote business plans for producing and processing cassava, though none had any prior experience working in the industry. In April, FED supported 12 prospective processors (entrepreneurs and farming groups) and the 3 winners of the youth business plan competition to visit the HANDS cassava processing center in Zwedru, Gran Gedeh County in order to expose them to a functioning cassava processing factory. The youth then partnered with the cassava processors, who were lacking in knowledge of business plan writing, to help them write grant proposals for funding. Four farming groups were subsequently awarded grants. Estimated grant amounts are \$50K USD each (\$200K USD Total).
- The cassava market study launched on August 12 with Agri-Impact. Enumerators began gathering data on August 15. The final report is expected on October 15.
- On August 14, the ED vegetable team in conjunction with the Women and Business Officer and Linda McGovern held a discussion group with the leadership and vegetable sellers of the Go-Buy-Chop women at Red Light market. The purpose of the discussion was to once again determine the major constraints faced by the women when trading in fresh vegetables. Major constraints expressed were the lack of reliability of farmers (farmers take loans from the women to produce, but then do not sell their produce to the lender as agreed), and lack of storage. The information will be used to develop improved linkages between the farmers and buyers for the produce that is most demanded on the market.
- Pilot Rice Business Cluster update – An engineer was selected for hire on August 13 to help develop the design and bill of quantities for the construction of the warehouse. A request for quotes has been distributed to procure rice mills and other post-harvest technology. An expression of interest has been distributed to find entrepreneurs to participate in the program. Quotes and applications are due between August 19 and 22. As of August 15, three farming groups in Nimba, (Payee-kolakeh, Boweh-lolewon and Doumpa) have signed MOU's for the program.
- As a result of consultations held between the ED team and the farming group From God to Man (Doumpa, Nimba County), the group purchased 125 (25 kg) bags of imported rice. On August 12, they

opened a mini store in their warehouse to sell rice during the hunger season to their community as a means of generating more income to get involved in the purchase of local paddy rice for processing and selling. The group is selling the imported rice as an alternative since they do not have local rice for now, until the harvest season at which time, they are hoping that they will have their rice mill operational which will enable them to process their local produce rice and package in 25kg quantities to begin to sell it in the community.

- The Koeteman Cassava Farmer's Association of Zoeluapa, Zorgeh District, Nimba County, reported sales of 1,923 kg of cassava for a total of LD \$6,855.00 (\$87.66 USD) between July 3 and August 7. The group consists of 38 persons working with FED on a demonstration plot of less than one hectare of cassava. Harvesting and selling will continue through August. The group is making plans to sell cassava cuttings as well.
- In Bong County, the ED Assistant held consultations with the Palala Rural Women to prepare them for accessing finance to expand their operations. Currently, this group engages in lowland rice production, rice processing, and vegetable production. They are looking to expand to cow pea production. The ED Assistant is helping them draft a short business plan for the loan they are seeking. A follow up meeting will be held August 16. The group could be eligible to receive a loan from the MFI, LEAD, that has been working with farming groups in Bong and Nimba.

Component Three: Build Human Capacity

- Participated in a training for 12 Grand Bassa Community College students on leadership skills organized by FED's Youth Coordinator. FED is partnering with GBCC and USAID's Advancing Youth Project (AYP) on this activity.
- Participated in an assessment meeting with a potential partner for component three work in Bong County "Liberia Opportunity Industrialization Center" (LOIC).
- Coordinated along with Training assistant and STTA, a TOT on Farming as a Business for 9 of FED's IQC holders.
- A Roll-out strategy for Farming as a Business for Farmers' pilot in Montserrado, Margibi, and Grand Bassa Counties activity was drafted;
- Between August 1-15 FED supported the clearing of a site (one hectare) at Booker Washington Institute. Twenty three laborers were recruited to rehabilitate a former swamp rice field. Urea Deep Placement technology will be demonstrated in this site. Also, a FED-provided power tiller will cultivate the land demonstrating the ease of preparing the paddy for transplanting.
- Work began for the renovations at Nimba County Community College for the agriculture department office and the Career Internship Center.
- FED supported the third annual ECOWAS-TVET Curriculum development workshop (5 – 15 August) held at the Tubman Vocational High School in Sinkor, Monrovia. Dr. Dennis Eaton was a guest speaker at the opening ceremony.

Cross Cutting Initiatives

Gender

- On August 7 STTA Gender Consultant Marcia Odell, FED's Senior Program Specialist and FED's Women in Business Officer attended a meeting at the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD) with Parleh Harris the Director for Women's Empowerment and Lawodo Nimly the Ministry of Gender and

Development Consultant. Future collaboration is planned to make connections between MoGD County Coordinators and FED at the county level.

Youth

- On August 12, 12 junior students from Grand Bassa County Community College began their assignments as Intern Extension officers with USAID Advancing Youth Project's (AYP) schools in Grand Bassa County for a specific FED/AYP collaboration. These interns are responsible for coaching youth clubs that are participating in the FED supported Back-school-garden competition for five months.

Nutrition

- Conducted a meeting with the Ministry of Health-National Health Promotion Division and discussed the production and airing of radio drama and spots messages on dietary diversity and women's nutrition. FED is developing a strategy to roll out dramas and jingles containing nutrition messages.

Communications

- During this period a coaching and mentoring plan was finalized to follow up with the 14 radio stations with which FED has MOUs. Radio Specialists will be travelling to Lofa, Nimba, Bong and Grand Bassa to follow up with community radio journalists on the farm radio training that took place for 28 journalists in June/July.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- M&E participated in discussions with the USAID/World Bank UDP Impact Evaluation team and will accompany them to the field next week.
- The cassava farmer survey continues with the field work ending this week.
- M&E participated in a USAID sponsored Webinar to discuss the draft Guide for clarifying 4 key Indicators for use in FTF project activities.
- M&E Monrovia and County staff travel to monitor and assist the group conducting the cassava farmer survey. M&E staff are also engaged in the harvest of the Year 1 cassava crop in the counties.

August 16-31 Planned Activities

Component Two

- FED will be supporting an additional five cassava processing entrepreneurs in developing their businesses through a cost-sharing initiative. The project is expected to launch in September.
- Two business service providers have been selected to deliver Village Savings and Loan training to 26 USAID FED farming groups. Offers are due August 16. It is now expected that training will begin in September.
- In conjunction with Component Three, Farming as a Business training for approximately 30 farming groups in Montserrado, Margibi, and Grand Bassa will begin roll out in September utilizing the recently hired business service providers.
- For the Rice Business Cluster project, final MOUs will be signed with the remaining farming groups, four entrepreneurs will be selected to participate in the program, and an engineer will begin work for the design of the warehouse / stores at the end of August.
- In September, USADF will hold the official grant signing ceremonies with the FED cassava groups.

Component Three

- Complete the training plan for all MDF trainings in connection to quality assurance, monitoring and post training evaluation effort.
- Pilot FaaB pilot training to be rolled out for 775 individuals from 31 farming groups and lead farmers from Margibi, Grand Bassa and Montserrado, all beneficiaries of the FED project.
- Engage Community colleges and vocational schools on the roll out strategy for the career centers
- Conduct training visits to all of FED's field offices to train staff on training documentation and roll out processes, also to gather information for capacity assessment of FED's partners.
- Complete the planting of Rice on the one-hectare swamp at BWI.

Youth

- From August 19-30, there will be a 14 day Training of Trainer (TOT) workshop in Kakata, Margibi County for 30 National Agriculture Volunteers.
- August 21-22 there will be a two day Business Development TOT workshop for 60 AYP's youth club members in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County. These youth clubs are participating in the Back-to-school garden competition.

Gender

- On August 30 there will be a gender awareness presentation as part of UNICEF and FED's Technical Agriculture ToT.