



INSIDE DE FARM

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security

National Programme Coordination Unit Monthly Newsletter

Rehabilitation and Community-based Poverty Reduction Programme (RCPRP)

Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme (RFCIP)

CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECT REACHES ITS MIDTERM

February, 2015

Integrating Adaptation to Climate Change into Agricultural Production and Food Security (IACCAPFS), a complementary project of the IFAD funded RCPRP in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security has undergone its Midterm review (MTR).

The overall purpose of the MTR was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities in relation to its stated objectives. The specific objectives of the exercise were as follow:

First, to strengthen project management and monitoring functions. Second, to ensure effectiveness for the achievement of the LDCF objective. Third, to analyse any specific technical constraints and provide practical solutions to improve project performance.

The MTR also assessed **project relevance, effectiveness of its intervention approach** (Stakeholders engagement, targeting, coherence etc.) and the sustainability of its interventions. Another key purpose of the MTR was to assess the implementation of the last supervision mission recommendations (3-18 February, 2014), document implementation adjustments in response to the comments included in the supervision report while providing **clear recommendations** with **clearly defined** roles and responsibility for follow up on specific technical recommendations.

The mission began with a progress review meetings with the National Project Coordination Unit (NPCU) and key project international and national partners, and was followed by visits to the project's operational area/districts from 19 to 28 January 2015.

The mission composed of one team leader and 4 technical experts. The team leader, Sierra Leone's leading Scientist Dr. Dunstan Spencer was responsible for the overall coordination of inputs, the overall assessment of the project and the compilation of the final report.

The mission members visited two target districts representing the two agro-ecological zones in which the project works (Koinadugu in the savannah woodlands and Kenema in the forest zone); met the District Councils and District Project Coordination Units (DPCUs) and visited villages to see sites of Inland Valley Swamps (IVS), Earth Dams and other climate change initiatives. The Mission also interacted with beneficiaries, service providers and the public and private-sector partners. The impressions/feedback gathered during the field visits were discussed for validation at NPCU level prior to the finalization of the aide-memoire, with a working draft provided to MAFFS and MOFED for their input. The final Wrap-up was held with Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security and the Ministry of Finance & Economic Development, thus forming the highpoint.



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Mohamed Kallon posing besides his bike

Case Study 1:- Mohamed Kallon

Mr. Mohamed Kallon dropped from School as a result of losing his parents during the rebel war. To even afford his daily bread was difficult not talking about School fees and materials. Mohamed who is now thirty one (31) years of age joined the Bike Riders Association (BRA) during the early part of 2004, when the trade was just introduced into their chiefdom. He became a famous rider for a well known business man in their chiefdom (Dama). He continued to ride motor bikes for others and in return kept days earning after giving the owner Le. 30,000.00. It was not too long when the FSA concept was launched in Kpandebu Town through the RFCIP where in Kallon made it a point of duty to register and bought shares. Kallon increased the purchase of shares on a weekly basis and later received his first loan, which is equivalent to USD 100. The entire amount was spent to repair an old motorbike he got from his previous boss and started using it from which proceeds he used to make repayment of his first loan to the FSA without default. This he continued until he bought a new motor bike with his 4th cycle loan which is equivalent to USD 1,000. As collateral, the life card and receipt of the motor bike was kept by the FSA until when he made his last installment within six month. Kallon immediately linked their union at chiefdom level to that of the district BRA at Kenema Town. His purpose was to have them serve as umbrella organization in term of guarantee and collateral for some of his colleagues in the trade. Over twenty youths have been linked to the FSA through the relationship created by Mohamed Kallon and have bought their individual motor bikes through the same procedures. With his good leadership and business relationship, he has become a prominent second hand bike seller and at the same time riding. He has three commercial motor cycle and has provided employment for two of his colleague youths. He has bought a plot of land, and now preparing for construction as his business progress. Mr. Kallon got marriage last year and now serving as loan coordinator helping in the collection of loans from most of his colleagues at the Okada Park where he is serving as a contact person.



Traders are beneficiaries of the FSAs

Case Study 2 :-Alimamy Kargbo

Alimamy Kargbo is a very good and proactive business man based in Gorahun village, Tunkia chiefdom in the Kenema District. He is one of the highest shareholders of the Tunkia Financial Services Association. Since its establishment in 2011. Alimamy Kargbo is a farmer and business man who is totally involved in producing, buying and selling cocoa having one (1) plantation site at Gorahun which is enough to take care of his immediate family. His expansion of business, agriculture to be specific was hindered by lack of capital. He became a shareholder of the TUNKIA Financial Services Association when he bought five shares at USD 1 per share in August 2011. Some of his colleague farmers were doing well as a result of the loans offered to them by the Financial Services Association, this made Alimamy Kargbo increased his number of shares to 27 having total share capital of USD 27, which qualified him for the first cycle loan. He adequately and timely completed his first cycle loans within five months, and increased his shares to 100 and took a loan of USD 400. He rehabilitated his cocoa plantation site after receiving the second cycle loan, and his second cycle loan was also timely and adequately paid. He then increased his shares to 600 as a result of bumper harvest of his cocoa plantation, which was also capitalized by the second cycle loans. He took a third cycle loan of USD1,000, and built a shop to spread his risk. He rehabilitated a warehouse to store his produce when he started experiencing a flourishing business which was 100% finance by the TUNKIA FINANCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION. He took a fourth cycle loan of USD2,000 again and increased his scale of business by buying more stocks. "My cocoa plantation is one of the most yielding in this Chiefdom, I started with just a single site plantation but with the help of the TUNKIA FINANCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION I can now boast of having big site of plantation and a very big shop and a warehouse" he said. "The rehabilitation and extension of my cocoa plantations which was capitalized by the TUNKIA FINANCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION has enabled me to send my son to University, and I am very glad that the FSA is my partner, and also a partner to all the indigenes of this Chiefdom" he enthused. "We have also been thought how to do savings to secure our monies, as most of us have been keeping our monies from selling our produce in the house which we think is not secure, the TUNKIA FINANCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION has been our partner. We have always been wishing to have such opportunity in these our villages, and we shall continue to be shareholders of the TUNKIA FINANCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION" he concluded.



Cross Section of Extension Workers at the Evaluation exercise in Kenema

The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, Dr. Joseph Sam Sesay has honoured the Extension Officer of Bonthe District. He conferred this accolade to the officer during a session held at the Lambayama/Chinese farm hall in the eastern district headquarter town of Kenema.

Sierra Leonean agriculture is characterized by food production involving mostly smallholder farming for subsistence. The greatest challenge throughout history is for the country to feed its ever-increasing population on a permanent basis. To this end, several initiatives and interventions have been pursued over the years. This began with swamp clearance, partial development, and cultivation during the colonial era. The period between independence and the present day saw a large number of programmes by the government of Sierra Leone and its partners. These included:

- (i) Freedom from Hunger (FFH) campaign (late 1960s to early 1970s),
- (ii) Integrated agricultural development projects (IADPs) of the early 1970s and 1980s,
- (iii) Crash Rice Programme (late 1980s)
- (iv) Agricultural Sector Support Project (ASSP) (late 1980s to late 1990s),
- (v) Agricultural Master Plan (early 1990s),
- (vi) Vision 2025 (developed early 2000),
- (vii) Medium Term Agricultural Strategic Plan (MTASP) and Agricultural Development Strategy (2003–7),
- (viii) Agricultural Sector Review – FAO/MAFFS (2003),
- (ix) Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) (2001–3),
- (x) Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP1)

(2005–7),

(xi) The National Food and Nutrition Policy (2004–8),

(xii) Agenda for Change (PRSP II) (2008–10).

(xiii) Farm for Business/SCP (at current)

The theme running through all these policies, strategies, and plans/programmes is to achieve food self-sufficiency and food security, with emphasis on rice, the staple food. This is due to Sierra Leone's comparative advantage for domestic production of rice as against import to meet its needs. In this regard, the Extension sub-sector offers the greatest hope and best opportunity, and its promotion is vital.

On the day two of the planning meeting at Lambayama (Chinese Farm) Kenema, various speakers were given the opportunity to talk on the integrity, roles and responsibility of extension officers in the Ministry of Agriculture. Addressing the 13 Extension officers from the 13 Agriculture districts of Sierra Leone, Jack Jalloh, a senior officer in the Ministry lamented on the under performance of most of the extension officers in the country, noting that one of the major objective for the Minister's visit was to identify the problems that might have been derailing the course of implementation of the ministry programs and to put strategies in place to get them effectively on course.

Access to Finance

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) is one of the several development partners for whom access to finance is high on the agenda and it gives as one of the headline results of its private sector approach: help more than 50 million people to access savings, credit and insurance (DFID 2011). Access to finance is synonymous with what is now popularly referred to as financial inclusion and has gained particular prominence in recent years and includes but is not limited to microfinance alone. Full financial inclusion as described by Accion's Centre for financial inclusion is (see Rhyme 2010):

a state in which all people have access to a full suite of quality financial services, provided at affordable prices in a convenient manner and with dignity for the clients. Services are delivered by a range of providers, most of them private and reach everyone who can use them, including the disabled, poor, rural and other excluded populations. Financial inclusion is achieved when consumers can access and sustainably use financial services that are affordable and appropriate to their needs.

Demand for Financial Services in Sierra Leone

Access to finance cannot be meaningfully discussed without some indication of the level of demand for financial services. There have been very few definitive studies (such as a Finscope survey) on access to finance in Sierra Leone. However, in early 2008 an EU BizClim-funded study offered the first insights

into microfinance demand in urban and rural areas of Sierra Leone. The findings from that study have been compared to available national population data in order to quantify demand for various financial products and services. It should also be noted that this study centred more on micro financial services as opposed to overall, general access. However, given that the overwhelming majority of access to finance issues involves those at the 'bottom of the pyramid', the study remains very relevant as a measurement of overall access to finance. The findings, as reported in Miamidian (2008) for funding agency Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) are given below.

Size of Desire for Loans

According to the study, desire for microcredit is substantial and on the rise throughout the country. While only 10% of households currently have bank loans outstanding, 58% are interested in obtaining a loan within the next year. This need or desire, was double the previous year. While

Sierra Leone remains a primarily rural country, with 63% of the population residing in rural households, much of the country's economic activity can be found in the capital city of Freetown, and other urban centres. The desire for loans reflects this reality.

Size of Need for Saving

The mix market found that the median MFI in Africa mobilizes more savings compared to its loan portfolio than MFIs in any other region. Microfinance institutions have learned over the years that reaching poorer, rural areas often requires savings-led initiatives, since savings are generally in higher demand than loans. As such, the finding that savings needs in Sierra Leone are relatively low is surprising. Even more unusual is that saving needs are higher in the urbanized Western Area (30% of households) compared to the rural areas (between 6 and 13%). Miamidian finds this unusual because 'MFIs have learned over the years that reaching poorer, rural areas often requires savings-led initiatives, since savings are generally in higher demand than loans.' She believes this is likely reflective of the high levels of poverty in the country, as well as the loss of assets suffered by many families during the war. The study found that poverty was clearly a factor in ability or willingness to save. While these numbers are very low, it should be noted that the survey found that one-third of Sierra Leonean households would be interested in opening a bank account.

Use of Payment Services and Transaction Accounts

According to the study, 31% of Sierra Leonean households use money transfer services; making it the most frequently used financial service. Usage is similar in urban and rural areas, though gender distinctions vary dramatically, as the large majority of those willing to use formal money transfer services are women (86%). It is interesting to note that only 8% of households transferring funds use formal channels including banks (3%) and Western Union (5%). Informal channels are much more frequently used in rural areas. Extrapolating the available data, it appears that large amounts of money are sent within the country each year, primarily through informal channels. Using the conservative assumption that all money sent is within Sierra Leone, a total of US\$246.9 million in funds is moved through formal and informal channels around the country on an annual basis.

Types of Microfinance and Other Access to Finance Providers in Sierra Leone

According to the MITAF II project document, in 2003 it was estimated that, of the 90,000 to 160,000 potential microfinance clients in Sierra Leone, fewer than 15,000 had access to financial services. In 2009 the number of clients of the microfinance sector increased from 13,000 in 2004 to 123,000. This strongly suggests that microfinance in Sierra Leone has done tremendously well over the past five years or so. Although Sierra Leone's financial sector is dominated by the banking and microfinance sectors, and from the perspective of 'access to finance/financial services' these two are the most important mobile money payment providers that are fast catching up. The discussion also include NASSIT, which as mentioned earlier, is a social security fund but arguably has the largest number of savers, most of whom would qualify as micro or small. Providers of microfinance in Sierra Leone are varied, and can be grouped as follows below.

- **Formal (regulated/supervised by the central bank or other regulatory body):**

- Commercial banks;
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- **Community banks.**

- **Semi-formal (legally and formally registered but not by the Central Bank):**

- Microfinance institutions;
 - Cooperatives;
 - Financial Services Associations;
 - Village savings and loans associations;

- Government and donor funded projects/programmes.

- **Informal:**

- savings clubs such as Osusu groups;
 - other informal groups such as business associations, farmers and other sectoral groupings.

Legal and Regulatory Environment in Access to Finance in Sierra Leone

Microfinance Policy

The government of Sierra Leone published the National Microfinance Policy in December 2010. The policy framework is based largely on the National Recovery Strategy in the short term and the Agenda for Change, in the medium term

'both of which emphasize the crucial *role of microfinance in our endeavour to reduce poverty*'. It expands the financial infrastructure of the country to meet the financial requirements of the micro, small and medium enterprises

(MSMEs). Further, the policy advocates for viable and sustainable microfinance institutions that can be adequately integrated into the mainstream of the national financial system and provide the stimulus for growth and development.

The policy emphasizes the importance of credit, saving, payments and micro insurance as the criti-

cal aspects of the microfinance sector which must be promoted.

The Vision of the Microfinance Policy

The microfinance policy is guided by a vision of achieving widespread access to microfinance throughout the country, made possible by institutions operating on commercial principles. A wide range of institutions are expected to be involved in the provision of services, including community banks, non-bank financial institutions, and NGOs. Microfinance will be integrated with the mainstream financial system with a flexibility that ensures that their special features are not compromised.

Policy Targets

The main targets of the policy are:

- to provide financial services to the majority of the poor but economically active population thereby enhancing their productivity and reducing poverty;
- to provide sustainable livelihoods to unemployed citizens, especially women and youth, by improving their access to financial services. The BSL will have primary responsibility for implementation of the policy and will apply the same fundamental principles it applies to other parts of the financial system in regulation and supervision to the operations of deposit taking MFIs. However, it will modify regulations in order to accommodate the special characteristics of MFIs.

There are roles for all the different types of microfinance stakeholders both in the public (including central government, BSL and NaCSA) and private sectors (from commercial banks to community-based organizations) as well as the meso-level microfinance apex organization SLAMFI. Implementation may be some way off as first the BSL needs its microfinance capacity adequately strengthened and the apex SLAMFI needs a complete overhaul and rejuvenation.

Legislation Proposed by the Policy

The microfinance policy includes certain specifics for the framework for regulation and supervision of the microfinance sector. They include the following.

- Only MFIs that are licensed to accept deposits from the public or from other financial institutions will be subject to regulation and supervision.
- For organizations such as cooperative societies where many of the risks that regulation protects against do not arise central bank supervision will not be applied. However, where such organizations grow beyond a certain size, supervision will be applied.
- Minimum capital or other entry requirements for the successful operation of microfinance institutions may differ from those required for full service commercial institutions.
- Existing financial institutions will be encouraged to offer microfinance services.

IFAD Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment



Investing in Rural People



There is evidence that economies with greater gender equality have higher economic growth and offer a better quality of life for all. Gender equality includes equal access to opportunities and to benefits.

IFAD is firmly committed to empowering women and to working with families, communities and countries to build gender equality at every level. In 2012 the organization's Executive Board approved the IFAD Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The policy is central to the overall goal of IFAD's Strategic Framework 2011-2015 – enabling poor rural women and men to improve their food security and nutrition, raise their incomes and strengthen their resilience.

Strengthening gender equality has multiple benefits. Greater gender equality:

- makes a major contribution to improving household food and nutrition security and reducing child malnutrition
- contributes to inclusive economic growth that lifts people out of poverty

- increases household income and assets, and benefits everyone in the household
- develops the skills base of rural communities
- helps protect the natural environment
- increases the impact, relevance and effectiveness of development interventions
- makes development projects more sustainable.

Women are major players in the agriculture sector, in household food and nutrition security, and in natural resource management.

- In the agriculture sector, they work along the value chain from the field to the market – in their own enterprises, in family activities and as employees.
- They also engage in a mix of non-farm and income-generating activities, as part of their strategy to diversify their livelihoods and household nutrition options.
- Poor rural women are both stewards and users of natural resources. They

possess knowledge that is distinct from that of men and complementary. They also depend on natural resources for water and fuelwood, and use natural products for economic and medicinal purposes.

Despite their multiple roles, women have significantly less access than men to the assets and services that would enable them to increase their productivity and reduce their workload. In addition, they are under-represented on natural resource management committees and in user groups.

Gender gaps can also disadvantage men. In some parts of the world, the gender gaps are reversed, with boys having less access to schooling than girls. Similarly, rapid socio-economic changes in certain areas might expose men more than women to the risk of job loss or underemployment.

Thus, changes in both men's and women's roles and relations are a prerequisite for gender equality. The challenge is to ensure equal opportunities for women and men to engage in development activities, in terms of



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IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialized United Nations agency dedicated to eradicating poverty and hunger in rural areas of developing countries.

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opportunity to participate as well as to share in the benefits. Nevertheless, inequalities are largely experienced by women and selective interventions are needed to level the playing field for them.

IFAD's gender equality policy directly addresses these key issues and draws on over 30 years' experience.

Three strategic objectives

The gender policy has three strategic objectives:

- Promote economic empowerment to enable rural women and men to participate in and benefit from profitable economic activities.
- Enable women and men to have equal voice and influence in rural institutions and organizations.
- Achieve a more equitable balance in workloads and in the sharing of economic and social benefits between women and men.

Five action areas

The strategic objectives will be implemented through five action areas. Action areas 1 to 3 relate to IFAD's core activities, while action areas 4 and 5 relate to IFAD institutional structures and resources for policy delivery. The outputs for each action area are as follows:

- Action area 1: Gender equality and women's empowerment issues are addressed systematically in IFAD-supported country programmes and projects.
- Action area 2: IFAD's contributions to advocacy, collaboration and partnerships, and knowledge management on gender equality are improved.
- Action area 3: The capacity of partners to address gender issues in agriculture and rural development is strengthened.
- Action area 4: Corporate approaches and procedures that support gender and diversity balance are developed.
- Action area 5: IFAD's corporate systems for human and financial resources, and monitoring and accountability fully support gender equality and women's empowerment.

How will IFAD deliver the policy?

IFAD will:

- Address gender equality as a cross-cutting theme, including in its policies.
- Take into account differences that exist among women – age, nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic category – and the dynamics in gender roles and relations.
- Use gender analysis to understand the different roles, interests and priorities of women and men, and tailor policies, programmes and projects accordingly.
- Implement, when necessary, women-focused activities to address existing imbalances in economic and career opportunities, decision-making and workloads.
- During project identification and design, focus efforts on providing young rural women with economic and social development opportunities.
- Apply continuous learning and analysis based on field experiences to develop more effective approaches and to generate information for evidence-based advocacy and policy dialogue.

Find out more about what this means in practice and read the full policy at www.ifad.org/operations/policy/policydocs.htm

On the same webpage, see also *IFAD Targeting Policy: Reaching the rural poor*, and *IFAD Engagement with indigenous peoples*.

The Rice Story Written on the Winds

In Africa, a domestic strain developed from wild rice. Its cultivation began about 3,500 years ago. A few centuries before Christ, Asian rice reached Africa from Java with Javanese sailors sailing in outrigger canoes. Settling on the eastern shores of Africa in Madagascar they started growing rice. Later sailors from the eastern coast of south India also came here via Oman, using the same route as the seamen from Malaya, Sri Lanka, and Arab traders. In this way rice travelled along with the monsoon winds. It is rightly said that the arrival of Asian cereals in Africa was written by the winds.

Rice is not mentioned in the Bible, nor in the early records of Egypt. It was first cultivated in the Nile Valley around AD 639. When Alexander returned from India he brought rice with him. His teacher Aristotle was the first European scientist to mention rice, which he called *oryzon*.

Rice reached Europe through several routes. Between the first and eleventh centuries, Arab traders took rice from India to Iran and then Egypt. From here it reached Spain and Sicily. The Moors of Spain carried it to Portugal in the eighth century. Later it was introduced to Italy and from there reached Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Romania in 1468.

Russia first encountered rice in the reign of Peter I who imported it from Iran in the early 1700's. Some rices also reached Russia from East Asia, and were grown in the coastal areas of the Caspian Sea.

America received its first rice around 1609. It was grown in Virginia. Then in 1685 a ship from Madagascar docked at Charleston in southern Carolina, for repairs. When leaving, the ship's captain left behind a bag of rice. Thus began the cultivation of rice in Carolina.

President Thomas Jefferson was so impressed with the rice grown in the valley of the Po river in Italy, that he smuggled a pocketful back to America. This was in 1784 when he was ambassador to the court of the French King Louis XIV.

In 1522, a shipful of wheat arrived in Mexico. Mixed with the wheat were grains of rice. Interestingly this became a boon for Mexico.

Rituals Connected with Rice

In Crowley in Louisiana (California), an International Rice Festival Queen is selected every year. In Korea every family keeps one vessel filled with rice grains. This is considered sacred and is not touched. In India no ritual or function is complete without the use of *akshata*—grains of rice coloured with *roli* or *haldi*—specially the wedding ceremony. And when the marriage ceremony is over, women shower rice on the departing couple, in silent blessing that like rice they stay together, united and unbroken, facing all calamities.

This custom borrowed from India is found all over the world, in all religions. Everywhere, new-weds are showered with rice in the hope that they flourish like this sturdy grain. Thus has rice become an inseparable part of life.

INSIDE A RICE PLANT

Wouldn't it be fun if there were a magic potion which made you tiny in an instant, and then back to your normal size, whenever you wanted! Imagine you were so small that you could only be seen through a microscope and you entered a rice plant through one of the millions of minute holes on its leaf. It would feel like being in an air-pipe for the air pressure would suck you down.

In the rice plant air-pipes go from the leaf to the stem and roots. It is because of them that paddy roots can "breathe" even when submerged. This is why rice is the only cereal which can grow in deep water.

We slowly crept into the roots of a rice plant. On the root were tiny root-hair which drew water from the soil. Along with the soil-water several minerals were absorbed by the plant. This is how rice gets its nourishment and why a tonne of rice uses up twenty kilograms of nitrogen to grow.

A little bored of being in the root, we moved towards the pipe which carried the water from the root up the plant. This is called the xylem. From our microscopic size the xylem looked like masses of water pipes.

In biology you must have learnt how soil-water reaches the top of a plant. There are two pressures working at the same time: root pressure pushes it up and water transpiring or evaporating from the leaves also pulls it up. This is the way each pore of the plant gets watered—be it a rice seedling or a massive tree.

We then entered a plant which was swimming six metres deep in water. By "swimming" I do not mean that it was literally flapping its roots and leaves and moving from one place to another—as the level of the water rises, the stalk grows. In fact the shoot of a floating rice plant grows a centimetre every hour—twenty-four centimetres in a day.

Even if the rest of the plant is submerged the top leaf, the flag leaf, keeps its head above water. Light and air pass through it into the entire plant.

Excess water activates chemicals which elongate the floating rice plant. The stem is jointed. The joints are called nodes. The part of the stem between two nodes is hollow. Because of the air in it, the rice plant keeps afloat. This part contains the chemicals which elongate the stem as the level of the water rises. These plants can live in five to six metres of water for up to a week.

There are usually four to fourteen stems called tillers with four to seven leaves on them. The head of rice bears the green ears which bend low with the weight of the ripe grain. An ear of rice grows twelve to forty-two centimetres long. It bears small flowers which become grain.

Now we are inside one of the small flowers, taking a walk around, to see how it is made. The flower opened this morning. The rice flower opens for barely two hours and immediately stamens begin to peep out.

Climbing the slender filament of a stamen to the top we come across two swollen bags—the pollen sacs—filled with pollen grain. And on looking inside, hidden in the middle, was the pistil.

You must know what takes place between the stamen and the pistil, for seeds to form. But let's remind ourselves. When the pollen sacs ripen, pollen from them falls on the frilly head of the pistil. It grows in the pistil, and gives the sperm which fuses with the egg inside to form the seed.

This process is known as fertilization. It takes five to six hours to complete fertilization in rice flowers. But it takes a long time for the seed to form and ripen—thirty days in hot and sixty-five days in cool climates. A ripe grain which is completely dry weighs twelve to forty-four milligrams.

Once Japanese scientists developed a rice variety in which each grain was the size of a peanut. But each plant produced only four grains! No farmer would want that!

There is a story about the colour of rice, too. It is said that the rice plant always existed but it bore no grain. Then along came Goddess Kuan Yin and sprinkled her own milk on the plant. The ears filled with white grain. Then the Goddess squeezed too hard and some drops of blood came out. That accounts for red rice.

Another story is popular in Bali, Indonesia. The God Bathara Ciwa gave a few grains of rice to a bird and told it to take the grain to the earth. The bird separated the ears of grain into their four colours, white, red, black and yellow, and flew off. On the way it felt hungry and ate up the yellow seed. It dropped the remaining grain in the fields. These became white, red and black rice.



According to Jack Jalloh, Agricultural extension officers are intermediaries between the ministry and farmers. They operate as facilitators and communicators, helping farmers in their decision-making and ensuring that appropriate knowledge is implemented to obtain the best results. Agricultural extension officers need to communicate to farmers and give back report to the ministry on progress made. They need to ensure that farmers understand this information and use it on their farms in order to obtain the best production.

“Agricultural extension officers are expected to propagate new farming methods through their demonstration sites, but it is surprising to know that most of the demonstration sites we saw are not in the ministry’s standard. Thus, a big disappointment” he lamented.

He also express the need for the Agricultural extension officers to encourage farmers to adopt new, improved methods of farming, using a variety of methods to reach farmers (i.e. organizing study groups for farmers, ‘farmer field days’, demonstrations, lectures and literature,) as well as informing the ministry of progress. Following his visit at the Gola forest, upon report of illegal mining activities in the park, the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, Dr. Joseph Sam Sesay was given the honour to announce the winner of the Best Agricultural Extension Officer for the year. Announcing his ministry’s results for work done by various extension officers by district, the Bonthe district man was ranked with 87% successful complication of ministerial ranking. So the Extension officer of Bonthe was announced as the Best, thus taking home several gifts for his outstanding performance.

After the presentation, the Minister continued his visit at various project sites.

Inspecting Oil Palm Nursery -Funded by RCPRP

Giving overview on the oil palm Nursery project in Kenema, the Project Agronomist, Unisa G.M Kamara told the Minister that the oil palm nursery was set up to support over hundreds of youth and women in the district. In his response, the Minister commended the RCPRP for what he described as ‘the right move in the right direction’.

Inspecting Honey program Funded by RCPRP

The next stop was at Nguwabu, few miles from Mano junction in the Kenema district. According to a senior director at the Extension division in the ministry, J. B Bangura , ‘honey/bee farming is no new concept but now becoming very attractive and profitable venture in sierra Leone’. He therefore urged the RCPRP to help more farmers to show interest in it. He advanced that the increasing applications for honey of late have shown that honey is a valuable product.

Inspecting Tree Crop rehabilitation funded by RCPRP

The Minister also visited the Kamboma Tree Crop Rehabilitation site fund by the RCPRP. welcoming the Minister and entourage, the cooperative chairman informed the Minister about their success and how they have been empowered to produce and export very high tonnage of high graded cocoa through the intervention of the RCPRP. Similar visit were done in Ndawebu, Ngiema and Taila; all in the Kenema district.

At the end of the visit, the minister was full of praises and appreciation to the Programme Coordinator and staff of the RCPRP for what he described as ‘their zeal’ in fighting to eradicate rural poverty.

Our Photo Gallery



Minister of MAFFS and Entourage during the RCPRP Field Visit in Kenema



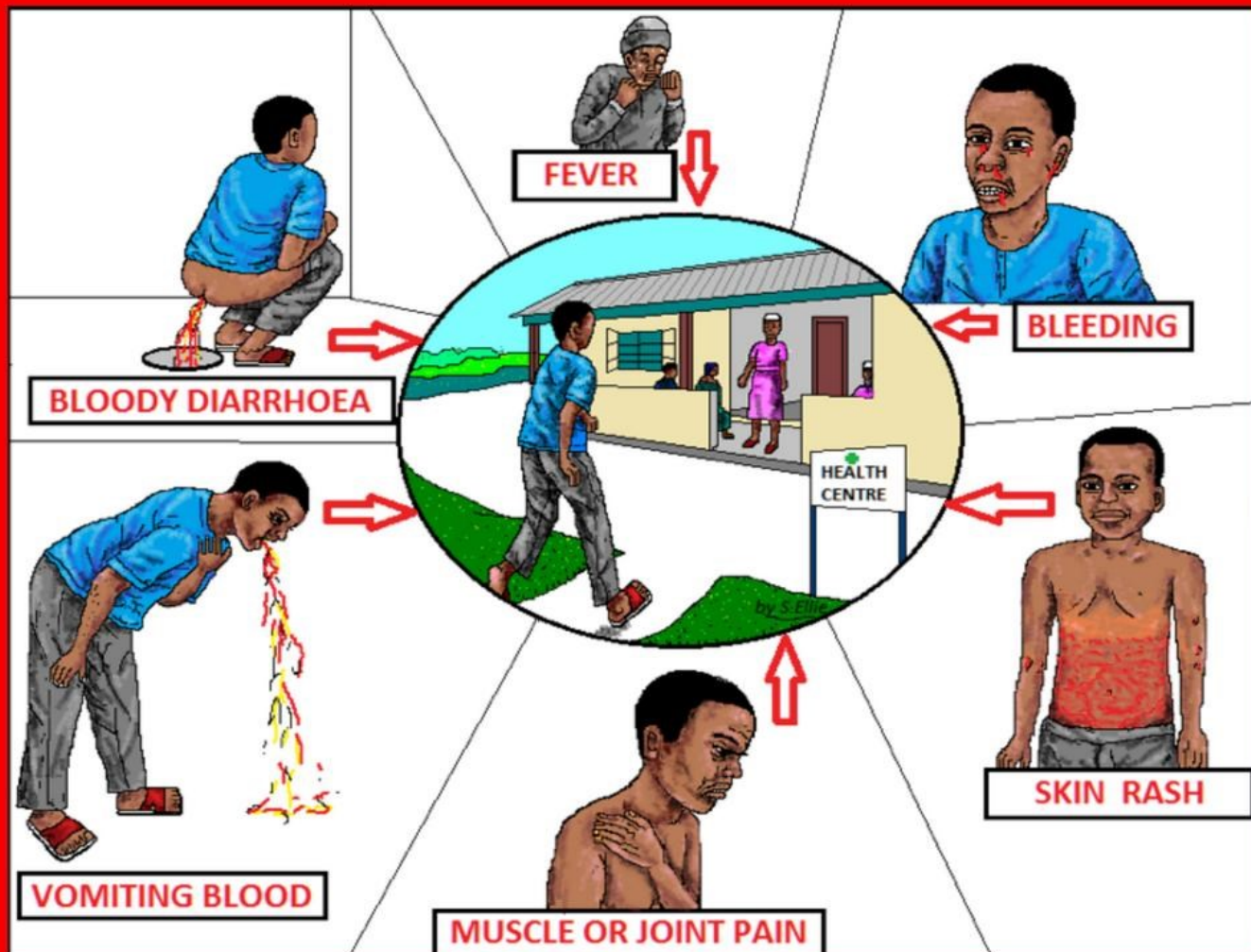
Mission Members and NPCU staff on Mid Term Review of the Climate Change Project



The Pilot Oil Palm Nursery in Koinadugu District

EBOLA

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS



IF YOU HAVE FEVER, DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING, WITH OR WITHOUT BLEEDING, GO TO THE NEAREST HEALTH FACILITY

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