

MAKING A DIFFERENCE . . .



ONE LIFE AT A TIME

Success Stories

Fiscal Year 2007

LEAD and LINKS Programs
Consortium for Rehabilitation and Development



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COMMUNITY IVS REHABILITATION, LEAD PROGRAM

Farmers in Bomboru village, Lei Chiefdom had for a long time undertaken IVS rehabilitation to prevent damage to their rice by water and to increase yield. Undertaken on an individual basis, however, this activity was very difficult for farmers and was labour-intensive, time consuming, and potentially hazardous.

As a result of community sensitization meetings held on the rehabilitation of community assets in the chiefdom, the community decided to come together and rehabilitate 7.5 acres of swamp.

Rehabilitated IVS showing good growth



Working together as a group will reduce labour, reduce the hazards of long stays in the swamps and increase crop yield. The crops from the reclaimed land will be used to create a community seed bank, and the surplus will be sold for the development of the community. The formation of head bunds and internal and peripheral bunds will prevent running water from damaging rice plants, thus

increasing yield. The farmers will have enough to eat, sell and to create a community seed bank. The Bomboru community is also hoping to assist in the building of a school for their children, as the nearest school is about 3 miles away.

Of the project, Bondu Fallah, a prominent woman in the community said, 'We will try to solve the problem of educating our very young children, who have to walk miles to their schools, because by the time they get there they are tired and can take in very little. This community IVS rehabilitation is a very good venture that will solve a lot of problems if well managed'.

"Water will not destroy our rice this year as a result of the repair of head bunds, internal, and peripheral bunds which will lead to an increase in yield. Each member of our community will have enough to eat and the surplus will be sold to take care of other problems such as school fees and improve our living condition. With more money the lives of our children and us will improve." Group Leader Fayiah Lebbie

DIWADU ROAD REHABILITATION, LEAD PROGRAM

Diwadu is an important town in Tankoro Chiefdom, in the south of Kono District. It is situated on a hill overlooking nearby villages. Diwadu is an agricultural community with high cocoa, coffee, oil palm, and food crop production. Before the decade-long civil conflict, the local road network led to several villages, including Tongoro,

From farm to market – New Meima to Diwadu road rehabilitation



Yekior, Gbensendor and Meima, where markets convene every Friday. During the conflict, however, the road became overgrown with trees and brush, hindering vehicular movement and severely constraining access to markets.

With the intervention of the CORAD LEAD project in the Tankoro chiefdom, the community developed a micro project to rehabilitate 4.5 kilometers of the road. They said, “We are tired of carrying our goods on our heads, and that most of our produce cannot reach the market due to the

poor road network.” Using the food for asset (FFA) concept, CORAD field staff examined the project with the community and transferred a total of 14.771 metric tons of assorted commodities for the completion of the rehabilitation exercise. In all, 212 workers (104 male and 108 female) were involved in the roadwork.

Tamba Komba, the contact person for the roadwork said, “Now that our road has been rehabilitated, the movement of vehicles and people is in progress and the periodic market that was dormant is now flourishing.”

Diwadu and its peripheral communities can now access the central market with their agricultural products. Because it is now accessible, the village itself also attracts petty traders and small businessmen from other communities.

“I can now take my vegetables to the Meima periodic market by using vehicular transport instead of carrying the goods on my head, and my children can now go to school instead of having to convey goods to the market on school days. With the flow of vehicular traffic to Diwadu and regular sales of vegetables, my income level has increased immensely and I can now afford to pay the school fees of my children.”
Kumba Kanawa a participant in the rehabilitation exercise.

POST HARVEST LOSS REDUCTION IN TOMBOMA COMMUNITY, LEAD PROGRAM

A community drying floor was a priority need in the Tomboma community, one of the most agriculturally productive communities in Kailahun District. Prior to the creation of a community drying floor, community members used cloth spread on the floor to dry their produce, leading to post harvest losses and foreign matter mixed in with the produce.

All members of the community, including women and children, were involved in the construction of a concrete drying floor. The community drying floor is completely environmentally friendly, as shown by both pre and post environmental impact assessments. No forest was cleared to effect the construction.

“There is much difference in the community since this project came”, said Mustapha Sorie, the Village Development Committee (VDC) chairman. “We now no longer have sand and pebbles mixed up with our food and other produce after drying.”

“In Tomboma community, there was no drying floor to dry our produce after harvest; we spread cloth on the floor on which we placed our produce to dry. With the intervention of CORAD, we now have a concrete drying floor, which has helped reduce post harvest losses considerably. We no longer use pieces of cloth spread on the floor.” Salamatu Baio, a member of one of the farmers’ groups in the community, during an impact survey interview conducted on 17 September 2007.

Drying a variety of agricultural produce in Tomboma Community 17/09/07



Drying agricultural produce in Tomboma Community 25/07/07



KOINDUKURA MARKET, LEAD PROGRAM

Koindukura town of Sulima Chiefdom is located less than one mile away from the Guinea border, in the district of Koinadugu. In the past, this strategic location made Koindukura a very important trade town, where goods from Sierra Leone and Guinea were bought and sold. It also served as a rest stop for traders making the long journey between Guinea and other more distant towns in Sierra Leone, such as Kabala and Makeni. Economic activity in the area has yet to recover its prewar status.

In late 2006, CORAD and community leaders discussed the possibility of building a market in order to attract economic activity back into the area, and to restore the livelihoods of many local traders and farmers. The community pledged to provide a suitable plot of land, local building materials and labor. In exchange, CORAD offered to provide the necessary funds to buy and transport locally unavailable construction materials, such as cement and CI sheets, as well as technical supervision. During early 2007, the construction of a 200 square meter market began as part of the LEAD program.

Rehabilitation of 7km farm-to-market in Sulima Chiefdom



Construction of 200m² market in Sulima



In addition to the market construction, field staff from CORAD partner CRS and community stakeholders identified the rehabilitation of seven kms of farm to market road as an important, and complementary, food-for-work activity. CRS provided the tools, food and technical supervision, while community members provided the labor to rehabilitate the road.

The new market and road are finished and are now benefiting not only farmers and traders, but also the cattle raisers from Koindukura and neighboring communities. According to community members, economic activity in the area is now increasing, and linkages with neighboring markets, both in Sierra Leone and in Guinea, are growing stronger.

EXPERIMENTAL FARMING, LINKS PROGRAM



Amadu displays his farm produce of rice.

I am Amadu S. Kamara. I live in Sambaseneya, about 21 kilometers from Kabala, the district headquarter town of Koinadugu District. I am married with eight children: five are attending school, the remaining three are with me in the village. I am a member of Sambasineya Farmer Field School. I am a farmer from birth. I have been practicing indigenous agricultural practices in my farming. I joined FFS group to see if I could learn new ideas and techniques in

farming, a dream I thought to be impossible until now when I have seen a real difference.

Our FFS group was involved in planting cassava on ridges and doing rice varietal trials—an experimentation I keenly observed and participated in. After the cassava trials, I took one of the high yielding varieties to my personal farm for further investigation. I obtained a loan from our village savings and loans (VS&L group), and hired labour to cultivate five acres of cassava where I carried out all the agronomic practices learnt. I was able to harvest 300 bags of cassava, which I sold at Le 20,000 per bag. After selling, I realized that I made enough profit to send my children from the village schools to schools in Kabala. I am proud that my children are now attending schools in the district headquarter town, which makes them bold and highly inquisitive. Another major asset acquired from the sale of this cassava was that I could buy five bundles of corrugated iron sheets to roof my thatched house in the village. Changing my rooftop to corrugated iron is a real dream I never thought would happen in my life.

“My wife and children have seen that investing in agriculture will turn our life round and make us live with respect and dignity. I am very grateful to the LINKS program.”
Amadu Kamara

IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS: KOIDU CARPENTRY, LINKS PROGRAM

Members of Koidu carpentry workshop in Koidu town in the eastern province of Sierra Leone hail from Bo in the south of the country. These young men fled from Sierra Leone to Guinea during the rebel war. Upon returning to Sierra Leone after the war, they decided to settle in Koidu, Kono District as they had lost their houses and some members of their families. The group leader, Ibrahim Sesay says, “We felt it will be better for us to stay in Kono and work for now, because if we went back now our hearts will be more troubled than they are now.”

Even though times were difficult, the young men started carpentry work on a small scale with little or no tools. With the timely intervention of the LINKS program, “a lot of people came to know about us since we were able to buy tools and materials that helped us to show what we were capable of doing. Today, we are able to take care of the new families formed and the workshop, even though there is still a lot to be done in terms of improving the workshop,” said Ibrahim.

Koidu Carpentry Workshop



“We have impressed people so much so that, even [CORAD partners] now contract us to do a lot of carpentry work for them. We are really very grateful as our sufferings had been placed at our back. With time and the healing of our wounds, we will decide to go home.”
Koidu Carpentry Workshop assistant leader.

SAVING LIVES AND IMPROVING MATERNAL HEALTH USING A SMALL TRANSPORT SOLUTION, LINKS PROGRAM

There is a clear association between infant, child, and maternal mortality and the distance that people must travel to access healthcare facilities. This is particularly troubling as more than 60 percent of the people in Kono District live more than 10 km from a health care facility. Factors conducive to good maternal and child health such as antenatal and postpartum care, birth in the presence of a skilled attendant, and the availability of emergency obstetric services are compromised by limited,

“Had it not been for the availability of the tricycle provided through the LINKS program, I would have lost my wife and child.” Komba Mani, husband of patient Sia Mani.

inappropriate, expensive transport services and distance to referral health services. Furthermore, the poor handling and positioning of patients, particularly pregnant women, during transportation can lead to critical secondary injuries.

The people of Lei chiefdom in Kono district breathed a sigh of relief upon learning about the LINKS small transport solution teams. The Kissi Town, Pekuya FFS requested a small transport solution to address their farm to market transportation constraints, not thinking that it would also save the lives of community members. The vehicle was provided after the group had registered, insured and licensed the vehicle using their savings.

On the 16th of June 2007, less than a week after receiving the tricycle, the farmers were asked to help with transportation of an extended delivery case. Sia Mani had been in labor for five days at the chiefdom health centre in Siama, about 70km from Koidu. The nurse in charge of the health centre, realizing that she could not handle this case, made a referral to the Koidu government hospital.



Expectant mother in STS vehicle

As there was no other means of transportation available in Pekuya, the tricycle was used to transport Sia to Koidu Hospital, where an emergency operation was carried out, saving the lives of both mother and child.

The LINKS small transport solution has not only provided transportation for farmers to take their goods to market, but has benefited all members of the community.

ADULT LITERACY AND NUMERACY, LINKS PROGRAM

My name is Amara Kamara, born in Songaia Ballia Village in Yataya Section, Wara-Wara Yagala Chiefdom, Koinadugu District, Northern Province of Sierra Leone. I am aged 45 years and married with four children.

I never went to school, but knowing the importance of formal education, I am struggling to send my children to school. The eldest child is in the United States of America. Whenever my child in the US wants to talk to me through the cell phone he sent for me, I found it very difficult to respond to his call because I don't understand the writing on the cell phone. The only way to talk to him is to seek assistance from somebody else. Whenever I want to talk to my son, someone has to facilitate the process. The disadvantage was that I had no [opportunity for private conversation] with my son.



Saccoh talks on his phone.

I am also the chairman of our Village Development Committee (VDC). Whenever there is a document for signing on behalf of the community, I had to use my thumbprint because I did not know how to sign my name. More often than not I felt ashamed for not being able to sign my name and for having to use my thumbprint. I spent hours thinking about how to improve myself in the community and stop thumbprinting, so as to make a difference between me and the rest of the community members.

After hours of thinking, my final question was, 'how can I achieve my objective?'

As God would have it, [CORAD] LINKS program came to our community and introduced an adult literacy and numeracy program. At first we looked at it as something not important, but after attending two classes, we realized the worth of the program and encouraged the facilitator to increase the frequency of our meeting times and his energy in facilitation. The group promised working in his farm as a means of compensation for the extra time.

After three months we completed the first phase of the learning program. From this point onwards, I started to read short stories with my primary school children. In addition to that, I can now read and write my name and can even sign it without the help of anyone. I can also write figures from one to twenty.

Over and above all, I can now sign my name, call my son through my cell phone and respond to his call without the assistance of anyone. I can write dates to remember important events and my secrets remain my personal affairs.

"May God bless the LINKS program."
Amara Kamara
chairman of Songaia
Ballia Village

IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS – BASSAMA WOMEN’S BUSINESS GROUP, FIAMA CHIEFDOM, LINKS PROGRAM

For the Bassama Women’s Business Group (BWBG) in Waima, Fiama Chiefdom, eking out a living was a challenge after they returned from refugee camps. They depended on small market gardens to make their living, which were inadequate and could barely meet the daily cash requirements for their households. Through the LINKS program, BWBG Chairwoman Finda Alpha and group members were able to access training and a start-up grant to develop their business skills and expand their business activities.

Finda Alpha described the affect the LINKS program has made on the lives of the members of the women’s group: “Life took a different turn when we were sensitized into forming a self-selected group and were fortunate to receive the “Making Cents” training to improve our basic business management skills and qualify for a start-up grant of Le 750,000! We utilized this money to strengthening our original business activities. We then realized that by pooling our resources we could even do better and make more profit. We decided to form two groups, one group trading in an agricultural product – plantains – and the other in plastic goods. This move helped us to plan and implement our business better. We realized an increase in profit and in a short period were able to save Le 340,000 with the Union Trust Bank in Koidu. In addition to this amount, we have another Le 700,000 invested in the two main activities, which attract interest on a monthly basis until the whole amount is repaid in two months.”

“The LINKS program has enabled us to upgrade our business skills, which has led to an increase in our daily income, improved our living standards, and helped us build a better future for our children. Our success is a result of total commitment and accountability of the members to the group. We now can go to bed without wondering whether we will eat the next day or if we can afford to send our children to school, all thanks to the LINKS program.”

Plastic goods market in Waima, Fiama Chiefdom



EMPOWERING WOMEN FARMERS: THE USE OF SIMPLE IRRIGATION TECHNOLOGY IN KOINADUGU, LINKS PROGRAM

Commercial vegetable production is an important revenue generating activity for communities in Koinadugu District. The agro-climatic conditions present in the zone give it a comparative advantage for the production of vegetables that would otherwise be imported. Two factors have limited production of vegetables in the area, however. Farmers faced a lack of seeds, and had no access to an irrigation system.

During the last three or four years, CORAD-supported farmer field school groups, through the LINKS program, have experimented with a range of “imported” and “traditional” vegetable crops, including cabbage, sweet pepper and tomatoes. The farmers in the group have had success in terms of production and market opportunity, with resilient crops such as okra, hot pepper and eggplant.

In conjunction with the lack of seeds, FFS participants lacked access to irrigation, and women spent large portions of their days collecting and hauling water for their crops. During the last months of FY 2006, the FAO-MAFS Special Program for Food Security (SPFS) donated a manual powered irrigation pump to CORAD. Since the treadle pump is a new technology for Sierra Leone, CORAD established a collaboration agreement with the Department of Agricultural Engineering at Njala University (NU) to set up a demonstration site to assess the feasibility of this technology.



Installation of the system

When offered the chance to participate in the demonstration, the interest from participating communities was overwhelming: the demand exceeded the offer. Through a series of meetings and focus group discussions, project participants and the CORAD field agent agreed that three FFS groups would team up in one site to pilot the irrigation equipment. A total of 90 participants, most of them women, selected a suitable site and spent approximately 100 days participating in the regular FFS curriculum, as well as receiving training on the installation, use and maintenance of the treadle pump technology. The pilot experiment resulted in a significant decrease in the time spent by women in collecting and hauling water for their crops. Although there was no significant difference in terms of yield (as compared to similar plots in other parts of the district), there is undoubtedly a great advantage for women, who have been relieved of the physical labor of manual irrigation and now have more time to take care of their children.



Woman collecting water using the new system

LIVESTOCK AND ANIMAL DRAFT POWER REINTRODUCED IN KOINADUGU DISTRICT, LINKS PROGRAM

CORAD partner CRS started a pilot program using the farmer field school approach for the re-introduction of oxen as draft power and for the semi-intensive production of small ruminants (goats and sheep). These activities provide households with alternative methods for increasing their income, as well as improving their access to protein (through meat and milk).

It is widely accepted that livestock plays an important role in the household economy and food security of poor rural farmers worldwide. Families with animals tend to have higher incomes than other households in the same village. Before the war, Sierra Leone had a sizable number of livestock, but during the ten-year conflict most animals were either slaughtered or died from neglect.

Through the LINKS programs, six FFS groups received access to grants to purchase stocks of sheep, goats and oxen. A total of 180 participants received training in the design of appropriate field activities for semi-intensive livestock production and oxen handling. Farmers have been trained in the selection of the best animals, the detection, prophylaxis and treatment of diseases, and the design of production/feeding systems using locally available resources.



Tilling the land with oxen

In the traditional farming system prevalent in Sierra Leone, farmers do not regularly provide extra feeding, and they lack the knowledge and resources to keep animals healthy. These adverse production conditions extend gestation and weaning periods of lambs and kids, which in turn delay reproduction. The new feeding systems should increase the rate of production and quickly rebuild the stock of goats and sheep.

Although the true impact of this intervention will only be felt after a longer-term period, especially with regard to the goats and sheep, the positive effects of the training are being demonstrated through the high degree of organization and care with which the farmers are currently treating their animals. In addition, labor has already been saved by the oxen groups, which are using their animals to plough fields, a scene that has, since before the war, been extremely rare.

SKILLS TRAINING IN MICRO ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IMPROVES LIVELIHOODS, LINKS PROGRAM

A combination of LINKS interventions is helping more than 100 trainees at Koidu Technical Training Institute (K-TEC) reshape their lives, restore dignity and improve their livelihoods. LINKS micro enterprise development activities are helping young disenfranchised people out of grinding poverty made worse by years of civil war.

“Start-up grants have enabled us to attend classes on a regular basis, and the financial gains from the skills acquired have improved the lives of our children and ourselves tremendously.”

Young people who did not have the educational requirements or skill sets to earn a decent living are now enrolled at the Koidu Technical Institute (K-TEC) learning new skills in tailoring, hairdressing, embroidery, soap making and gara tie dying. Their training is further strengthened through LINKS “Making Cents” training.

Said one student of the LINKS training, “the programs have introduced me to two things I have always wanted to do – be able to sign my name and save some money for emergencies. The savings and literacy training is a blessing for us as we can now learn how to read and write at our own pace.”



K-TEC students with their products

“We have experienced a high attendance and retention rate thank to the various LINKS interventions.” Sahr Mbayo, principal of K-TEC

Although she voiced concern that products may take some time to sell, Aminata Senesie, another young woman benefiting from skills training said, “I feel like a responsible woman among my companions, thanks to LINKS.”

THE COCOA INITIATIVE, LINKS PROGRAM

CORAD continued to strengthen existing nurseries and establish new ones to support replanting and replacement of trees in rehabilitated cocoa farms in Kono District. In the absence of research capacity in Sierra Leone, LINKS partners are looking to adapt technological innovations through its relationship with the STCP to improve and enhance the production of plant materials.

As part of its ongoing tree crop improvement program LINKS field agents worked with the FFS and MAFS to identify and obtain Amelonado variety seeds with fairly uniform progeny from existing farms around Kono

Nursing cocoa seedlings



Under brushing a cocoa farm

District. These were planted in eight community nurseries managed by the FFS. Using community resources, these seedlings are low cost and easy to produce and generate income for the continuation and maintenance of nursery operations.

Forest, but vital to producing quality cocoa. LINKS field agents provided specialized training in fermentation techniques to the FFS in target communities to improve cocoa quality. Capitalising on the existing knowledge base in methods of post-harvest management such as bean fermentation, and the drying and storage of cocoa, the FFS decided to experiment with existing practices and other known but untried procedures. The traditional basket method of fermentation was tested with another known but less used method – the fermenting box method. Preliminary tests of the fermentation box produced high quality cocoa beans after about 7 days fermentation, followed by sun drying. Farmers are currently looking into adopting the fermenting box method of fermentation, which will yield uniform and high quality beans after drying.

Better post harvest management has improved the quality of cocoa, which in turn has increased household disposable income. Building on the experience of the FFS members, this activity will facilitate the introduction of industry recommendations for improved quality cocoa and empower farmers to manage bean quality at the earliest stage of the supply pipeline.

Fermentation is challenging in humid conditions in the transitional rain

Cocoa fermenting box



ALLEVIATING TRANSPORT CONSTRAINTS IN WAIMA, FIAMA CHIEFDOM, KONO DISTRICT, LINKS PROGRAM

The Dobeneh women's group in Waima in Fiama chiefdom (approximately 40 km from Koidu town) is a micro-enterprise group that grows perishable vegetables such as peppers, okra, and eggplant on a large scale for sale in the Koidu market. This is a popular income-generating activity for the women. Before participating in a micro-enterprise project through LINKS, many of the vegetables produced by the women would spoil, as the women lacked transportation to carry them to market. With poor roads and no transportation, the women had to carry their produce to market

"The tricycle will help women in Waima town and the surrounding communities to transport their produce to Koidu. It will improve our livelihood by providing us with a cheaper and more reliable method of getting our produce to the market on time. With the use of the tricycle I was able to transport ten bulgur bags of pepper to Koidu town, which I sold for Le 200,000 – an amount I have never received before from vegetable sales. This money will be used to buy food for the family and pay fees for my daughter who was suspended from school for fees. Market women from Koidu town will no longer exploit us as we now have direct link to the town market."
Mrs. Kumba Benya, chairwoman of Dorbeneh FFS.

Transporting vegetables to market



on their heads, which limited the amount of produce that could be sold.

An alternative was to sell their goods to businesswomen from neighboring villages, at very low prices.

Through the distribution of tricycles through the LINKS project, the women now have a means of transporting their goods to market in Koidu. Vegetable spoilage in Waima village and the chiefdom as a whole has been reduced, and the members of the the Dobeneh women's group has been able to generate more income.

YOUTH IN KONOMOQUAY IMPROVE THEIR LIVELIHOOD, LINKS PROGRAM

Youths at No. 9 Junction Tankoro chiefdom, Kono District found life very difficult after the war. They therefore decided to form an association and sought assistance from donors. After some very difficult months they were able to establish a piggery. After a year, however, they could not afford to feed the pigs. Through the intervention of the LINKS program, however, they are now able to feed their pigs.

"We can now go to bed without worrying about what we will eat the next day. This was one of our greatest problems but at this stage I must confess that the LINKS program has solved this problem forever. For this we are very grateful to [CORAD partner] World Vision and USAID sponsored LINKS.

"Had it not been for the timely intervention of LINKS we could have lost the entire piggery. We are now able to provide enough feed for our pigs that enhance health and growth. We can now slaughter and sell at very good prices." Group chairman Tamba Prince Boima.

The combination of donor assistance and aid through the LINKS program helped to improve the livelihood of the members and renewed their hope for a brighter future.



No. 9 Youth member poses with pigs

LITERACY AND NUMERACY TRAINING, LINKS PROGRAM

Mr. Saccoh Marah is a 40 year-old man from Senekedugu in Yataya section, Wara Wara Yagala Chiefdom, Koinadugu district in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone. He is the Village Development Committee (VDC) chairman. Eight years ago, LINKS started a literacy and numeracy program in Mr. Marah's village. This is his story.

"It was eight (8) months ago that I joined the Literacy and Numeracy group introduced to us in our community by [CORAD partner] CARE LINKS project. It was during this meeting that I asked a question 'will some one above school going age be able to read and write?' The field agent replied to me that 'there is no one too old to learn, new things evolve and are learnt everyday,' said the Field Agent, 'so if you are willing to learn you can make it.' Soon my dream started becoming true and my fear was arrested by the field agent's reply. These encouraging words gave me courage and hope to join the group.

I treated the classes as a priority; I attended all the classes and even took extra time from my day's work to go through my book. I started identifying numbers and letters, which was a difficult task for me but with persistence homework, things started working out positively, as I had envisioned.

Thanks to the LINKS program for introducing the package of literacy and numeracy in our community. I can now boast of reading starter books and writing simple words and even signing my name. I can read and understand less difficult books. It has even helped me in me in carrying out my business because I can now calculate expenditure as against income, can read, and show time on the clock, and read letters with few constraints.

I have known the value and worth of education in life. With my farming activities I will fully support my children going to school and will also talk to my community members to send their children to school."



Saccoh reads in front of his home