

Concept Note

Support to Farmer Based Organizations in the form of Capacity Building

A. Strategic context of the project

The Government of Sierra Leone launched its second Poverty Reduction Strategy paper for 2008-2012 (PRSP II) the “Agenda for Change,” with a focus on four key priorities: energy; transportation; agriculture; and human development. Following the commencement or completion of several large road and energy infrastructure projects, agriculture has been identified as the President’s top priority. This has been reflected in steadily increasing public investment in the sector, with a budget allocation at 9.9 percent in 2010 and expected to increase to 10 percent in the near future. In September 2009, the Government launched NSADP, the Country Compact under the CAADP. The vision of the NSADP is to make agriculture the engine for socioeconomic growth and development through commercial agriculture. More specifically, its aim is to provide short, medium and long term Investment Programmes to increase commercialisation of the sector and promote “farming as a business.” The Smallholder Commercialisation Programme (SCP) is identified as the priority to delivery this goal.

Over the last decade, donor activity has been making a transition from post-conflict and emergency relief to longer-term development. After the war, donors and NGOs were primarily focused on resettlement and rehabilitation of farming land and rural communities, using project-based approaches. More recently donors shifted to more programmatic designs, and refocused activities towards capacity-building, enhancing productivity.

An Extension Division has been established in the Ministry of Agriculture with a new Unified Agricultural Extension Service to coordinate activities. The Government has also built on an existing system of Farmer Field Schools (FFS), training over 40,000 farmer facilitators in 1465 FFS of 25-30 farmers with support from a number of NGOs and donors. The Government is now looking to build on this network of FFS to create Farmer-Based Organisations and a network of Agricultural Business Centres to service them.

The Division of Agricultural Extension was created within MAFFS in 2009, and is guided by a strategy of supporting smallholders through the now expanded Farmer Field and Life School (FFS) which includes life skills alongside technical skills and organisational training. This approach includes strengthening Farmer Based Organizations at community level, and promoting Agricultural Business Centres (ABCs). The extension system is still preparing a coherent policy to guide the structure, organization, delivery and approaches to collaboration with NGOs and other actors. The Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) was established in 2007 to bring together all research activities under one organisation. A strategic plan for SLARI was developed in 2008. SLARI continues to operate in a conventional research-driven model and recognized the need to shift their approach to a more farmer-based model. SLARI also has limited capacity at present to work in more interactive farm-based methodologies.

B. Justification

NRDS through the District Agriculture Officer and the council will effectively support the FFS in the training of farmers in organizational and managerial skill and improved farming techniques. FFSs are the platform for technology adoption and improved farming practices, improving decision-making capacity of farming communities and stimulating local innovation for sustainable agriculture. FFS have expanded to include business planning and livelihood aspects including literacy etc.

This will also help to build FBO capacity toward becoming empowered professional agricultural organisations. FBOs will continue to be assisted and mentored in applying adapted technologies and improved production practice. They will acquire essential knowledge and practical skills in organisational and business management and planning, and be assisted in registration and in forming associations with 3-4 other FBOs toward development of ABCs which are essential building blocks to commercialisation.

C. Potential intervention zones and target groups

Potential intervention areas include major lowland rice growing areas in Southern and Northern Regions of Sierra Leone – Port Loko, Kambia, Bombali, Tonkolili, Pujehun, Bonthe, Moyamba.

D. Main Objectives of the Project

Global objective: To increase rice production and productivity by enhancing adoption of improve technologies and maximizing use of inputs.

Specific Objectives:

- To improve smallholder livelihood.
- To improve skills in rice production.

E. Description of the Components, Outputs and Activities

Component 1: Training in leadership and good governance.

Component 2: Training in agribusiness and management

Component 3: Training in agronomic practices.

Component	Output	Activity
1. Training in leadership and good governance.	FBOs trained in leadership and good governance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Selection of participants. 2. Development and production of training manuals. 3. Training of trainers workshop. 4. Training of farmers.
2. Training in agribusiness and management	FBOs trained in agribusiness and management skills.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Selection of participants. 2. Development and production of training manuals. 3. Training of trainers' workshop. 4. Training of farmers 5. Linking farmers with micro-finance institutions.
3. Training in agronomic practices.	FBOs trained in agronomic practices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Selection of participants. 2. Development and production of training

		<p>manuals in agronomic practices.</p> <p>3. Training of trainers workshop.</p> <p>Training of farmers.</p> <p>4. Establishment of demonstration plots</p>
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G. Implementation Strategy of the project

FBOs will continue to be assisted and mentored in applying adapted skills, technologies and improved production practices through various trainings, exchanges and study tours, and provision of operational support (notably mobility and technical equipment). The extension staff will work more closely with FFS and the development of commodity chains through public private partnerships (PPP) such as out grower schemes, and better respond to farmer needs in technical, institutional and commercial areas.

District and Ward Councils, including Agricultural Committees will be more informed and involved in the initiatives by participating in sensitization, information sharing, and capacity development programs tailored to their responsibilities and needs. This training is expected to build up smallholder commercialisation a strategic priority in district development planning and ensure appropriate sectoral linkages (such as infrastructure development). The project will finance trainings, study tours and study-visit exchanges tailored to the different needs and levels of FBOs and staff working in the field.

FBOs will acquire essential knowledge and practical skills in organizational, business management and planning.

H. Project Organization and Management

- MAFFS assumes overall responsibility for the project implementation
- District councils will provide oversight
- FBOs will work with Councils to provide oversight

I. Monitoring and Evaluation

The District Agricultural Officers will produce monthly reports based on submissions of M&E officers in the District.

Local councils to carryout independent assessment of progress and report appropriately.

J. Risks

- Willingness of the communities to participate fully in the project
- Favourable political climate for the implementation of the project
- Timely release of funds
- Training of farmers on time.
- Staff of various institutions are well motivated to participate in the project

Project/Program	Objectively Verifiable indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions/ Risks
1. Global objective:			
To increase rice production and productivity by enhancing adoption of improved technologies and maximizing use of inputs	Application of the adopted technologies is notably increased Sustainability of ABCs	Smallholder livelihood improved Skills in rice production improved	Adopted technologies in rice production will be used in the farm. Quantity of rice produced will increase. Improved Quality of rice produced will

			improve.
2. Specific Objective			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve smallholder livelihood. • To improve skills in rice production 		Progress reports	Funds are made available
3. Outputs/Results			
Component1: Training in leadership and good governance.			
1. Selection of participants.		Progress reports	
2. Development and production of training manuals.		Progress reports	
3. Training of trainers workshop. 4. Training of farmers.		Progress reports Progress reports	
Component 2: Training in agribusiness and management			
1. Selection of participants.		Progress reports	
2. Development and production of training manuals.		Progress reports	
3. Training of trainers' workshop.		Progress reports	

4. Training of farmers in agribusiness and management		Progress reports	
Component 3: Training in agronomic practices			
1. Selection of participants.		Progress reports	
2. Development and production of training manuals in agronomic practices.		Progress reports	
3. Training of trainers workshop.		Progress reports	
4. Training of farmers.		Progress reports	
5. Establishment of demonstration plots		Progress reports	