

Sierra Leone

Fresh from the Field

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Improved Farming System

A Story of Transformation



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In the Inland Valley Swamps (IVS) farming system, bushy vegetation is raked and burned. Grasses are sometimes left to rot followed by turning over of clods, which bury the unburned grasses. Usually, little or no fertilization is used and no insect and disease control measures are carried out. Beds are raised to about 0.3 to 1 meter high and of varying dimensions with straw (burnt or unburnt) buried beneath.

Soil is worked into a finer bed to grow crops, in this case groundnuts. Since this is a perennial swamp a second rice crop could be grown. The decomposed groundnut plant remains after harvest and serves as manure to help grow the second crop, rice. After the harvest of the groundnuts, four to six week old rice seedlings are transplanted into the now flooded or partially flooded swamp. Little or no fertilization and no insect or disease control measures are carried out.



Namisa Marah practiced the Inland Valley Swamp farming on her plot and admitted that she is full of high hope this year because of the help she had gained from the VSL program introduced to her village by CES. The VSL credit facility made it possible for her to expand and farm land and to grow in the swamp which she could not do for many years. This system of farming she was introduced to by the CES field staff (Foray Marah) will double her crop production and will ensure that she has two harvests instead of one. She will have two good harvests of groundnuts and rice. With such a good harvest, she concluded that, "My son's school I can now pay easily with the income realized from the farm."

Prayer Requests for Sierra Leone

- Thank God for the ongoing Ebola Orphan Relief project undertaken in Nieni chiefdom. Pray that the caregivers and mentors will be committed to supporting and helping these children.
- Praise God for the continued support received from World Renew (North America). This has made it possible to purchase and install two additional rice mills in the communities of Kalkoya and Diang Sokurala 2 and to construct food-drying floors in Diang Sokurala 1, Yirafilia-Badala, and Bendukura. The increased number of completed projects has attracted commendation from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.
- Continue to pray for the new CRC Church in Yirafilaya Badela. The caretaker evangelist, Bilalie Mansaray, has gone for further theological training in Sierra Leone. There is therefore a need for an evangelist replacement. Pray that the right person will be found and that the leadership of CRC-SL will act quickly in finding a replacement to continue the good work that has been started.
- Continue to pray for the newly elected president of the CRC-SL, Rev. Moses Musa Jawara, asking that God will lead and guide him. Pray that the Lord will give him wisdom in charting the way forward for the church.
- Pray for Robert Jawara (a former national director of CES) and his family. Robert's wife, Na Tigie, died suddenly last month, apparently from cardiac arrest. Pray that Robert and the children will experience the true peace and blessing of God.
- Thank God for the audit team consisting of Kathy Vandekloet (from Nigeria) and Joan Norman (from Grand Rapids, Mich.) who audited CES and CRC-SL in Kabala, Sierra Leone. Pray that the audit will map out ways for improving financial records and reporting of the two departments. Pray also that this will help in building the capacity of the accounting staff.
- Sierra Leone is going through one of its worst economic crises in recent times. Pray that the government will put in place measures that will ease the burden of the poor, which was already at its lowest point following the Ebola crisis.
- Thank God for the successful visit of the CRC-SL General Secretary Rev. David T. Koroma to Nigeria. Pray that he will have the opportunity to implement what he learned from the CRC of Nigeria.

Gravity Watershed Protection and Community Participation

A Story of Transformation

Christian Extension Services (CES), World Renew's partner in Sierra Leone, began implementing a project to protect the gravity watershed sources of six communities in four chiefdoms of the Koinadugu district. The pilot phase of this project resulted in many other communities calling for protection of their watershed sources.

CES, with the support of Smithers Church in British Columbia, provided about 1,000 tree seedlings (*tectonia grandis*) to each of the six gravity watershed sources for the nine additional beneficiary communities. The gravity watershed in six communities was constructed with support from World Renew. Community members freely contributed by using their local tools in transplanting the seedlings and brushing around small trees that were planted the year before. CES also held consultative meetings with community stakeholders and the government district ministry staff about implementing future project activities such as the formation of tree nursery sites.

Expanding the area planted with tree seedlings around the six gravity watershed sources has been an ongoing practice supervised by CES staff and the government district ministry staff. And the people of the target project communities gladly supplied the labor necessary, being offered food for work in this season between planting and harvesting, when so many often go hungry. The goal is that the trees, when planted, will help change the local vegetation back to forest from grassland, restoring areas that had been deforested over a period of many years.

Several women selected from the communities took care of providing and preparing the food for workers. Other activities

included planning for stage three of the project—the establishment of tree nursery sites in the communities—and meeting with community leaders to review the memorandum of understanding concerning the siting of the project and the community responsibilities.

The involvement of paramount chiefs as influential figures in the reinforcement of forestry by-laws has helped to guarantee the safety of these gravity watershed sources. Paramount Chief Alie Balansama Marah of Sengbeh chiefdom, for example, has been a key advocate for sustainable care of the watershed sources. The chief personally addressed the people of Badala to reaffirm the need to protect gravity watershed sources by planting more trees to protect the sites. One problem in particular was that children, mostly males, unnecessarily set the bush on fire. These same children have now been included in the tree planting process and have been strictly advised by all parents and stakeholders to stop setting fires. Most of the tree seedlings planted last season survived, but in places where seedlings did not survive, new ones were planted to replace them. The water quality of these sources is gradually improving because of the abolishment of activities like burning, squatting, cutting of trees, and fishing around the gravity watershed areas.

Among the tree seedlings selected and planted last season, *tectonia grandis* survived in most areas better than moringa or *gliricidia sepium* tree seedlings. In the future the communities will focus more effort on planting *tectonia*.

The transportation of the tree seedlings to project sites was a challenge because the heavy rains at this time of year make the roads difficult for traveling. Still, the enthusiasm of the communities ensured the transport and planting of the seedlings. In the future it may be better to transport seedlings to project sites before the rains get heavy.



Women of Yirafilia-Badala ready to plant tree seedlings to protect their gravity water source

Women showed more enthusiasm than men in participating toward the protection of the watershed sources; they expressed that the domestic workload is heavy on them, especially in relation to the availability of water in their homes.

Overall, the leadership in the various communities was very supportive of the project because of the obvious benefits to all the communities. And thanks to the testimonies heard from beneficiary communities, the demand for CES assistance toward the restoration of watershed sources has increased in the entire district of Koinadugu.



This tree was planted last season.



Sarakoh gravity water source, mostly full during the rainy season



Brushing around the seedlings planted last season & replacing those that did not survive.