

Japanese Government Rice Grant impact in Liberia continues on after the close of the project implemented by CHAP



In an effort to boost the agriculture sector of Liberia and improve food security in the country despite the economic hardship faced by Liberians, the Community of Hope Agriculture Project (CHAP) through the Japanese Rice Grant Project has during the past two years worked with over 9,000 farmers in five Ebola-affected counties in Liberia.

US\$2 million was provided to Liberia by the Japanese Government through the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), which led to collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture to design a project that would increase farmers' income by developing the rice and cassava value chains in Liberia.

The Japanese Rice Grant is entitled 'Economic recovery of Liberian rice farmers in Ebola affected counties' (Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, Lofa and Montserrado).

The goal of the grant is **to empower poor farmers, particularly women (at least 60%), to overcome the impact of the Ebola crisis by increasing their food security, building a sustainable agricultural rice base, and improving their livelihood.**

The 14 years of war and the Ebola epidemic in the country undermined Liberia’s agriculture development over the past years. CHAP is working with thousands of farmers in these five counties that were highly hit by Ebola in 2014 to help these farmers improve their lives and their communities by promoting sustainable agriculture practices using SRI and labor saving devices.

The Community of Hope Agriculture Project, through IFAD and MOA with funding from the Japanese Government, has been extremely helpful to local farmers in Liberia using the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) to increase farmer’s yields; many continue to practice SRI in these areas.

Farmers, under the Japanese Rice Grant Project, received from the Japanese Government the following in order to enhance rice production in the Liberia:

- Picture books1,800 pieces
- Rain boots.....7,200 pairs
- Fertilizer.....7,200 50kg bags
- Shovels.....600 pieces
- Rotary Tillers.....33 pieces
- Weeders (Garden Weasel)...600 pieces
- Pesticides.....1,800 liters



The JICA Liberia office along with the Regional Head of JICA from Ghana also visited a few fields and saw the impact first-hand, including how farmers under CHAP continued to farm using the System of Rice Intensification (SRI). Recently reporters, who visited the five counties in which CHAP has work, spoke with local farmers and county authorities concerning the impact of the Japanese Rice Grant and discovered there were more farmers now using SRI methods and explained how their

harvest has increased significantly and how the labor saving devices distributed were still in use by the 131 farming communities.

Reporters from National Television ELTV, newspapers, and other media said that most of the farmers interviewed expressed much joy and happiness over the level of work that CHAP did and are still carrying on with activities on a lower scale in their counties although the project has ended.

When interviewed, farmers said that it is the very first time they have ever seen and worked with farming equipment such as the rotary tiller and rotary weeder and that these have made a huge difference in their farming work. Farmers thanked the Community of Hope Agriculture Project, the Japanese Government, IFAD, and the Government of Liberia for the improvement so far in the agriculture sector of Liberia and appealed for the continuation of said project for minimum of 3 more years. Farmers said the equipment, farm inputs, and training given them by Japanese Government through CHAP is of great help to their farming life. They explained that in years past they spent more energy and time to produce rice, but with the equipment and training they are now spending less time and energy in the production of rice.

CHAP informed the JICA team that in going forward, it is important to have the private sector and a Liberian non-profit organization as implementing partner in order to assure sustainability and accountability.