

UN Trust Fund Project

Enhancing Agriculture and Peacebuilding



Left: Participants of the workshop

Zwedru, A workshop that integrates agriculture productivity with peacebuilding and enhanced understanding among farmers and community residents ended in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County late September with 20 participants pledging to help improve food production and strengthen peace in Nimba, Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Maryland Counties.



Practical, outdoor session in the field

The four-day training of trainers session was aimed at building the capacity of 20 participants through knowledge sharing and skills development in improved agriculture production, livelihoods diversification and peacebuilding and unity fostering so that they can return to the four project counties (Nimba, Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Maryland) and train 250 county officials. The local county officials including District Commissions, Paramount Chiefs, Clan Chiefs, Town Chiefs, Women Chairladies, Youth Leaders, and School Principals will then work toward fostering unity and peace among farmers and community people through agriculture-related activities including crop production and livelihood diversification for income generation through farming. The local officials when trained will also serve as mainstream support mechanisms to farmers in promoting peacebuilding and production.

Speaking at the workshop, participants pledged their commitment to work with local leaders and farmers. Lydia Y. Dahn, participant from Nimba County said: *"I learnt a lot of new things especially how to bring peace in communities and how to mediate between conflicting people. I am going home to work with people on the importance of agriculture and peacebuilding."* Isaac Kyne of Zleh Town, Grand Gedeh was clear about his role in his community: *"My role in my community is to be a role model in building peace in a positive, active manner for farmers and families and not to take the passive approach of peacebuilding which is not too positive."* Another participant, Abraham T. Chorbuo of Gbarzon District in Grand Gedeh County, will first apply the skills he learned on himself: *"If I don't even go into the communities, I will now be able to control my emotions and then be in the position to help other people in my district."*

Earlier, UN Human Security Trust Fund Project Coordinator, Albert Kpassawah, said the project, recognizing the efforts of past interventions, is extending its scope and operations in a developmental context to ensure sustainability and to address agriculture and other development needs in areas where the need for such support is critical. The project will also address the multi-sectoral causes of human insecurity for vulnerable populations of southeastern Liberia. He said when the Ivorian crisis broke out in 2010/2011; refugees came to Liberia and settled along the border. These people received some humanitarian assistance but communities not close enough to the border did not get as much help. It is these areas that are the focus of this project intervention. The project, titled ***"Human Security Initiative in the Most Neglected Communities with the Integration of Efforts by the UN Country Team in Liberia"***, caters to 15,467 beneficiaries in the four counties.

The project is a joint effort comprising FAO, UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO, WFP and UN Women, with support from UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)) as well as the Government of Liberia. Each partner has a specific role to implement based on its comparative advantaged and scope of expertise.

Addressing the workshop in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County Assistant Superintendent for Development, Abraham T. Gbeway, challenged the participants to be up to the task. *"It is not just providing food but to also unite the communities. Know that you are in competition not to fail but to become an ambassador for all."*

For his part, the Head of UNMIL Field Office (HOFO), Napoleon Viban, said it was pretty obvious that food security was vital to national security because *"a hungry man is an angry man."* He said the workshop was necessary *"to exert our energy and ensure there is peace and security for farmers."* He then pledged UNMIL's total support to the project.

The peacebuilding component of the workshop was conducted by Liberian conflict resolution specialist James C. Ballah who stressed the relevance of peacebuilding to development. *"Peace begins in the family and flows out into the community and society which is essential for development."* He emphasized that in peacebuilding people go to lengths to consolidate peace and must not stop at what satisfies them. He urged participants to be messengers of peace and avoid acts that serve as ingredients for chaos. *"If you want everything for yourself, that's greed; it's a receipt for disaster."* He pointed out that of the two main aspects of peace – active peace and passive peace – active peace should be utilized and prioritized more and more because it is positive and constructive based on values and understanding as it flows from within the individual person. Passive peace, he said, is the opposite and should be avoided wherever possible.