

**Mariama Kpah,
Grand Gedeh County, Liberia**

A success Story of a Cross Border Trader

“Before my participation in the Human Security Project, I used to sell in the local market in my village. I wanted to be a cross border trader but didn’t understand the security issues at the border. I had low self-esteem because I had no idea or knowledge about my rights as a cross border trader nor the security issues that many women in cross border trade face at the borders. When I participated in the Peace Hut training with women peace builders including attending regular peace hut meetings, I was able to understand my rights as a woman and what to do when my rights were abused. I begin to understand my rights and how to get justice. The peace hut in my village opened my eyes, and today, I am now crossing the borders to trade goods and to buy goods because I now have confidence as a trader and as a woman. I now have a space in my village to discuss issues affecting women in the community. Also, my business as a cross border trader has grown, and I continue to get mentoring and coaching services from the project. Many women and girls in my village are now reporting incidences of Sexual and Gender based Violence (SGBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), Extortion and other serious issues that affect women.



BRIEF

HUMAN SECURITY INITIATIVE IN THE MOST NEGLECTED COMMUNITIES:

UN Joint Programme on Human Security

TARGET LOCATIONS/BENEFICIARIES

Counties: Nimba, Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Maryland

Beneficiaries: Community women, girls, and men in the most neglected communities

Budget: US \$392,223.94

Donors: UNTFHS

Duration: 2014 – 2017

KEY ACTIVITIES

Strategic activities under the joint programme include:

- Establish male networks with at least 200 men serving as positive role models and male ambassadors to the peace huts, publicly working to end violence against women and children in the target communities by 2017; and
- Establish local women’s peace huts in four host communities to mediate conflicts, provide linkages and dialogue structure with local security institutions, and to promote the prevention and response to gender based violence by 2017

ACHIEVEMENTS / IMPACT

- ✓ 4 male networks established and are active in 4 host communities in 4 targeted counties, namely Nimba, Grand Gedeh, Maryland, and River Gee County) with at least 200 men (50 men per group) serving as positive role models and male ambassadors to 4 newly established peace huts, publicly working to end violence against women and children.
 - *There is ongoing mentoring of the 200 male champions and/or ambassadors for increased capacity to effectively engage local communities on creating awareness around SGBV/SEA prevention, management, and response including for championing the rights of women and girls at local level.*
- ✓ 4 local women’s ‘peace huts’ were established and are operational in the 4 host communities to mediate conflicts, provide linkages and dialogue structure with local security institutions, and to promote the prevention and response to gender based violence.
 - *There is ongoing mentoring of 100 women peace builders and 4 peace hut leaders for increased capacity to effectively manage the affairs and operations of the established peace huts and to ensure women are accessing justice through the local peace huts.*

OBJECTIVE: Community Security (with focus on women and men) – To ensure comprehensive prevention, management and response to SGBV and harmful cultural practices including child marriage with focus on gender: working with women and working with men.

GOAL: To enhance the human security of most vulnerable Liberian populations in the southeast region through adapting the value added approach of human security concept with “protection” and “empowerment” measures.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

In November 2010, the neighboring country of Côte d'Ivoire held presidential elections and although the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) and the international community accepted the results in December 2010, violence spiraled, encompassing Côte d'Ivoire's border region with southeastern Liberia. Due to the Ivorian post-election crisis, the overall population of refugees in Liberia grew significantly in mid-2011. The large influx of Ivorian refugees and Liberian returnees, who themselves had been accommodated in Côte d'Ivoire during the Liberian conflict, put tremendous pressure on the already fragile border communities which are already marginalized and often neglected. Unlike any other part of Liberia, the four border counties of Nimba, Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Maryland, have hosted a significant number of Ivorian refugees since they started arriving first in November 2010, with whom they share strong cultural, social, economic and family links.

This has made their already vulnerable socioeconomic fabrics even worse. The PRSPI of Liberia indicates that the poverty headcount indices are the highest in the southeastern region (77 percent). This region also has the second highest level of inequality (after Monrovia) according to the African Development Bank's Country Strategy Paper published in June 2013. In particular, Grand Gedeh is one of the largest counties with rich natural resources but historically, the most neglected and underserved. Inadequate and non-existent basic infrastructure continues to hinder the quality of life, and this was a main contributing factor to the civil crisis.

With stability returning to the border region, the need to transition from emergency to development assistance is increasingly recognized. Although nearly two thirds of the Ivorian refugees have returned home, Liberia's Southeastern counties continue to face challenges of hunger, instability, and low human development, all underlying drivers of conflict and thus endangers sustained peace and security. In addition, while humanitarian assistance in the past years focused on refugees and their host communities, other communities, not hosting refugees, have had little attention from both national and international aid communities. This joint programme recognizes the importance of building on these humanitarian interventions in the past and also the importance of extending their scope and operational areas in a developmental context, particularly to ensure sustainability and to address frustrations that may have arisen from perceived unequal treatment in areas where the need for such support is critical.

IMPLEMENTING PARTENERS

UN Partners: FAO, UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO, WFP, UN Women, UNMIL

Government: MoA, MoH, MoGCSP, MoJ

NGOs: Rights and Rice Foundation (RRF)

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