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Improved Livelihoods through Creative Enterprise A Story of Transformation



by Andrew Gwaivangmin
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During last year's harvest, as other farmers grumbled about low yield, Mustapha Fofana hoped for a bumper rice harvest. Mustapha had reason to hope: *last year he harvested 180 bushels!* "I used to grow just enough rice for my household to eat. But now," he says proudly, "I can keep some and sell the surplus to pay my children's school fees, buy school supplies, pay family medical bills, and meet other household needs."

Mustapha participates in a Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security program (SAFS) in his village in northern Sierra Leone. Funded by World Renew and implemented by its partner organization, Christian Extension Services, **SAFS programs are boosting rice production, avoiding reliance on imported rice, and providing additional income to farmers in 15 communities through Sierra Leone.**

In addition, CES has helped these communities establish Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA). **A VSLA allows farmers to act as lenders to each other, forming a sort of community bank.** "This was a really great blessing for us," says Mustapha "as we no longer take high-interest loans from business people. They were really exploiting us."

The VSLA in Mustapha's village of Sarakoh was established with a grant of 2 bushels of rice seed and 3 million Leones (\$400US) to each of its 44 members. After training, the village received a metal box with three padlocks. The three corresponding keys



were given to three different members to ensure security of the money and Mustapha was elected treasurer of the group, a reflection of their trust and confidence in him.

CES Field Officer Lansana Jawara says "Being able to take and repay loans with low interest rates from this box is empowering for the farmers. We hope that these rural communities will be in a stronger position not only to provide for their own feeding, but also to sell their surplus rice to neighboring villages and to the local market in Kabala town."

Mustapha Fofana, who now serves as the chairman of his village's development committee, says "We thank and appreciate everyone that donated to World Renew to improve the lives of our communities in Koinadugu District, Northern Sierra Leone."

Pray for Sierra Leone

- Thank God for the safe and successful visits of West Africa team leader Mary Crickmore, and Esther Kuhn, Senegal Program Consultant to Christian Extension Services. While Mary worked with the CES administration and finance staff, Esther visited projects in the field.
- Pray that new staff members Mariama and Agnes, hired as administrator and cashier for CES, will catch up with the workload and contribute positively towards high-quality financial reporting standards.
- Thank God that the CRC Yirafilaya Badela church building project has now been roofed before the rains. A lot more needs to be done on the building, but the major hurdle has been crossed. Thank God for their evangelist and pray that he will be able to meet the growing spiritual needs of this young church.
- Thank God for the ongoing implementation of community-initiated projects, including a dry floor and grain storehouse. Pray for freedom from accidents or ill health in these communities and cooperation from all members of the communities.
- Praise God for the support received for CES work in North America in the last few years which has contributed in reducing poverty in no small measure. The communities are very thankful for the show of love and care, illustrated by their welcome of visitors from North America.
- Sierra Leone will hold Presidential and parliamentary elections next year. Voter registrations have been done and civic registration follows. Pray that all of these events will contribute to a successful election next year.
- CES will be selecting about 9 new communities for engagements in the next 6 months. Pray that the selection process is carried out without delay and that the neediest communities are served first.
- Pray for the caregivers and mentors from the Ebola Orphan Relief project, who have continued to support the orphans even when funding has stopped. Pray for those in school that they will continue to get the needed help for school fees and other school needs.

Blessings,

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