



Community initiated fish pond harvesting in Kunike Chiefdom - Tonkolili District.

Project:

Fish production and Income Generation Activities

Proposal Submitted to:

Givewell Poverty Grant

On behalf of Concern:

Sierra Leone

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INTRODUCTION

Concern Sierra Leone

Concern has been operational in Sierra Leone since 1996, initially working in emergency programs in Freetown and the Western Area at the height of the civil war. When peace was declared in January 2002, Concern took part in a multi-sector needs assessment in Tonkolili District. The assessment results culminated in the opening of a branch office in Magburaka in September 2002 to manage multi-sector activities in Education, Health and Livelihoods to address the prevailing community needs. Since this time Concern's programs have evolved from relief/rehabilitation to sustainable development activities. In line with Concern's global strategic plan, the Sierra Leone country strategic plan (2006 – 2010) aims to promote program growth and expansion in both Tonkolili District through integrated education, health and livelihood programs, and in urban Freetown through livelihoods and public and environmental health in poor urban slum locations. Targeting is based on vulnerability ranking as part of Concern's focus on poverty reduction, and meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Concern is currently operating in six [Yoni, Maral Mara, Kholifa Rowalla, Kunike, Kunike Barina and Kholifa Mabang] of the eleven chiefdoms in Tonkolili district.

Currently, Concern Sierra Leone has a total of 122 national staff (of which 72 are Tonkolili field based) and 13 expatriate staff working on the various sector programs.

DESCRIPTION OF INTEREST

Program Overview

Sierra Leone is the least developed country in the world (ranked at 177th out of 177 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index). About 70% of Sierra Leoneans live below the poverty line with very low food production levels, low household incomes, poor nutrition and health care and poor education and employment skills. Subsistence agriculture is the main source of both food and income for Sierra Leone's rural communities. Tonkolili District is one of the poorest districts in Sierra Leone. Rice is the staple food crop but its yield level is low, as production is done mainly on small farm holdings and at subsistence levels. Household food reserves are likewise low thus requiring supplementary alternatives in order to meet household food demand and daily basic needs. As a result of the low food reserves at household level, many families face a 'hunger gap' of approximately four months when there is a lack of food, and coping mechanisms such as reducing meals and eating poorer quality food are necessary. This has consequences for the nutrition levels of the households – especially for children under five and pregnant and lactating women. It is, therefore, crucial that target beneficiaries have diversified livelihood options to ensure a continuous income throughout the year.

This project will focus on the areas of fish farming and small business development as a means to diversify incomes for the target groups. The target groups will be vulnerable households who have been identified as part of Concern's diagnostic assessments in 2006. The targeting is based on criteria agreed with community members such as households with many dependents or households that lack assets and cannot send their children to school. Women and youth will be especially targeted. Women will be targeted because of their more vulnerable status in communities in terms of access and control over resources as compared to men. In rural communities, women contribute greatly in household livelihood in agriculture and business enterprise as evident in labor profile in Sierra Leone. However, due to cultural norms they have little decision making power over the income is spent. The aftermath of the civil war has seen a greater proportion of women-headed households who will be targeted within this project.

The youth will be targeted because of their high levels of unemployment which leads to an extra liability on the households and contributes to increased poverty levels. Most youth have missed out on an education because of the war and lack the skills to gain work. Within Sierra Leonean culture, youths are often marginalized in decision making as age and experience is more respected and so many feel disempowered.

The current migration of youths to mining and urban centers can be reduced by providing opportunities for them within the communities such as fish pond development. The youth are energetic members in the communities whose potential can be mobilized to develop their communities while also motivating them with employment and skills.

This programme will work in two chiefdoms (Kunike and Kunike Barina) of Tonkolili district to support 12 vulnerable women groups (360 women) to develop small scale business activities, and 150 households to engage in fish farming. In addition, the project will benefit 3,750 youths who will construct the fish ponds by providing food for work, teaching construction skills and giving access to tools. These activities will directly increase the livelihood options of the beneficiaries in remote and neglected communities by improving their nutrition through added protein in the diet; and their purchasing power through the sale of fish and the development of small enterprises. The 150 households for the fish farms will be selected based on water availability to maintain the ponds. Once the selection is complete, groups of 25 youth will be engaged to construct the ponds. Using a food-for-work approach, the youth will be provided with tools and taught construction skills. Tool banks will be established at each site and the youth can continue to access the tools to replicate the fish ponds and work on other construction activities. Concern will support the youth groups to organize themselves into committees to properly manage the tool banks.

Once the fish ponds are built, the owners will be responsible for the overall management which will include provision of local feeds for fish such as termites and rice bran as well as maintaining the structure. Beneficiaries will also be trained to monitor water levels and pests to prevent loss of fish. Sustainability will be assured through revenue earned from the sale of fish that will be utilized for further rehabilitation of the fish ponds by the beneficiary households. Concern works closely with the Ministry of Agriculture in Tonkolili who will provide technical support and supervision for the project.

Concern currently supports 31 women's groups in Tonkolili, providing some financial and technical assistance to improve their organizational skills and help them find appropriate means of income generation. This project will support 360 women in 12 groups to improve their financial resource base, through: capacity building, linkage to markets and formal financial institutions as well as the establishment of lending opportunities. The women are engaged in petty trading which includes the production and sale of palm oil, nuts, rice and vegetables. In addition, the women lend money to community members from the proceeds realized with minimal interest to build on their financial base. The women will be encouraged to save money as a group and then have a revolving fund that can be borrowed by members.

These lending facilities will allow the women to expand their businesses. Concern will support the women's groups with institutional organization skills ensuring proper organizational structures are in place to enhance effective coordination, management of the groups' activities and capacity building on micro-enterprise development skills. Small grants will also be provided to the groups to enhance the revolving funds and allow them to invest in processing machinery that will add value to their products.

The proposed project is intended to augment activities already undertaken by Concern in the target area as well as building on already existing community structures. Below are some of the activities accomplished by food, income and market program in the last 20 months in collaboration with Tonkolili District Council, local NGO partners and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Forestry (MAFFS);

1. Provided the following improved seed varieties/planting materials 55 metric tones of seed rice to 85 farming groups, 5,820 bundles of sweet potato vines to 2,695 households & 5 community development groups. Trained 640 farming field school members in improved agricultural techniques and 208 women farmer field school members in food processing, preservation and utilization techniques.
2. 70 fish ponds and 60 acres of inland valley swamps were either rehabilitated or constructed. Each of the 70 fish pond and 60 acres benefited one registered vulnerable household. It is anticipated that a total of 650 individuals were direct beneficiaries of the two activities.

3. Market access – 246 kilometers of feeder roads linking over 86 villages were improved through community participation by opening of inaccessible footpaths, back filling of undulated areas along the roads, construction of culverts, construction of drainages and bridges. These have enabled farmers to deliver their produce to markets and thus fetching comparatively favorable prices. Additionally, communities have had increased access to schools and health centers.
4. Supported 46 community development groups and 14 women groups on organizational management to ensure that proper management structures are in place for coordination as well as effective management of the group's activities. Adult literacy training provided for 14 women groups (280 women) has contributed to empowerment of the members allowing them to keep financial records.
5. Livestock distribution – A total of 641 peasant farmers benefited from restocking of goats and sheep as a means of building their resilience and asset base. Restocking of small ruminants to targeted farmers that previously possessed livestock before the advent of ten years civil war.

Request for Support

The project activities are based on successful models already used in the target area. Concern will continue to replicate the activities in new villages within the target communities to ensure sustainable impact. A full grant of **\$ 250,000** is requested for this project. Concern's livelihood program in Tonkolili is currently funded by the European Union but this grant ends in February 2010. This funding request will enable program activities to continue and bridge the funding gap. The requested funds will complement the ongoing program aimed at reducing vulnerability and poverty levels through expanded income opportunities.

It is expected that the project activities will have multiplier effects within targeted communities. The fish ponds development project will involve 3,750 youths in the construction of ponds. Capacity building of the community youths will be promoted through on the job training during the constitution and maintenance of the ponds, allowing them to replicate on their own initiatives thereafter. It is also expected that the women's groups will share their learning and experience with other groups in the area and successful business models will be spread across all 31 of the women's groups that Concern works with. Concern will also share information on the project with other NGOs and groups working both in the target area and in Sierra Leone to ensure a multiplier effect. Concern organizes regular learning alliances in Tonkolili with beneficiaries, government representatives, NGOs and other interested stakeholders which will be a useful forum to spread ideas.

Concern will also continue to collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) and the Tonkolili District Council to build their capacity and ensure that they can sustainably support future projects.

The key planned activities include

1. Mobilization and engagement of community youths for fish pond construction;
2. Selection of 150 fish pond beneficiaries and sites;
3. Training of 3,750 community youths and subsequent construction of 150 fish ponds including stocking of 60,000 fingerlings (seed fish). Each pond will be stocked with 400 fingerlings.
4. Training of 150 households on fish farm maintenance;
5. Training of 12 selected women groups on micro-enterprise development skills;
6. Establishment of linkages between women's groups and formal banking institutions.

PROJECT BUDGET

Item description	\$ Unit cost	\$ Total units	Total cost (USD)
Purchase of fish pond construction items	242	150	36,249
5 days feeding contribution for 25 youths	347	150	52,083
Procurement of fingerlings & nurturing materials	78	150	11,667
Ministry of Agriculture technical supervision fees	200	14	2,800
Women group empowerment			
Women group empowerment training and equipment cost	1,500	12	18,000
Provision of mini projects marching grants	5,069	12	60,828
Provisional funds for women	18,601	1	18,601
Personnel support			
2 Project Assistants 50%	449	12	5,384
3 Project officers 50%	396	12	4,750
2 Community development officers 50%	449	12	5,384
1 Program manager 50%	329	12	3,950
1 Program coordinator 30%	1,399	12	16,786
1 Driver 50%	121	12	1,456
Total direct cost			237,938
Administrative costs 5%			11,897
Grand total			249,835

DETAILED INFORMATION

Clients

Sierra Leone is the poorest country in the world, ranked last in the Human development index (HDI). The country suffered from ten years of civil conflict which rendered destruction and loss of community assets especially in the rural communities. A greater portion of the population, over 75% rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. Pre-war level was characterized by a vicious cycle of poverty with very weak national and rural economy, which stems from the use of low farming technology with the lack of technology transfer opportunities, including: agricultural extension services to intensify production, low agricultural productivity and limited or no access to markets. There are seasonal crop failures due climatic changes as well as livestock mortality, pests and disease problems.

In Sierra Leone, the national average daily income is less than one dollar per day. On this basis 26% of the national population fall below the poverty line. According to survey findings¹, poverty is likely to increase when households live in rural areas; households are polygamous and female headed; household heads are elderly; households cannot read & write a simple phrase and where household heads work as subsistence crop farmers.

The infant mortality rate is 67/1000, under 5 mortality rate is 115/1000 and maternal mortality rate is 42/1000 live births². A newborn in Sierra Leone has the lowest chance in the world of surviving until their 5th birthday. Access to social services, including health care and safe WatSan facilities, is still limited. The most frequently reported illnesses are malaria (51% incidence rate), acute respiratory infections (31% incidence rate) and diarrhea (19% incidence rate)³. Life expectancy at birth in 2001 is 34.5 years and adult literacy rate among people of between 15 years and above is 36%. The Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper describes the poverty situation as worsening due to the rising incidence of HIV and AIDS, typhoid, malaria and communicable diseases including tuberculosis.

Tonkolili district is one of the poorest districts in the country where more than 84% of the residents in the district live in abject poverty. This incidence increases to 87% for the urban population in Tonkolili⁴. The district suffered tragically from the country's ten year civil war, which resulted in widespread destruction to all basic services such as health, education, agriculture, water and sanitation.⁵ Vulnerability Assessment Studies concluded in 2003 categorized many chiefdoms in Tonkolili between Extreme and highly vulnerable levels. A more recent vulnerability report in 2008 based on housing, asset portfolios and agriculture parameters describe Tonkolili as still vulnerable with 86% of the population experiencing serious shocks, 26% food insecure and 36% of children under five stunting. Basic health services are not accessible to the majority of population in Tonkolili because of lack of adequate health infrastructure. Agriculture is the largest sector in the economy, employing over 75% of the population and representing the largest contribution to GDP (45%). Yet farmers are among the poorest category of the population.

This is attributable to the following reasons:

- Low capital investment, lack of modern technology based inputs and support services (research & extension services are either weak or non existent);
- Weak farmer organizations and associations lacking access to credit for inputs and market information for products;
- Poor networks of roads constraining transport & marketing;
- Low participation of farmers in policy formulation;
- Institutional weaknesses – the shortage of trained, qualified technical or professional and management staff;
- The un-profitability of small scale peasant agriculture especially for rice which the main crop grown by majority of farmers.

According to survey findings⁶, poverty is likely to increase when households live in rural areas; households are polygamous and female-headed; household heads are elderly; households cannot read & write a simple phrase and where household heads work as subsistence crop farmers.

¹ Sierra Leone integrated household survey 2003/ 2004

² District Health Profile – Tonkolili 2008

³ District Health Profile – Tonkolili 2008

⁴ WFP report on vulnerability 2003

⁵ UNOCHA, 2002

⁶ Sierra Leone integrated household survey 2003/ 2004



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Key:



Concern Worldwide Programme offices



Concern operational area

Impact Studies

Rogbom village is a remote community with a population of 97 persons in Kunike Barina Chiefdom in Tonkolili District. Fish farming is one of the main livelihood activities of the people of Rogbom village complementing other agricultural activities. Sources of income are normally scarce in the village notably at the peak of the hunger period, between the months of July to September when household food reserves have run out. Fish is scarce during this period due to the rise in water volume in the nearby streams where these families source fish mainly for consumption. The remoteness of Rogbom village also makes it difficult for community members to buy fresh fish as the nearest market centre 13km away, on poor roads.

Ya Yeanoh Sesay is a Concern beneficiary who live in Rogbom. She and her husband had a fish pond which was their source of livelihoods before the war. Her husband was killed during the war, forcing her to flee with six children for a period of three years as the war intensified. With the cessation of animosities, she returned home and found her fish pond dilapidated and could not afford to rehabilitate it. This made it extremely difficult for her and children to cope especially during the hunger period. Yeanoh was one of the most vulnerable households who were targeted by Concern two years ago in the village for fish ponds rehabilitation project. The fish pond now augments her household food basket during the hunger gap and also provides income to meet other basic needs such as medical care and school fees for her children.

When Yeanoh was visited, she remarked; “I now have enough food to feed my family from the daily catch and proceeds from sale of fish and fingerlings from my fish pond”. Yeanoh further explained that after the war, her household relied on bush yams and cassava during the hunger period while she was engaged in sale of labor to earn her living.

When Yeanoh was asked how she copes with farming; she responded, “I found it difficult to farm after the war since my late husband had helped with farming activities, but I was able to hire laborers to work on my farm from the money generated from the sale of fish this year”. She also added that she raised approximately \$150 from the fish sales and part of the money was used to buy rice seeds and pay laborers.

Since 2007, Concern has rehabilitated and restocked 70 fish ponds in Kunike and Kunike Barina Chiefdoms targeting the most vulnerable households which include widows, women-headed households, households with elderly and disabled in the villages with community youths providing labor in the rehabilitation work. The fish ponds rehabilitation project is geared towards improving the nutritional status of the beneficiaries through provision of fish as a source of protein, as well as diversifying income sources for the resource-poor household's to sustainably reduce shocks and stress.

Technical Reports

Please see attached annexes.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

1. Are you seeking funding for a program that is intended to become self-sustaining over time?

The training of youths in fish ponds construction and management techniques as well as the establishment of tool banks will enable youths to replication their own ponds and thus promotes sustainability. Collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture on the implementation provides opportunities for follow up and provide further support to communities for up scaling of fish ponds. Linking women's groups to Yoni Community Bank is a means of assuring sustainability as the groups will have access to loans to increase their business ventures and thus become self-reliant. Additionally, the acquisition of capacity building training skills in micro-enterprise development ensures continuity of the project since the women will utilize the skills to engage in profitable income generation activities. Creating marketing linkages with traders from bigger towns for marketing of their produce will promote sustainability of their business, as there will be ready market for their produce.

2. Has your organization, in the past, started programs with charitable funds that have become self-sustaining (i.e., continuing to operate with no further charitable support) over time? If so, please provide the region, the year the program was started, and for how many years the program has continuously operated without donor support.

Angkor Mikroheranhvatho (Kampuchea) Co. Ltd (Angkor Microfinance Kampuchea, AMK) is a licensed Microfinance Institution (MFI) operating in Cambodia. AMK originated from the savings and credit components of the community development work of Concern Worldwide in Cambodia from 1993 but only became a directly implemented program in 1999. Following the new Cambodian microfinance regulation, AMK became a separate company and obtained a license from the Cambodian central bank in 2004. AMK mission is 'to help large numbers of poor people in Cambodia to improve their livelihood options through the sustainable delivery of appropriate and viable microfinance services'. Thus, AMK's priorities as a provider of rural finance are centered in its operational and financial sustainability, while maintaining its social objectives.

ADDENDUM A – for full studies/reports that you might want to provide