



Sierra Leone

Since the civil war ended in 2002, Sierra Leone has made significant progress in recovery, reconstruction and democratization, but still faces serious challenges from a decade of conflict. Poverty is pervasive, and agricultural production is low. Furthermore, weak institutional capacity impacts all economic and social sectors.

ACDI/VOCA began work in Sierra Leone in 2008 at a critical time during the transition from conflict, and continues to support multiple sectors as the country puts in place sustainable structures and promotes agriculture and economic growth.

Support to Agriculture, Governance and the Environment

One of ACDI/VOCA's most significant projects in Sierra Leone has focused on strengthening governance and local capacity through hands-on training. In 2008, we began implementing the four-year, \$13.4 million USAID-funded **Promoting Agriculture, Governance and the Environment (PAGE)** program, which targeted agriculture, democracy and natural resource management in Kono, Kenema, Kailahun and Koinadugu districts. PAGE brought together ACDI/VOCA as the prime



implementer with World Vision and Tetra Tech ARD as subrecipients.

In agriculture, PAGE focused on building the capacity of indigenous organizations using a value chain approach. The program formed **farmer field schools (FFS)** and linked them to marketing associations (MAs), building their technical, business and financial capacity as well as facilitating market linkages. PAGE also promoted sustainable agriculture that contributes to the preservation of biodiversity in particular and wise natural resource management.

Implementing a holistic approach to improving livelihoods, PAGE facilitated access to credit by establishing village savings and loans associations (VSLAs). >>

In the environment sector, PAGE worked with the national government to formalize policies that support community forest management and develop community NRM infrastructure. The culmination of these efforts was the landmark signing of Forest Co-management Agreements for the Kambui North and Wara Wara Forest Preserves. As a result, the government and communities now share the responsibility for sustainable preservation of these critical areas as well as the proceeds from marketed forest products.

PAGE's governance activities focused on strengthening business principles and practices to help community leaders govern transparently while helping citizens engage with local government to build trust and confidence. This included a range of activities from empowering communities to advocate for themselves and their natural resources, to reinforcing the structures and systems within FFS, MAs and VSLAs. In total, the project supported and built the capacity of more than 1,030 groups: FFS, producer organizations, MAs, women's groups, youth groups, community-based organizations, VSLAs and inland valley swamp groups. Program implementers also provided literacy training to various communities.

In 2012, recognizing project success and seeking to consolidate gains made during the first four years, USAID awarded ACIDI/VOCA a one-year, \$2 million extension to continue PAGE through February 2013.

Leveraging Resources for Agricultural Development

In 2009, the government of Sierra Leone launched the National Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan (NASDP), which promotes commercial agriculture as the engine for economic growth, implemented through the **Smallholder Commercialization Program (SCP)**. In 2011, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) awarded ACIDI/VOCA \$45,497 over a five-month period to support SCP implementation. In particular, ACIDI/VOCA consolidated agricultural business centers (ABCs) and their member FBOs (farmer-based organizations) in the district of Koinadugu.

Leveraging PAGE resources, ACIDI/VOCA assessed the capacity of ABCs and helped develop two-year business plans and five-year development plans. We also established a coaching and mentoring system for ABC managers and facilitated market linkages. This was followed by a second award from FAO in 2012.

In a related six-month, \$85,000 activity known as Capacity Building Services for the SCP in Koinadugu District, ACIDI/VOCA conducted training needs assessments and studies of market demand for ABC services. Additionally, we supported the development of business plans and provided training and coaching on governance, agribusiness development and management to FBOs and ABCs. >>

Reducing Malnutrition and Enhancing Livelihood Opportunities

ACDI/VOCA's most recent program in Sierra Leone has strengthened livelihoods as well as health and well-being among women and young children. In June 2010, we began implementing the five-year, \$60 million **PL 480 Title II Sustainable Nutrition and Agriculture Promotion (SNAP)** program. SNAP was funded by USAID and involved collaboration among ACDI/VOCA, the International Medical Corps (IMC) and Opportunities Industrialization Center International (OICI).

SNAP operates in Tonkolili, Bombali, Kailahun and Koinadugu Districts, seeking to reduce food insecurity and increase resiliency among vulnerable populations. Using an integrated approach, SNAP ensures access to food through direct distribution, thus improving health and nutrition while promoting improved literacy and sustainable livelihood activities for the same households. In addition, SNAP integrates five cross-cutting themes into program interventions: resiliency to shocks, productive youth, gender equity, environmental stewardship and good governance.

Utilizing a "preventing malnutrition in children under two" (PM2A) approach, SNAP provides training and direct distribution of rations for pregnant and lactating women as well as children up to 23 months of age. PM2A combines health capacity building, behavior change communication and food aid to provide a bridge toward long-term, sustainable

improvements in health, sanitation and nutrition. SNAP also engages local health services and communities with training and rehabilitation projects to ensure that children under five benefit from improved health opportunities and nutritional and hygiene knowledge. The project also provides medicines to health units as gifts-in-kind.

SNAP also acts holistically to ensure that livelihoods challenges are addressed. It supports value chains for rice, cassava, sorghum, pigeon pea, sesame, oil palm, groundnuts, sweet potato and garden vegetables. In addition, SNAP provides training in critical interventions in production and post-harvest handling. Other interventions focus on enhancing marketing channels by establishing and strengthening FFS and MAs, and linking them to markets. SNAP conducts trainings in gara tie dying, tailoring, soap making and carpentry, and supports improved literacy. Ongoing work with VSLAs has increased the cash supply for social purposes and provided more opportunities for women's empowerment.

Looking Forward

While levels of USAID funding in Sierra Leone are uncertain, ACDI/VOCA's experience in there has positioned us well for upcoming opportunities. The challenges in Sierra Leone remain great, and ACDI/VOCA is well-placed to support the country's continued growth into the future.

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