

STIMULUS GRANT FOR THE WOMEN OF THE MRU

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, rural Sierra Leone has suffered great losses economically. Border communities in Sierra Leone along the Liberia and Guinea borders bear the brunt of this as the closure of borders and restriction of movement prevent these areas from engaging in cross border economic activities. Women are most affected as they form the majority of traders and entrepreneurs along the Mano River catchment area and the border regions of the three countries.

THE INTERVENTION

Realizing the danger of increased economic instability in the area, SEND-Sierra Leone with funds from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), under the Stabilize Affected COVID 19 communities in Mano River Union project provided 400 women and community members a COVID-19 stimulus package. The project disbursed the grant capital using the Village Savings and



MEMBERS OF THREE NEW VSLAS FORMED IN KAMBIA DISTRICT

Loans (VSLA) approach to beneficiaries in the Kailahun, Kambia and Pujehun districts. On the 23rd of August 2021 in Buedu, Kissi Tongi Chiefdom in Kailahun District, 100 beneficiaries received one million leones each totaling one hundred million Leones. The disbursals were a great success, and even garnered a heartfelt remark from the Kissi Tongi Chiefdom speaker, *"I am overwhelmed with this gesture, it came at a time when most of my people are struggling to recover from the impacts of the COVID 19 as we are engaged in agricultural activities and petty trading. My people will use these grants judiciously."*



EXECUTIVES OF A NEWLY FORMED VSLA IN KAMBIA DISTRICT



EXECUTIVES OF A NEWLY FORMED VSLA IN KAMBIA DISTRICT (2)

Similarly, 300 women from Koindu, Kailahun, Pendembu, Jendema, Madina and Kambia towns, each received two million, five hundred thousand leones as grant capital for investments in agriculture and trading business. During the grant disbursement in Kambia, the Councilor of Ward 195 in Madina, Aminata Bangura shared her experience of attempting to alleviate the impact COVID-19 had on the livelihoods of her female constituents. In her address, she assured the team of her commitment to support the intervention by monitoring and mentoring beneficiaries of the grant to ensure judicious use of the grant. For her, providing the grant capital, the business management and accounting skills through training session and logistical materials such as the VSLA box, passbooks, ledger books and calculators would ensure sustainability and protection of their livelihoods. As she received cheers from the women gathered, she exclaimed *“This is a huge opportunity which will not be misappropriated.”*



BENEFICIARIES OF THE STIMULUS GRANT UNDER THE STABILIZE PROJECT

A BETTER TOMORROW

Singing cheerful songs, beneficiaries commended SEND Sierra Leone and UNDP in Sierra Leone for introducing the Stabilize project as it presents a lifeline to begin new and revive existing businesses as the borders still remain closed. Notably amongst the beneficiaries were Hannah Dumbuya, a teacher and Josephine Kadiatu Turay, a practicing nurse. Both women lamented on the difficulties in living a dignified life as they struggled to make ends meet but the grant capital and the VSLA training, have reinvigorated them to have hope once again in creating a sustainable livelihood. With dreams of becoming a qualified teacher with a Higher Teachers Certificate, Hannah believes the new business she would invest into using the grant capital after reinvesting her profits will provide her enough savings capital to pay for her tuition to further her education.

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