



Employment Promotion Programme (EPP) *Youth Resettlement and Reintegration in Sierra Leone* – a catalyst for rural development

Where we started

One of the tragic legacies of the decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone is that up to two million people were internally displaced. Many were youth who fled to urban areas and to artisanal diamond mines, living lives of abject poverty, hunger, and unemployment.



Photo Joan Baxter

Concentrations of disenfranchised youth in urban centres such as Freetown and in the diamond centre of Koidu create pressure points: breeding grounds for crime, disease and political and social volatility.

In 2006, GTZ approached youth groups in Freetown and around Koidu and learnt that the majority were anxious to return home to the rural communities they left during the war. They were penniless, unable to afford even transport back to their villages, and they could not go home empty-handed. Serious rifts with elders in their communities caused by the conflict had not healed.

Their communities suffered from a lack of able-bodied young men and women for farming, maintenance of tree crops, and for community works on roads and bridges that would open up the area to key markets for agricultural produce.

All that was needed to resolve this problem was a catalyst – here in the form of the GTZ pilot Food Security and Peace Consolidation and Reconciliation Project. Through trial and error and by listening to returnees as well as their host communities, GTZ has developed a six-step approach:

1. identification and registration of the youth willing to return
2. verification with the host communities
3. negotiation and arbitration in the host communities on the rights and obligations of the returnees
4. transportation of the returnees to their villages
5. provision of resettlement kits for male returnees and their families
6. livelihood support and follow-up such as small development projects in the villages.



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What we have achieved so far

In 2006 and 2007, the project successfully resettled 300 young families (671 family members) from Freetown and Koidu to their native villages in Kono and Kailahun Districts. It offered the basic support the young families needed to return home, providing them with transport, basic foodstuffs, utensils, tarpaulins, farming tools and brick moulds for house-building.

Not a single person has returned to Freetown or Koidu. They are now growing their own food, contributing to food security and development in their communities. The villages are rejuvenated and the elders and youth have reconciled their differences.



The operational area – Kono and Kailahun Districts in Eastern Sierra Leone – bordering Guinea and Liberia

Where we are going

The success of this pilot project led to a new five-year programme of Youth Resettlement and Reintegration within the GTZ Employment Promotion Programme, which aims to scale up and expand the resettlement up to 60,000 young people in Kono and Kailahun Districts by the end of 2012.

Its objectives are to:

- ♦ empower youth and increase their productivity through agriculture and income generating activities for secure livelihoods, thereby responding to the Government of Sierra Leone's priority of addressing youth unemployment
- ♦ increase food security in the country and contribute to rural development, thereby responding to the Government of Sierra Leone's priority of increasing agricultural production
- ♦ reverse the rural-urban migration flow and relieve high concentrations of disenfranchised youth, thereby contributing to political and social stability in Sierra Leone.

Through the successful economic reintegration of displaced persons, social reconciliation and stability, as well as sustainable peace within the community are being promoted.

How we work and who are our partners

To strengthen the programme, GTZ has linked up with several key partners. Training in sustainable agriculture (horticultural techniques, rice swamp management) is provided by the German NGO, Welthungerhilfe.

The World Food Programme offers support in the form of foodstuffs for the programme. Reproductive health education and voluntary HIV testing are provided to resettling youth and to host communities by NGOs.

Together with the German Development Bank (KfW) and the Ministries of Agriculture, of Youth and Sports, and of Labour, GTZ helps groups of villages to form 'clusters': hubs to increase agricultural production, add value to local produce, to generate income, and to promote sustainable, commercial agriculture for markets. Feeder roads are being built and maintained by and for the hubs to increase their access to markets in the country.

In all of these activities, GTZ works closely with local authorities, District Councils and Ward Development Committees to bring sustainable rural development to communities, districts and Sierra Leone as a whole.



For further information contact

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