

UPDATES FROM LIBERIA

August 2024



Concern Worldwide's Liberia five-year strategic plan 2022–2026 will contribute to a Liberia that is food and nutrition secure. We will achieve this through a multi-layered, multi-sectoral approach. This means working with households living in conditions of extreme poverty on activities that are both nutrition-specific and sensitive, including continuing our livelihoods work with a particular focus on enhancing engagement in food systems, expanding our water and sanitation, and health system strengthening programming. As part of our five-year ambition, we intend to restart our education interventions in Liberia. Our approach is to work in communities where people live in extreme poverty to create an environment that enables them to reach their full potential. Through our advocacy and influencing work, we will contribute to addressing some of the systemic challenges at the district and national levels that prevent people from moving out of extreme poverty.

Our Achievements (January to June 2024)

Health & nutrition
 **2,306**
PEOPLE REACHED

Livelihood
 **4,941**
PEOPLE REACHED

WASH
 **17,250**
PEOPLE REACHED

Agriculture
 **1,650**
PEOPLE REACHED

 **OPERATIONAL IN**
6 counties

Image: Joseph F. Wheh, a lead farmer of the farmers' group farm in Sand Community, Grand Bassa County. The farmers group have started cultivating orange sweet-flesh potatoes.

Photo: Concern Worldwide.



Angelina Kamara her fruits at the eco-fridge in Bokay Town, District 1, Grand Bassa County. **Photo:** Concern Worldwide.



Using climate-smart approaches to reduce post-harvest loss and increase income for smallholder farmers

The lack of access to infrastructure and electricity has made farmers in rural communities vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and food insecurity. Liberia is currently ranked 117 out of 125 countries according to the 2023 Global Hunger Index report with a level of hunger that is considered serious.

In June 2024, Concern completed the implementation of the EKO Energy-funded project. The project titled “Using sustainable solar systems to transform rural farming communities and markets in Liberia”. The solar energy system project has improved access to renewable electricity in rural areas using solar energy to electrify storage structures in targeted communities in rural

Liberia. Overall, the intervention has contributed to reducing carbon emissions and addressing the sustainable development goals, particularly Sustainable Development Goals 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and well-being), 5 (Gender equality), 7 (affordable and clean energy) and 13 (clean energy). The project installed four solar cold storage to reduce carbon emissions from fossil-powered alternatives, helping mitigate our impact on the climate in Liberia.

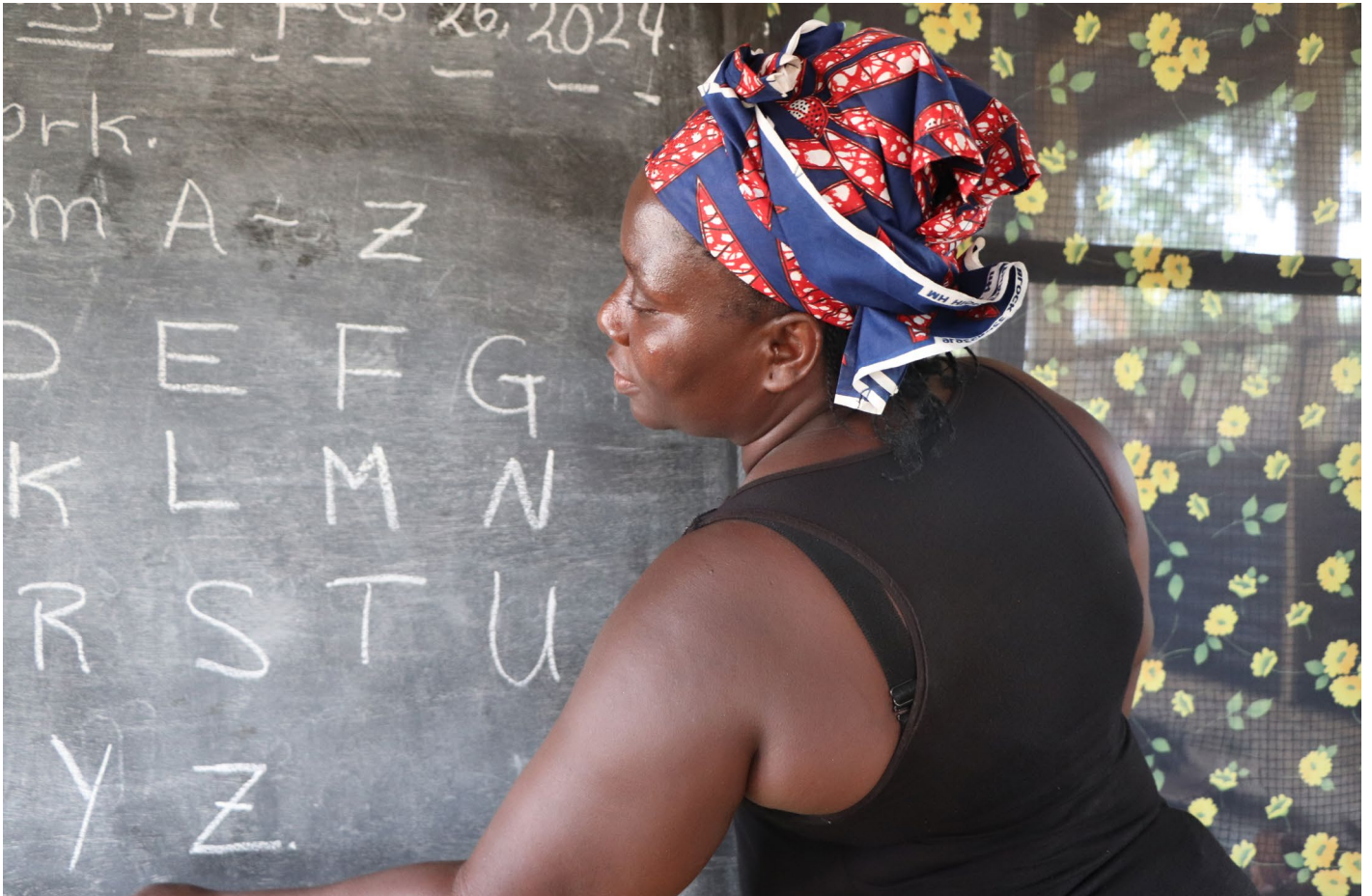
As part of our sustainability approach, Concern Worldwide established and

trained community management committee for the management and maintenance of the infrastructure.

“Due to the lack of access to market and poor road network, we had a lot of wasted fruits and vegetables after harvest. With the solar cold storage, we now have a place to store our perishable produce, which is reducing post-harvest loss, especially for us the smallholder farmers”. said Sarah Koyou, one of the residents and smallholder farmers of Bokay Town.

Eco fridge in Bokay Town, District 1, Grand Bassa Co. **Photo:** Concern Worldwide





Rachel T. Moore practices her letter formation at an adult literacy and numeracy evening class for women in the village of Poweh, Rivercess County. **Photo:** Concern Worldwide.



Adult learning & gender equality

Strengthening the capacity of female farmers through adult learning

The Irish Aid funded Livelihood Innovation, Food and Entrepreneurship (LIFE) program seeks to increase rural economic development and food security in Liberia. To date, the program is working with 100 new communities and over 2,500 smallholder farmers by providing climate smart agricultural inputs and training, increase rural financing through the Community Savings and Loan Association (CSLA) and promoting positive gender behaviours and social cohesion.

As part of capacity building for smallholder farmers, the LIFE project works with 638 women on the adult

literacy activity in Rivercess and Grand Bassa Counties. Most of these women have never been to school which makes it difficult to properly track sales of their farm produce.

The [2022 national census report](#) indicates that there are more literate men than women in Liberia – it states 54.6% of women and 65.2% of men are literate. Literacy training includes numeracy recognition, simple mathematical calculations, alphabet recitation, and reading.

“Female education was not considered important in the 1980s. This denied me and many other women access to formal education. I had always wanted to be a midwife. I would have loved to see the beginning of new lives.” – Rachel T. Moore, Rivercess

Rachel has never been to school until Concern Worldwide introduced the adult literacy program in her community in 2023. Rachel and her sisters had spent all their time farming for the family while their brothers went to school. One can easily tell through the eyes of Rachel how passionate and eager she has been to acquire formal education.

During the adult literacy classes, she always ensures to sit at the front row, which helps her to be more focused and not distracted. What’s more interesting about her is that she seizes every given opportunity to demonstrate learnings on the writing board. For her, every attempt to answer a question counts: – “it doesn’t matter whether I get it right or not. What matters to me is doing my best” she says.

Rachel is now capable of independently writing her name, calculating two to four figures and writing four- to five-letter words which is greatly helping her track sales, use her profit wisely and participate in the CSLA.



Concern Liberia Country Director Ciara Begley (right) and Railey Boeya Community Empowerment for Change, Program Officer attended an *Agriculture and Market Linkage Fair* in Buchanan City, Grand Bassa County under the theme “Grow local and eat local”. **Photo:** Concern Worldwide



Agricultural market

Concern Worldwide hosts agriculture and market linkage fair in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County

In April 2024, the Concern Worldwide hosted the agriculture

and market linkage fair in Buchanan City, Grand Bassa County. The market fair brought together over 250 farmers from Rivercess and Grand Bassa Counties to showcase and sell their produce and connect with other value chain actors that are interested in their products. This one-day event was held under the theme “*Grow local and eat local*”.

Serving as keynote speaker, the Deputy Minister for Technical Services of the Ministry of Agriculture

(MOA), Solomon C. Hedd-Williams noted that the Government of Liberia is committed to transforming the agriculture sector by addressing the key issues affecting the sector. He said the Ministry of Agriculture is currently formulating a holistic agriculture development plan to guide the sector for the next six years which will inform development partners of the gaps and needs of the sector. Hon. Williams assured farmers that an agriculture enterprise bank will be opened soon where farmers can access loans for farming purposes.

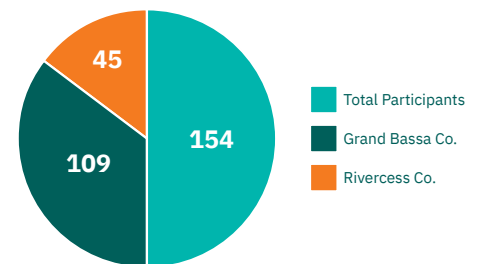
To motivate farmers, Concern Worldwide and its five National Implementing Partners (Community Empowerment for Change (CEC), Youth Alive Liberia (YAL), Community of Hope Agriculture Project (CHAP), Rainbo Initiative Liberia, and Liberia Agency for Community Development (LACD)) gifted three exceptional farmers with various packages of agriculture inputs. These packages worth USD\$450 for first place winner, USD\$300 for second place winner and USD\$200 for third place winner all given in agriculture inputs. The winners were selected based on several essential agriculture criteria that assessed farmers’ level of knowledge on best agriculture and environmental practices.



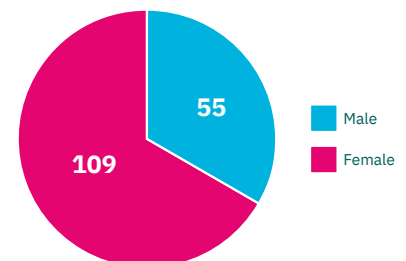
Deputy Minister for Technical Services at the Ministry of Agriculture, Solomon C. Hedd-Williams speaking at the *Agriculture and Market Linkage Fair*.

Photo: Concern Worldwide

No. of Participants at the Agriculture & Market Linkage Fair



Breakdown of Attendance to the Fair by Gender





Nowah Kwaneh at her farm near Buchanan, which she has expanded with support from Concern and her local CSLA. She grows watermelon, okra, bitter ball, cucumber, peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, and pumpkin. **Photo:** Kieran McConville/Concern Worldwide

IFaNSI farming

Women's contribution to local agriculture and household sustenance

Improving Food and Nutrition Security through Sustainable Agricultural Interventions (I-FaNSI) is a Latter-Day Saints Charities funded project. The project works to address food and nutrition security for vulnerable households and children under five in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County.

Currently, the I-FaNSI project works with over 1,800 women in 45 communities of Buchanan and its environs. One of these women is Nowah Kwaneh who is unwaveringly

involved in farming activities as source of livelihood.

Due to the civil war in Liberia, Nowah has found herself in a situation where she had no income, no land or basic resources and a family to care for. Responding to such a shock is complicated and this was the exact case of Nowah after the Liberian civil war when she had fled from Bong County to Grand Bassa County to seek refuge.

Most women, like Nowah, living in rural communities rely on agriculture for livelihood. Abruptly relocating to a different region makes it harder for such women to access land for livelihood activities.

Being very agriculturally driven and proactive, she one day discovered an unused land lying at the outskirts

of Buchanan. This piece of fertile swamp land has since been a source of income for Nowah and her family. She begun farming leafy and non-leafy vegetables on this land since 2006.

However, she reveals that farming in the absence of adequate funds for capital investment and lack of access to loan and proper farming methods has also been a major challenge for her causing low yield and less income yet, she remained resilient.

Nowah is a participant of the community savings and loan association where she has access to loan that supports her farming activities.

“It is difficult getting money from credit unions and banks. The demands are high along with the unaffordable interest rate (25%)” – Nowah Kwaneh, smallholder farmer

The Improving Food and Nutrition Security through Sustainable Agricultural project (I-FaNSI) has increased the purchasing power of targeted households through savings and alternative/enhanced livelihood strategies and improved nutritional status of children under five, through nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions.



Government of Ireland
International Development Programme

Improving access to finance in rural communities

The Community Saving and Loan Association (CSLA) serves as a central and integral part of Concern Worldwide's programming in Liberia. The CSLA are established in communities to create a platform for households to have sustainable access to finance. This helps farmers and entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and agriculture activities for a better



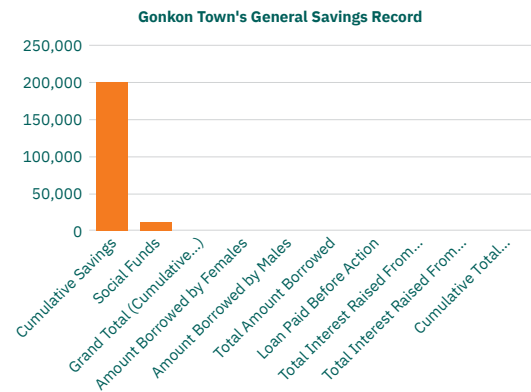
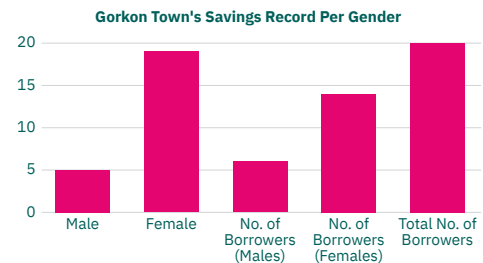
Saylah Zankah, project participant of an Irish Aid/LWC funded project. **Photo:** Josephine Drobia/Concern Worldwide.

livelihood. Concern has established 63 community savings and loan groups in District 1, Grand Bassa County as part of this Liberia WASH Consortium project (LWC).

The Irish Government funded LWC project is working to improve access to safe, diverse, and nutritious food by improving the population's incomes through the CSLA and strengthening their resilience capacities through household and community support mechanisms. It is being implemented together with Action Against Hunger and WaterAid in Grand Bassa and Montserrado.

“I took LD\$ 16,000 to purchase construction material (planks for doors and doorframes) for my house. This would not have been possible without the savings group.”

– Saylah Zangar, a member of the Gonkon Town's CSLA



Sanitation and hygiene



Reducing open defecation through social behaviour change

The Countywide Sanitation Activity (CWSA) is a five-year USAID funded project that is working to permanently end the use of open defecation in Liberia. To achieve this, the project carries out effective sanitation and behaviour change sensitization to the public and provides affordable toilet (materials). However, due to many social factors that influence the adaptation of sanitation practices coupled with limited finance, it takes decades for families to have access to proper toilet facilities in most rural areas. This was the case of Aletha Reeds and her family but not until she was introduced to the CWSA project. Aletha lives in a small community called Weinsue Town in Bong County.

Her household had used a nearby swamp for open defecation until she met an artisan trained through



Aletha Reeds of Weinsue Town, Bong County, Liberia holding the Sato pan at the front of her constructed toilets. **Photo:** Concern Worldwide

the Countywide Sanitation Activity (CWSA) in her community. “I had dug the pit to build a pull flush toilet because I didn't know about the Sato and all its advantages until I met an artisan who introduced me to the Sato/Queue toilet.” Aletha constructed two toilets and installed two sato pans in them for her family.

For community sustainability, the CWSA project trained artisans from communities to facilitate the construction and rehabilitation of toilets. The artisans charge a maximum of LD\$500 to install a sato pan to reduce the financial burden and make the product more affordable for community dwellers.

The USAID funded project is being implemented by a consortium of four organisations including Population Services International (PSI), Concern Worldwide, Athena Infonomics and Gusceman.

The Activity is promoting an end to open defecation through sanitation market development to increase access and affordability for women, people living with disabilities, and other socially excluded people to buy and use toilets. The project is also championing women in business with a targeted approach to female sales agents, artisans, wholesalers and fabricators.

Reducing maternal mortality and working with trained traditional midwives in Grand Bassa County

The Liberia WASH Consortium is a multi-sectorial intervention that focuses on WASH issues including backyard gardening for nutrition, facilitating dish rack and clothesline, water point construction and strengthening health system referral pathway. In rural communities of Liberia, inherited practices of traditional midwifery have been passed down from several generations to present days. In these communities, the healthcare delivery systems are hindered by poor roads, lack of morbidity and cultural practices to name



Trained traditional midwife, Nally Garpue (right) alongside her successor, Muabon Zangban (left), both from Noryou Town, District 1, Grand Bassa County. **Photo:** Concern Worldwide

a few. These traditional midwives have proven to be the only alternative for pregnant women and even lactating mothers for generations. In 2021, the Liberia Wash Consortium begun its four-year WASH focused project implementation in Grand Bassa, District 1. The project works with trained traditional midwives to strengthen the referral pathway for reduced maternal and infant motility by reducing community birth attendance.

With support from the Irish Government funded LWC project, the Liberian Ministry of Health through the Grand Bassa County Health Team provided training in home management of childhood illnesses and referral, adolescent health and nutrition and best nutrition practices for pregnant and lactating mothers amongst others.

Nally Garpue, having participated in these trainings, says the training is essential to save lives.

“Through these trainings, I have learned the process to support pregnant women and refer them to the health center for delivery. I also learned that nutrition is important, and I ensure that they eat the required food, do their regular antenatal care visits, and take their medications on time.”

– Nally Garpue, traditionally-trained midwife

Nally lives in a small community with approximately 250 inhabitants and is about six kilometres away from the nearest clinic. She says even though they were not recording deaths during delivery before the project’s intervention, there were several complications with pregnant women and infants that are now reduced. The Liberia WASH Consortium provides a delivery kit that contains a bag, flashlight, cell phone, battery, scratch cards, raincoat, and rain boots for the Trained Traditional Midwives (TTMs). This effort is encouraging birth preparedness and facilitating the shift from community birth attendance to health facility deliveries.

Concern Worldwide goes green!

Concern Liberia in line with its five years Country Strategic Plan solarized its offices in Grand Bassa County, Rivercess County and Monrovia. The solarisation is done to promote the use of renewable energy and reduce the Concern’s carbon emission. This is a huge achievement especially that Concern has taken a great step in supporting the Sustainable Development Goal 7 which speaks about clean and affordable energy. This solarisation reflects our quest to promote green and environmentally friendly communities.

The Concern offices in Buchanan, Liberia have been converted to run entirely on solar power, as have all other Concern offices in Liberia. **Photo:** Kieran McConville/Concern Worldwide





Fatou Miller, who received training from Livelihood Innovation Food and Entrepreneurship (LIFE) project, making eco-stoves to sell in Grand Bassa County. **Photo:** Concern Worldwide

Promoting environmental practice through eco stoves in Liberia

Most women in rural communities have used traditional cooking methods for several years to prepare food for household consumption. These open fires consume larger amounts of wood which produce more harmful smoke that pose inconveniences to women and cause environmental pollution. The time allotted to gathering these firewood for cooking increases workload for women.

As part of the Livelihood, Innovation, Food, and Entrepreneurship (LIFE) project, Concern has trained 20

women to construct eco stoves across Grand Bassa and Rivercess counties to reduce these social and economic impacts. The project also conducted financial management and business skill training for these women to scale up their production for income generation.

One of those women trained by the LIFE project is Fatou Miller from the Toweh Street community in District 3, Grand Bassa County. Fatou is a member of the mother group which consists of 25 women. The mother groups are women-driven groups established by Concern Worldwide in communities to support nutrition, livelihood, and agriculture issues amongst other key interventions.

Since her training in 2023, Fatou has built over eighty pieces of eco stoves in her community. She is also teaching other women to make eco stoves for household use and sales.

Equip with knowledge, she has begun producing mobile eco stoves and sells each at LD\$300 (USD\$1.5 at rate of LD\$192 = USD\$1). "I find this eco stove durable and a great way to make income. I wish to start supplying other towns and villages with the stove" she says.

The shift from traditional fire cooking to eco stoves has reduced the workload for women and considerably reduced the amount of wood used for cooking.

“Before the eco stove was introduced to us, we would use 10 to 15 bundles of wood per month for cooking. However, we now use just five bundles per month for cooking and produce less smoke.” – Fatou Miller, Grand Bassa County

Production of these stoves is creating sustainable livelihoods, boosting families' incomes, and building financial independence while protecting the environment from carbon emissions that is produced at household and community levels.

Concern Worldwide supporting trees planting to promote climate resilience in vulnerable communities

Through the Irish Government funded Livelihood Innovation, Food and Entrepreneurship project, Concern together with Youth Alive Liberia, are working with communities in Grand Bassa and Rivercess to prevent the impact of heavy wind, erosion and provide food through promoting tree planting.

Since early 2024, the project has distributed over one thousand fruit tree seedlings reaching one hundred eleven households in Rivercess and Grand Bassa Counties. Seedlings distributed are mostly cashew nuts, oranges, and avocados.



Abigail Gbarpue with mango seedlings she planted herself in Yarpah Town, Rivercess County. **Photo:** Concern Worldwide

“This is my first time planting trees around my yard, and I am glad to understand that trees have a lot to offer then just shade or fruits,” says Abigail Gbarpue. Abigail has planted over 90 trees (mostly mangos) and is encouraging others to follow same. She is establishing a commercial nursery in Rivercess County.

“Though we had suffered storm and erosion, we had no idea that planting trees could contribute to the solutions until Youth Alive educated us about it.”

– *Abigail Gbarpue, Rivercess County*



Jasper Yanbor holds some cashew nuts seedlings at the nursery holding. Jasper is the Program Officer of Youth Alive Liberia (YAL), one of Concern’s national implementing partners. He works with communities, helping plant trees and promote best environmental practices. **Photo:** Concern Worldwide.

This initiative complements the global efforts to address climate change and promote sustainability for people living in rural communities.



Joseph F. Wheh, a lead farmer of the farmers' group farm in Sand Community, Grand Bassa County. **Photo:** Concern Worldwide.

Transforming livelihoods and improving nutrition with orange flesh sweet potatoes in Grand Bassa County

The lack of consumption of diversified food coupled with limited income to purchase required daily diets force local communities to be faced with malnutrition, especially for children under five years. According to a [report from UNICEF](#), 13% of children in Liberia lack vitamin A which is essential to immunity and eyesight.

Grand Bassa, like many counties in Liberia suffers malnutrition and economic instability. To combat malnutrition and improve the livelihood of these communities, the Livelihood, Innovation, Food, and Entrepreneurship (LIFE) project recently introduced the orange sweet flesh potato (OSFP) for cultivation in Grand Bassa County.

The OSFP was given to one of the project’s Master Trainers, Lawrence F. Barbu for multiplication. Mr. Barbu is an agriculturist who was trained by the LIFE project to roll out agricultural training to other project participants across Grand Bassa and Rivercess. After three months of growing the OSFP seedlings, Mr. Barbu harvested two 25kg bags of OSFP and he has supported twenty other communities with the seedlings to be cultivated in other communities. “Thanks to Concern Worldwide for introducing this potato value chain in our community. The OSFP is nutritious and healthy, especially for children growth,” says Mr. Barbu.

One of those communities that received the OSFP seedlings from Mr. Barbu is Sand Town, headed by Joseph F. Wheh who is the lead farmer.

“Our priority is to multiply the OSFP and support other communities just as we were supported by Mr. Barbu, Master trainer. We hope to use the potatoes to make porridge for our children and sell some for-income generation.”

– *Lead farmer, Joseph F. Wheh*

The OSFP is not a regularly cultivated plant in Grand Bassa which makes the farmers excited to try the new venture. Over the next four years, the Irish Government-funded LIFE project works to increase the cultivation of the Orange Sweet Flesh Potato in Rivercess and Grand Bassa Counties.



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