



Madam Pamela Marian Konneh, FUPAP Coordinator

Speaking at a press conference held at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, the Communications Director and editor of The Farm Newsletter Mr. Richard Bockarie said Freetown is highly urbanized.

The civil conflict contributed to the soaring population of migrants into Freetown from up country and these migrants have a strong agricultural background. As a result of the soaring population in Freetown, the demand for food in the urban center has increased substantially. Another problem, encountered by majority of the Freetown urban population is the lack of affordable basic amenities. Because migrants with strong agricultural background have come from up country, they have adopted agriculture as their main source of livelihood.

According to Mr. Bockarie 80% of Freetown farmers are women; therefore urban farming is considered a female domain.

Their activities include crop production mainly from leafy vegetables such as sweet potato leaves, cassava leaves, greens, krain-krain, garden eggs, okra, etc. Livestock production including pigs and small ruminants are mostly raised on free range.

Freetown urban agriculture also contributes to household food security and nutrition and is now a major source of additional household income.

Mr. Bockarie emphasized that through urban agriculture, fresh vegetables and fruits are readily available to Freetown urban dwellers. Besides, the sector provides a source of full time employment for the urban poor, especially women and provides parents the financial resources to pay school fees, and to rent accommodation.

The lack of land and land security continues to be a major problem in urban agriculture practice and the use of government lands means farmers can be ejected at anytime.

The implementation of this FUPAP project includes the promoting health-risk free production practices, training on how to construct wells and the installation of

two turned pumps, supply of inputs such as improved vegetables seeds, tools, watering cans and fertilizers.

The Role of Urban Agriculture in Conflict Situations: The Sierra Leone Experience

Urban agriculture practice in Sierra Leone, especially in the capital, Freetown, is probably as old as the inception of the city itself. However, the importance of urban agriculture was never appreciated until 1991 when the capital was besieged by different armed fighters determined to topple the then legitimate government of Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone is a small West African country located along the Atlantic coast with an estimated area of 72,000 km². The country has a population of 4.9 million people with 70% of the work force engaged in agricultural activities. Freetown the capital has an estimated population of 772,873 people. Freetown is strategically located between the Atlantic Ocean and the Peninsular Mountains with only one outlet that leads to the provincial areas.

During the civil war, only the urban areas, namely Freetown, Bo, Kenema and Makeni were well protected, and these places experienced a mass influx of internally displaced rural migrants, leading to tripling of the populations of these places. Food supplies and accommodation became seriously scarce and the cost of living escalated well beyond the means of ordinary Sierra Leoneans.

In 1995, the war extended to the entire country and the capital was threatened. At the beginning of 1996, the United Nations community ordered all foreigners to vacate the country and on 6th January 1996, the capital was invaded by the joint forces of the disbanded military forces and the Revolutionary United Front. The capital was besieged and disconnected from the rural areas which supply the bulk of the food to the city. The population therefore depended entirely on food aid and agricultural produce from urban agriculture.

In Freetown, over 90% of vegetables consumed in the city are products of urban farming. The main vegetables produced before and after the war include potato leaves, cassava leaves, krain-krain, lettuce, cabbage, spring onions, tomatoes, sorrel, garden eggs, and greens.

The livestock reared in Freetown backyards include local breeds of chickens, which account for about 90% of the chickens produced, closely followed by exotic intensive managed poultry, ducks, small ruminants (goats and sheep) and pigs. During the three months of siege, the bulk of vegetable production was sustained by urban farming

The importance urban agriculture was eventually realized during the war as many internally displaced