



Ready for the market, Urban farmers harvesting their vegetables for the market. (Photo by FUPAP)

persons (IDPs) engaged themselves in urban agricultural activities as a main source of employment and income generation, especially for disadvantaged communities such as single parents, widows, widowers, the aged, physically challenged and school leaving children. Proceeds from urban agriculture were used to pay rent, buy additional food, pay medical bills and pay fees for school going children. In essence, urban agriculture was the only job opportunity that existed, which only required basic inputs such as tools, fertilizers and labour to economically engage in urban farming activities. Indeed, almost all available land in the city was fully cultivated and a marked increase of over 60% urban agriculture production was realized.

Even today, urban agriculture continues to play a major role in contributing to poverty reduction, and to food security thereby assuring human security.

She acknowledged that Mr. Herbert George-William was the first Mayor in the history of the city to meet with grassroots people in very remote communities. She asked the Mayor to address the plight of farmers and help in the promotion of and development urban agriculture in Freetown.

In his response, the Mayor acknowledged the role of urban agriculture in providing food for the urban populace, improving the environment, and referred to urban agriculture as the **“savior of the day”** remembering the time when the city was embroiled in a deep civil conflict. He said he remembered the period between 6<sup>th</sup> January and end February 1999 when the city was completely besieged by different rebellious armed forces. He noted that the only source of food, at that time, particularly vegetables and tubers came from urban farming.

He continued that many people would have died had it not been for the arduous work of urban farmers. He confirmed that urban farmers will not be let down and that it is his personal responsibility to ensure that urban farmers do their farming unhindered. He observed that, for generations, the efforts of urban farmers had gone unnoticed and further promised that urban agriculture will now be placed in the main agenda of the Freetown City Council Development Plan.

He thanked FUPAP for taking the bold initiative of bringing urban agriculture to the attention of stakeholders, and assured the workshop participants that urban agriculture will receive the same recognition as rural farmers.

## The Mayor of Freetown Promotes Urban Agriculture in Freetown

The Mayor of Freetown, the honorable Herbert George-Williams has acknowledged the significant role urban agriculture plays in fulfilling national aspirations of achieving food security and improving the micro-environment in the country.

On 30<sup>th</sup> of May 2008, the Mayor, attended a one day training workshop, conducted by the Freetown Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture Project (FUPAP) at Potor Levuma urban farming community in the western part of Freetown. FUPAP, which is based in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), consists of a multi-stakeholder team which is charged with the responsibility of promoting urban agriculture and developing the capacities of urban farmers in Freetown.

In her opening remarks, the coordinator of the project, Madam Pamela Marian Konneh, who is also the District Director of Western Ward II at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security, welcomed the Mayor to the workshop and thanked him for his time and concern over the project.

## Farmers of Potor Levuma receive training in basic irrigation techniques

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), Freetown City Council and Njala University, a training workshop was organized for selected farmers from Potor Levuma urban farming community.

The exploratory studies conducted in Freetown, had identified irrigation as a major constraint to the development of urban agriculture in Freetown. The land used for urban farming is located close to the Atlantic Ocean, which consists of salty water with high salinity levels. During the dry season, shallow dug wells are used for irrigation. These wells cannot be dug more than three feet deep because of contamination with salty sea water.

To address this problem, farmers dug wells close to the edge of the upland, where fresh water can be found. Through a pilot project, these wells were further deepened and concreted using funds provided by the project. A treadle pump for irrigation purposes was also installed for the farmers.