



Date: January 24, 2019
Title of Project: Agricultural Productivity
Host Community Site: Pejewwa, Sierra Leone
Date of project completion: October 31, 2018

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Were you able to complete the project with the funds you were given? If not, why?

Through the combination of the generous support of MNRPCV, the community of Pejewwa, and third-party contributions, the harvest storage facility was fully completed as outlined in our application. The community celebrated the completion with a ceremony on October 31, 2018.

Please describe how you used the funds for the project:

The awarded grant of \$1,000 from MNRPCV, along with local community contributions, was used by Pejewwa to conduct agricultural trainings, initiate seed loans, and build a post-harvest storage facility.

Did you meet the goals of the project? If not, why?

Yes, OneVillage Partners, in conjunction with the community of Pejewwa, improved the community's agricultural productivity. This was accomplished by the following activities: providing trainings on agricultural processes, developing agricultural inputs through seed loans, and improving access to proper storage for agricultural goods.

How did this project benefit the community?

First, a group of 30 local farmers engaged in a week-long farming training, including techniques in good agricultural practice. The training was facilitated by a local expert associated with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFF) at Kaliahun District Office. It enabled farmers to improve their knowledge and skills in basic farming techniques such as: identifying seed quality and varieties, applying fertilizer, creating a farming calendar, preventing pest and weed control, and recognizing proper storage methods. The farmers were also taught the Agro Ecological System analysis, which includes ways to monitoring and evaluate the farming cycle of rice and vegetables. OneVillage Partners provided improved seed varieties (rice, pepper, okra, and groundnut), farming tools (hoes, shovels, watering cans, cutlasses, and mattocks), and NPK 20/20 fertilizer to be used by trained farmers. Those who received OneVillage Partners' training returned to their community to train other farmers and help them freely access seeds themselves. In total, more than 100 farmers acquired new farming skills in the Pejewwa community.

Second, a seedbank was formed, where farmers were given seed loans to multiply their seeds for an increased output on a yearly basis. In total, 30 bags, weighing 25 kilograms, were delivered to the farming groups. Those using the seeds will replace them with a small interest of more seeds in future planting seasons. Due to the seedbank, farmers no longer need to decide between improving their farming and feeding their family.

Finally, the community of Pejewa now has access to one storage facility (30x50 feet) and one dry floor (40x25 feet). The storage facility improves produce storage practices, preserves crops, improves food security, and increases household hygiene by protecting homes and products from insects and rodents. To keep the produce safe from theft, a group of local volunteers was created to monitor the facility. The dry floor provides local farmers an improved space to dry and preserve their seeds before long-term storage. In order to share the knowledge of the storage facility, a group of locally trained volunteers were educated on the uses of their completed project. Through the use of role plays, the volunteers demonstrated to the rest of the community why the storage facility and dry floor can benefit homes through safe storage practices, seed preservation, and seedbanks. The meetings ensured community ownership of the use and maintenance of the storage and dry-floor.

Describe the community involvement throughout the project:

The inclusive and transparent nature of our work encourages all community members to be involved throughout the entire process of community change, from project identification, design, and construction to completion and monitoring. A group of local volunteers (CAG's) are trained through eight workshops on how to analyze the needs identified by the community, and design a project to address a top-priority need. The community of Pejewa identified the need for improved agricultural productivity. As a result of assessing the root causes of this problem, the CAG's led the design and implementation of the storage facility with guidance from OneVillage Partners' staff. When designing the project, community members in Pejewa engaged in two meetings where the entire community was invited to select the project and provide feedback on the design. Throughout the construction of the project, CAG's monitored local workers to ensure the project was completed in a timely manner. While the implementation was in progress, CAG's used community meetings to share plans and educate community members on the benefits of the project. Once the project was finished, local farmers engaged in a week-long training. Lastly, CAG's will continue to monitor the project for one year after completion. The monitoring will assess the effectiveness of the education in the community and the overall sustainability of the project.

What would you have done differently?

To ensure safe storage of products and seeds, OneVillage Partners did not distribute seeds to farmers until the storage facility construction was completed. However, construction finished in mid-planting season. As a result, farmers were expecting seeds and received them late in the planting season. If done differently, OneVillage Partners would plan the completion of the facility to correlate with the farming season. The community was still able to make use of the seeds due to an unusually long rainy season this year.

Also, to ensure understanding of the training, OneVillage Partners would extend the contract with the trainer so that follow ups and monitoring could be done. This would be beneficial to the participants get more individual practical training.

What did you learn?

OneVillage Partners used a local expert from a neighboring community, which increased participation of the trainees in Pejewa because they knew the trainer. Being from the area, he was familiar with the land farmers work on, the knowledge of participants, and methods to benefit their products. Further, the group of participants was diverse, and the community recognized the contributions of women in farming.

Through the training, designing, and implementation of this project, the community of Pejewa, in partnership with the local volunteers (CAG's), increased trust in the work of OneVillage Partners. The CAG's are motivated to manage the facility since they are farmers themselves and are excited for future projects.

Are you comfortable with MNRPCV publishing all, or part, of your grant report for promotional purposes?

Yes; please feel free to share information about the project.

Your STORY: We want to tell the story of this project! Please include a narrative description of your project with a picture/video/word description of your favorite moments...

Pejewa, a community of 1,350 people, has a productive landscape for farming. Almost all households and families are engaged in some form of farming, as it is the primary way to generate income and food supply. However, the community of Pejewa struggled with farming productivity and decided to address this challenge through trainings, seed loans, and a post-harvest storage facility.



Local volunteers (CAG's) in Pejewa

Previously, Pejewa experienced a series of agriculture projects supported by other organizations. Reflecting back, the community realized these projects did not provide long term solutions. Amara, a volunteer trained by OneVillage Partners, shared, “*Previous interventions did not solve the problem of food security, as most families couldn't still feed their families year-round.*” The community expressed that most of the farmers lacked knowledge in basic agricultural skills, such as understanding farming calendars and the techniques involved in planting. These, according to the community, have been the reasons responsible for the low farm yields.

As OneVillage Partners continued our partnership in Pejewa, the community expressed a strong desire and need for basic agricultural skills training, seed supplies, and storage and preservation facilities. They channeled this desire and goal into the designing of this project. To achieve that goal, Pejewa decided the best way to accomplish their goals was to build a storage facility and provide an agriculture training conducted by local experts.

The storage facility will also improve the health of its community members by providing a place for farmers to store their produce outside of their homes. The practice of keeping produce in the home has invited the presence disease infected rats and bugs, greatly impacting the health of everyone. With the new construction, the Pejewa community is attacking one of the main causes of health problems in the community.



The storage facility and dry floor during construction



Local farmers during a training

Then, we partnered with a local agriculture specialist to teach farmers how to use more effective farming methods. Once these participants finished and understood how these methods improved their product, the farmers taught other members of their community the knowledge. This training has helped increase knowledge of farming methods. Since the first training, the trained farmers have already held a second training to other members of the community.

Throughout the project's implementation, the community and its volunteers invested extra effort and exuberance to increase in their farm yields. What has been perhaps the most amazing outcome of the project is that most community members feel a deepened sense of cohesion. Farming has become the most effective platform for people to unite and cooperate with one another. Amara stated, *"This project has helped bring together the largest group ever to work together on one project that benefits the whole town."* This aspect of the project has not only led to an increase in the number of farm groups in the community, but it has also inspired the community to establish a seedbank for community members to access seed loans. Through this community cohesion, more families have already been able to feed their families, repay interest, and save some seeds against the next planting seasons.



The completed storage facility and dry floor in Pejewa