

Volunteers Savings and Lending Associations Established in Bong County

Monrovia, Liberia – February 23, 2009: The United Nations Volunteer (UNV) Programme has concluded the distribution of stationeries including cash boxes to four newly established Volunteers Saving and Lending Associations (VSLA) in Salala District, Bong County. The VSLA is a pilot project designed to promote women economic empowerment at the county level through volunteerism.



Distribution of stationery in Totota, Bong County

According to the Nee-Isaac Duanah, Project Coordinator of Liberia Initiatives for Development Services, the project is designed for members of local communities to pull their financial resources together through the purchase of shares and to provide lending from accumulated profit for members to engage in business activities. He said the four VSLA established with support from the UNV programme have a membership of 30 each comprising mostly of women. He said the 120 members benefitted from a month long training in micro enterprise development, club management and operations.

Mr. Duanah mentioned that each VSLA has developed their own constitution and have all agreed on days for meetings and shares to be purchased by members.

UNV Programme Manager Rukaya Mohammed commended the women for the level of enthusiasm shown for the establishment of the Volunteer Savings and Lending Association in their community. She said the project will promote social cohesion and empower communities toward financial independence.

Ms. Mohammed admonished the members to remain committed to the association. She said in the absence of financial institutions in local villages, the VSLA will provide the means of credit for communities. She said, such initiative has resulted in the establishment of rural banks in other countries because the project is sustainable and the funds are own by the communities themselves.

Ms. Hawa Veronica Sherif who currently serves as Ms. Volunteer vowed to visit the women on a regular basis to create awareness on HIV/AIDS and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the society. She encouraged the women to cooperate and remain committed. "Through this project you will be able to avoid the dependency syndrome that has subjected women to all kinds of hardship in the society".

In her closing remark, Ms. Victoria Mulbah, the chairlady of the association in Totota community, Bong County indicated that the VSLA has strengthened social cohesion in community because she now works with people she never even talked with since she came to the community. Ms. Mulbah added that, the



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VSLA is good for single mothers to be able to expand their businesses and cater for their children. She urged UNV and LIDS to expand the VSLA programme to other communities in order to help empower vulnerable women economically.

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