

Jesus said, *“Feed my sheep.”*



The Heart You Need

When long civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone ended earlier this decade, Presbyterians knew that helping the countries rebuild was central to answering Jesus' call, "Feed my sheep." Eighty percent of the people were unemployed. The wars had destroyed not only infrastructure, but also much of the fabric of trust and hope that enables communities to work together. And many had lost heart. According to a church leader in Sierra Leone, 98 percent of the village of Makibo was starving and doing what all African farmers know never to do—eating what should be saved for seed.

All three One Great Hour of Sharing programs had a long history of working individually in the region, but then it was clear—our usual methods weren't enough. Deciding we needed to work together—with the three programs and the church councils in the countries each contributing its particular experience—we began the West Africa Initiative.



Conversations with those councils of churches concluded that the first focus should be on helping rural communities start growing their own food again. But that didn't mean those communities needed people from the outside telling them how to solve their problems. One elder said of the community's hopes for the initiative, "We don't have money and we are not requesting money from you. We want you to assist us to boost our farming. You assist us and we do the work."

The pilot program trained eighteen young farmers to become trainers in agricultural techniques, many based on traditions that had been cast aside to adopt a "modern" style of agriculture dependent on expensive seeds, pesticides, and fertilizers. The



trainers adapted the techniques to the villages' own needs and desires. By the time the trainers graduated last June, major changes had taken place. More than 3,500 people were already eating from their fields, and farmers had saved the seed from their crops and created their own fertilizers and natural pest control. They could now sustain the gains they had made without having to buy seeds and fertilizers for the next year.

One community in Sierra Leone expanded to include new families from other communities. They called their project Liluma, or "having the heart to do what needs doing." Ishmael, a village elder, says the project has helped the village find unity. Reflecting on their experience, another exclaimed that the training was especially helpful because it did not discount their own knowledge.

These signs of progress mark a significant beginning. After years of poverty and warfare, divided and isolated groups of people are being transformed into productive communities rooted in concern for one another and a new sense of unity and hope. Much more needs to be done, and with your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing, it will be. Those gifts and this ministry are our response to Jesus' call, "Feed my sheep." Please give generously.



www.pcusa.org/hunger



PRESBYTERIAN COMMITTEE ON THE
**Self-Development
of People**

www.pcusa.org/sdop



**PRESBYTERIAN
DISASTER ASSISTANCE**
OUT OF CHAOS. HOPE.

www.pcusa.org/pda



General Assembly Mission Council
www.pcusa.org/oghs



Mixed Sources
well-managed
responsible
fiber
www.fsc.org Cert no. SA-COC-1000
© 1996 Forest Stewardship Council

PDS 12138-10-103