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TALKING AGRIBUSINESS IN LIBERIA PROJECT



FOURTH COMMUNICATION EVENT REPORT *Liberia's Food Systems: Children's Perspectives*

Venue: Corina Hotel, Monrovia

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Disclaimer

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The West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) aims to support a number of selected value chains at national and regional level to promote structural transformation and better access to regional and international markets, while taking into account social and environmental concerns. Its overall objective is to strengthen competitiveness of West African countries and enhance their integration into the regional and international trading system. Specifically, the programme will work to: (i) Improve the performance, growth and contribution to industry, regional trade and exports of selected value chains, and (ii) improve the business climate at national and regional levels.

The WACOMP consists of one regional component and sixteen national components (15 ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania)

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Cover Photo

Participants at the Fourth Communication Event of the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project [Credit: CERATH Development Organization (CDO)]

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ACRONYMS

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
CASTRAP	Cassava Transformation Project
CDO	CERATH Development Organization
CHS	Community Health Service
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDF	European Development Fund
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FLY	Federation of Liberian Youth
GM Foods	Genetically Modified Foods
MSMEs	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
RETRAP	Rural Economic Transformation Project
STAR-P	Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project
TaAL	Talking Agribusiness in Liberia
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
US	United State
WACOMP	West Africa Competitiveness Programme
WFP	World Food Programme

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) through the West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) has committed funds for the implementation of the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project. WACOMP aims to strengthen the competitiveness of West African countries and enhance their integration into the regional and international trading system. It consists of one regional and sixteen national components including Liberia. The Liberia national component, the Cassava Transformation Project (CASTRAP), began in 2021.

The Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project is complementary to and implemented along with CASTRAP. The project is focused on the agri-/food business value chain and seeks to disseminate information and raise awareness in Liberia on:

- i. opportunities for business performance and growth (competitiveness),
- ii. regional (trade) integration of Liberia's agri-/food value chains, and
- iii. an improved environment for agri-/food businesses to thrive in accordance with the objective of the WACOMP.

The implementation team is expected to organize six (6) communication events preceded by respective thematic background research on agribusiness topics validated among stakeholders in Liberia. The events are to create platforms for (1) deliberations by stakeholders on the requirements for the competitiveness of agribusinesses in Liberia, regional (trade) integration of Liberia's agribusinesses, and the role of policies and different actors; and (2) participatory forums for key conversations among vital stakeholders and wider audiences toward raising awareness of the opportunities for growing Liberia's agribusiness sector.

The fourth communication event titled "Liberia's Food Systems: Children's Perspectives" was organized by CDO on 9th April 2024, at the Corina Hotel in Monrovia, Liberia. The objective of the communication event was to provide the platform for disseminating the findings from the research entitled "Children's Perspectives of Liberia's Food Systems". In addition, the event served as a platform for information exchange and encouraged discussion on the inclusion of children in the food system's decision-making process.

There were 33 participants in attendance, from government ministries and agencies, development communities, agribusiness enterprises, and the media (See Appendix B for the list of participants).

PROCEEDINGS FROM THE WORKSHOP

Program Opening, Welcome Address and Purpose of Gathering

The Finance and Administrative Manager of CERATH Development Organization (CDO), Gladys T. Gborie, commenced the event with an opening prayer.

The Country Director for CDO Liberia, Leroy N. S. Kanmoh, delivered the welcome address and explained the purpose of the communication event. He extended a warm welcome to all participants on behalf of CDO. Leroy N. S. Kanmoh provided a brief overview of the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project (TaAL project), a communication-based initiative to raise public awareness of the potential for business performance and growth, regional trade integration of Liberia's agri-value chain, and a better environment for agribusiness. He then introduced the focus of the event which was on – The Perspective of Children on Liberia's Food Systems. He stressed that the event aimed to disseminate information on children's perspectives on Liberia's food systems.

He said that they needed to look into the knowledge children have about nutrition. He also underlined the need to understand children's viewpoints. He questioned whether children had so many options when it came to getting meals. He asked participants what some of the meals they had on hand were and what recommendations they could make. He emphasized that that was the reason they were present since studies on children's perspectives on Liberia's food systems had been researched on. He explained that in terms of policies and fostering an interest in agribusiness in children, all those issues were crucial for people to consider.

He indicated that representatives from the European Union and other governmental and development organizations would be giving their remarks at the event. In addition, he said that there will be a question-and-answer session and a presentation on the perspectives of children on Liberia's food systems. According to him, the purpose of the event was to provide government officials, educators, and policymakers access to the findings on children's perspectives on Liberia's food systems so they could assess them and provide the appropriate recommendations. In closing, he expressed gratitude to the participants and invited more discussion.

Opening Remarks from the EU and Representatives of the Government of Liberia

Remarks from the European Union

Ramon Vivanco Mugarra greeted everyone and conveyed his delight to be present at the event. He declared that EU's programming activity for Liberia included the food system; the Food system was included in one of the major European projects as well, he added. He said that together, they had created a programmed action regarding the existence of a crucial perspective element. He said that in addition to signing a financial arrangement with the Liberian government to fund food systems, they

had also inked one with the new European Settlement Fund. He said partners were putting it into action, and it was a projection of about 25 million US dollars.



Figure 1: Ramon Vivanco Mugarra, a representative from EU delivering a speech at the event

He explained that the program's focus would be on resolving some of the obstacles to the business environment and investment plan in the region, as well as the development of Liberia's key value chains, particularly those related to agriculture and business farms. He added that the intervention, worth over 25 million US dollars, aligned with the current priorities of the new government and expressed his happiness to be present, saying that he wanted to be one of the report's authors and consumers. He also mentioned that children and people with disabilities were extremely important for their international systems and that children were the future of both the present and the future of Liberia. He emphasised the importance of the report's conclusion in shaping their efforts in Liberia. In closing, he gave the participants his word that the EU would keep assisting Liberia's agricultural growth and food systems.

Remarks from the Food and Agriculture Organisation

On behalf of his country's representative, who was abroad for a foreign engagement, Mr. Ambrose Forpoh, the National Economist for FAO Liberia, delivered the remarks. He expressed gratitude to CDO for its continuous efforts to ignite children's interest in agriculture, help them realise their full potential in the field, and equip young people with the leadership and fundamental life skills they need to become better citizens. As the principal source of income for almost 60% of the population, he said that the agriculture sector was the foundation of the Liberian economy. He stated that younger generations may play a significant role in reviving and improving local economies, especially in the agricultural sector. However, he acknowledged that rather than continuing in their fathers' and grandfathers' footsteps, young people were increasingly choosing non-agricultural jobs and losing

interest in farming. He claimed that for youth to view agriculture as a lucrative and stimulating career path, they required technical skills, education, and productive resources like money and land.

Furthermore, he said that the use of contemporary technologies in agriculture, such as farm machinery and technology, may boost productivity and pique the interest of young people in the field. In addition, he said, the new technologies will show young people that agriculture is a viable and profitable industry, which would make career paths associated with agriculture more appealing to them. He pointed out that roughly half of the world's population was under 30, citing research that the UNFPA commissioned. He said that regrettably, the majority of young people were looking for quick money opportunities in urban areas, which included bike riding, petty dealing, and other lucrative and business-focused occupations. He made it clear that they did not view agriculture as a viable path to success and that their constant goal was to have money in their possession.



Figure 2: Mr. Ambrose Forpoh, the National Economist for FAO Liberia delivering his speech

He stated that it was a sad fact that the world's farming population was ageing, with the poor continuing to work in agriculture for an average of 60 years, and that this appeared to be the case in Liberia. Older folks made up the majority of their farm corporation, he said. FAO was grateful to CDO for the ongoing Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project, which was supported by the European Union and had already carried out research on children's perspective of the food system. In addition to capturing and sharing children's visions for a functional agri-food value chain, he expressed his hope that the findings would stimulate children's food engagement in agriculture. In closing, he thanked everyone and said that as a special UN agency for food and agriculture, FAO was available, willing to work together, and cared about helping the government create and carry out policies and programmes related to food and agriculture that would guarantee food security and enhance nutrition for all.

Remarks from the National Children's Forum

Cyrus K. Wea. Jr. expressed his gratitude to CDO for providing children with an opportunity to take part in the most significant decision-making process. He stated that they were all present to elevate the voice of food and that stakeholders from many organisations and institutions felt it vital to attend the food system workshop as they were all involved in the food system. Regarding the matter of food systems, he stressed that agriculture had a critical role in ensuring a brighter future for children, highlighting that it was similar to considering child abuse. In closing, he expressed gratitude to all of the participants and said that by supporting agribusiness in Liberia, we were honouring and advancing the voices of children, who will be the country's future leaders.

Remarks from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Jekeh F. Koiyan stated that the programme was important to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry since they were interested in agriculture. Since agriculture appeared in the first letter of the ARREST (Agriculture, Roads, Rule of Law, Education, Sanitation, and Tourism) Agenda, he said, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry was ready and determined to support the agribusiness project. He said the programme was good and urged everyone to participate in the discussion. He spoke on behalf of the Ministry of Commerce, saying that they were available for further discussions to explore ways of empowering the coming generation.

He also mentioned that he did not want the event to be the last time CDO was organizing an agribusiness event. He said they hoped CDO would keep up with its agribusiness programme to educate future generations as well, to help prevent drug addiction in young people and to help them change their perspectives about the agricultural industry. He said that the agriculture industry was thriving prior to the conflict, therefore they were hoping that groups like CDO would give the young more influence and open doors for working centres so that the youth could contribute to the development of the agricultural industry in the Republic of Liberia. In closing, he expressed gratitude to the participants and said that the government was determined to give agriculture priority, as shown by the fiscal budget; He also said that they were open to further discussions.

Remarks from Ministry of Agriculture

Minister David K. Akoi welcomed participants with greetings from the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and the Agriculture family. He indicated that he was delighted to be a part of the event. He started up by stating that Liberia's food and agriculture systems were now dealing with a number of challenges. However, he stated that to raise the nation's standard of living and increase agricultural output, the Ministry of Agriculture would promote agribusiness success and information access. He stressed the significance of implementing sustainable and successful farming operations. According to him, the agribusiness or agricultural sub-sector might be strengthened with the use of an extensive and cutting-edge agribusiness information system, which would improve agribusiness chains and greatly increase farmers' revenue. He also mentioned that this might result in a decline in rural poverty nationwide.



Figure 3: Mr. David K. Akoi, Deputy Minister from the Ministry of Agriculture delivering his speech

He added that he was aware of the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project, which sought to improve communication and agribusiness in the country. According to him, the project aimed to create a suitable atmosphere for agribusiness to thrive as well as increase awareness of the prospects for business expansion and regional integration of Liberia's agri-food value chain. The effort, he said, was aimed at three groups: communities, the private sector, and the public sector. He reaffirmed that the project gave Liberian agribusinesses visibility in West Africa and other African countries and improved the environment for them to prosper and conduct business in Liberia.

He highlighted that the Ministry of Agriculture was actively working to increase smallholder farmers' access to agriculture services at the moment. He said that the ministry sought to improve agribusiness incubation systems and promote public-private partnerships (PPP) by implementing creative agribusiness policies at different levels, including institutional and policy levels. He asserted that

smallholders would benefit from improved livelihoods, higher incomes, and easier access to agricultural services as a result of this. According to him, one of the minister's initiatives, the Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project (STAR-P), aimed to increase smallholder income, market assets, and value addition to reduce poverty and improve food and nutrition security for specific rural populations in Liberia. According to him, the project's goal was to improve the connections between smallholder farmers and the major rice and cassava processing micro hubs. He said that the project had given smallholders more money and financial support for a predetermined amount of time while also enhancing their operational and managerial capabilities to allow them to function on their own. He also cited the Rural Economic Transformation Project (RETRAP), which was supported by the Ministry of Agriculture and aimed to promote access to agricultural marketing infrastructure services, enhance livelihoods, and increase the income of rural impoverished households through sustainable agriculture. All things considered, he said, the Ministry understood the value of action plans in the creation of integrated strategic plans and agribusiness initiatives. He said that the Ministry aims to change the agriculture industry and give smallholder farms more beneficial and long-lasting outcomes by putting those plans into action.

He maintained that the Ministry of Agriculture empowerment was raising productivity through improving value chain actors' access to capital, developing marketable business plans, and providing them with market information. He disclosed the establishment of an Agricultural Enterprise Development Bank, which would provide farmers with access to financing at very low-interest rates. In addition, he said that the Ministry of Agriculture planned to modernise the agricultural industry as a whole and that to optimise the advantages of mechanisation, farmers would be urged to establish cooperatives. In closing, he stated that the Ministry of Agriculture wanted to work with the project since they were eager to see the children's point of view on the value chain of agriculture.

PRESENTATION OF KEY FINDINGS

The findings of the event background research on the Perspective of Children on Liberia's Food Systems were presented by Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey, Project Lead for the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project. She explained the research's context in relation to the WACOMP and the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project, which focuses on increasing awareness of opportunities for the competitiveness and regional integration of trade in Liberia's agri-food value chain, as well as creating a better environment for businesses to flourish in line with the WACOMP's goal. She stressed that the main goals of the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project were to conduct research on six (6) validated agribusiness topics and organize events to inform stakeholders about research findings and facilitate stakeholder engagement. The first and second communication event outputs, titled “The Status of Youth Engagement in Agribusiness” and “Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in Liberia-Involvement of Agro MSMEs”, had already been carried out, according to Maame Kyerewaa

Brobbey. The communication event for Output 3 which is on “Fisherfolk Access to Financial Services in Liberia” was slated for 11th April 2024 while Output 4 on “Children’s Perspectives on Liberia’s Food Systems” was being presented.

Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey, opined that Liberia ranked 117th out of 125 countries in terms of hunger conditions on the 2023 Global Hunger Index, which classified Liberia’s level of hunger as ‘serious.’ She mentioned that Liberia’s agri-/food business value chain was part of the country’s food systems and was essential to strengthening food access and diet quality among the population; Yet evidence had shown that business and trade did not always work for development outcomes without conscious efforts. She stated that the project's goal was to start a conversation among stakeholders about how to better align the goals of ending hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition to make the agri-food industry value chain more competitive. She emphasized that children were among the most vulnerable groups and that they were both current and future actors in Liberia's agri-food systems. Their demands and viewpoints should therefore be taken into account in any efforts to change the value chain. Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey noted that several initiatives and programs implemented by the Liberian government and development partners—specifically in the areas of social protection, education, and health and nutrition—were affecting how children saw the nation's food systems.

According to Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey, the study's goals were to: 1) determine the perspective of Liberian children on food security 2) explore children’s expectations of future food systems in Liberia 3) examine the nutritional understanding and perception of children about food types. According to her, the research team selected Bong County as the study area because it was the third-most populous county and had the highest percentage of children (35%), the majority of whom were between the ages of 12 and 14. She stressed that Bong County also had the highest rate of food insecurity (40,000 people), with 37% and 66%, respectively, of children suffering from malnutrition. She said that the study was qualitative and employed a visual methodology. Group talks and one-on-one interviews were used to explore the views, experiences, understanding and expectations of sixty children, ages nine to seventeen, according to Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey. She also mentioned that half of the children attended school and the other half did not.



Figure 4: Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey presenting on research findings

Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey presented the research's main findings, stating that roughly one-third (19) of the respondents were girls and two-thirds (41) were boys. She stated that 50% of the respondents were enrolled in primary, junior high, and senior high school; the remaining 50% were not. According to her, girls were more likely than boys to be enrolled in school (84% vs 34%). According to Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey, the three basic pillars of food security—access, availability, and utility—were examined to define it. She underlined that the topics covered included choice, satisfaction, affordability, and sufficiency. She said the results demonstrated that the children understood the importance of rice in the Liberian diet and the accessibility of various food types. She said that children believed rice to be the most popular food in the nation, both at home and at school. She underlined the importance of potatoes, plantains, and cassava. She underlined that there were worries about the amount of rice imported and that a reliance on it that was too great resulted in a failure to increase the productivity of rice grown locally.

Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey opined that the importation of rice and other food items meant that rice could be 'readily available' on the market. She stated that children saw local rice production as the approach to ensuring sustained food security. She mentioned that locally produced food was sold in the market only after there was a surplus from household consumption. She mentioned that children's access to, choice, and consumption of particular foods were influenced by their parents, peers, and school. Parents choose their children's food, whether it comes from the market or their backyard garden. She stressed that money/finances remained significant to food accessibility. She mentioned that

children in schools with school feeding programmes indicated they did not pay for meals because the school provided them. Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey stressed that these children and, in some cases, their families could afford one meal per school day and a free grocery list per month, respectively. She stated that children also raised issues on food quality and safety, malnutrition and access to [portable] water. Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey stated that most of the children regarded malnutrition as a unique newborn circumstance caused by their mothers' actions, including those related to poor nutrition.

For children's expectations of Liberia's future food systems, Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey, stressed that whereas children were advocating for mechanization others advocated for the use of tools like hoes and cutlass. She stated that children expected that Liberia should produce more food enough for Liberians and other countries to purchase. She also reported that children mentioned that the government should invest in pump technologies to enhance access to water in Liberia. Also, she stressed that children expected school feeding programmes in every school. For the third objective on children's nutritional understanding and perceptions about food types, she stated that most of the children could not define what constituted a balanced diet and thus could not distinguish between an unbalanced and a balanced diet. She also noted that children who spoke concerning a balanced diet depicted it as a diet designed for persons aiming to achieve a certain objective, such as weight loss. Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey opined that school children were able to recognise different nutrients and understand how they worked in the body. She noted that on the other hand, the children who were not enrolled in school could not articulate the differentiation of nutrients in foods. Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey stated that children often did not understand the topic of genetically modified (GM) food. She stated that their attempts at distinguishing/guessing fruits that were genetically modified relied on colour and shape (of fruits). She stated that the children's understanding of processed food was mostly based on how long it took to prepare them before eating.

In summary, Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey mentioned that rice was King, and so was money. She admonished that Liberia increased productivity to satisfy the domestic market – food and nutritional security and trade. She stressed that children could not consume adequate amounts of fruits and vegetables despite growing some in the backyard garden due to the seasonality of fruits and vegetables. For the children interviewed, she mentioned that the future version of Liberia's food systems should have room for mechanisation of agriculture production, particularly rice; enhanced access to water; no malnutrition, and a school feeding programme in every school. Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey, however, stated that there were some gaps in children's understanding of nutritional diversity and food types. She, however, said that being in school is noted as significant for their understanding of nutritional needs. She concluded by asking what opportunities existed to align food and nutritional security for children in Liberia.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND DISCUSSIONS

At the start, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Minister David K. Akoi, expressed gratitude to the presenter and everyone who was dedicating their time to children. He said that the school feeding program—which they referred to as the Homegrown School Feeding Program—had been the subject of discussion. The reason for this was their desire for all school-age children to become accustomed to consuming rice that was grown locally. He said he had observed that as one got older, the flavour of food grown locally tended to fade. He clarified that to feed students in the school, partners in the Homegrown School Feeding program will need to purchase food from farmers. As a means of encouraging farmers to establish more farms, he said, the government had plans to support the World Food Programme's (WFP) efforts by contributing funds to enable the organization to purchase food in Liberia. Regarding nutrition, he brought up a project involving the farming of fish in Liberia to lower the country's reliance on imported frozen food, which in turn would lower children's consumption of frozen food. He emphasized that because catfish and tilapia were fortified with protein, Liberia was now investing in them; He brought up the fact that agriculture was being promoted in Liberia. According to him, this could be the solution to the problem of animal feed availability.



Figure 5: The Deputy Minister of Agriculture commenting on the presentation made

He continued by saying that mechanization was crucial since it improved farmer productivity and decreased the number of trees cut down as a result of labour-intensive and large-scale land use. He also emphasized that labour costs could be decreased by increasing productivity, which raised revenue. Mechanization increased income rather than created unemployment. An increase in income brought about accessible necessities and high-quality education for children. He said in closing that the presentation slides should be submitted to him so that he may forward them to the Division of Food Security and Nutrition, who can review them and get to work helping the homeless children.

Hawa D. Varney from WASUDEV commented that the research was particularly noteworthy because it focused on children, who are frequently excluded from food discussions. She questioned why there

were less females (19) than boys (41) given their commitment to gender equality. She also inquired about some of the study's challenges with the hopes that future research might solve these issues.



Figure 6: Hawa D. Varney from WASUDEV asking a question

Although an equal number of boys and girls were chosen to participate in the study, Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey indicated that boys who were not enrolled in school were more likely to engage in the research than girls. She stated that establishing gender equality in the study was the challenge of the research. Obtaining authorization from the appropriate authorities to conduct interviews with children was another obstacle she mentioned for the project. She clarified that although orphans and disabled children were part of the target group, they were not included in the sample since the study team did not have permission to do so.

Emmanuel A. Yarkpozua from the United States Agency for International Development pointed out that smallholder farmers required market access, storage facilities, and a stable market. He noted that they had a USAID school feeding program, but obtaining the necessary quantity of food was challenging. He stated that they had switched away from the conventional approach to ensuring access to adequate roads and storage facilities. He also inquired whether there was a difference in Bong County between children from rural and impoverished areas and those from other locations. *Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey mentioned that there was diversity in children's viewpoints. She, however, mentioned that the presentation concentrated on the convergences of children's voices to make comprehension easy.*

Macpherson M. B. Abu, a Plan International participant, expressed interest in the work and requested the slides so that they might include the study's findings in their decision-making. He added that they had a democratic approach that prioritized children and women and that they would like to implement the principles discussed into their country's policy. He then encouraged everyone to share their knowledge at the event.

Cyrus K. Wea Jr. of Children's Forum inquired about the feasibility of spreading the research to other counties. *Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey stated that, while the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project is implemented in all counties in Liberia, the study on children's perspectives was only conducted in Bong County. She noted that the county was chosen because of the research's focus, allowing for further extension in future studies and initiatives.*

Norwu K. Harris of Action Aid Liberia inquired whether children were asked about the impact of the climate issue, as the notion of agroecology was crucial in agribusiness. She added that they were promoting the concept of agroecology through a school garden program, and she would appreciate it if presentation slides were handed over. *Maame Kyerewaa remarked that the issue of the climate issues came up, but it was not discussed since there were not enough voices.*

Caroline Armah, a representative from Calaw Foods, expressed an interest in learning about the viewpoints of children under the age of nine. Because she was producing food, she was concerned about the price of food while also improving its quality and quantity. She added that because the majority of Liberians were poor, they prioritized quantity over quality. She was pleased that CDO had laid the foundation for future research on children's perspectives. She maintained that the school feeding program was an excellent idea because no child could learn when he was hungry. She added that one reason farmers may not have responded to the call to supply produce was because of pricing, therefore homegrown school feeding programs should consider the price at which they get agricultural food from farmers.

Cyrus K. Wea, Jr. from the Children's Forum, inquired about the recommendations and mitigation strategies. He stated that the Children's Forum would be delighted to collaborate with CDO on future projects involving children. *Regarding mitigation, Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey stated that several mitigation techniques were already included in the presentation.*

Ambrose Forpoh, a representative from FAO, stated that he intended to look into some quantitative aspects of the research because the results were primarily qualitative. *Regarding the presentation of more qualitative aspects of the research, Maame Kyerewass Brobbey stated that because the sample size was small, presenting it in quantitative data may be challenging.*

Other questions included the following:

A participant inquired about the food security strategies for future initiatives. He said that as children have varied viewpoints and methods of approaching things, the project team should come up with diverse strategies to bring out these diverse viewpoints.

A participant inquired how the study's findings will be distributed following the communication session. *Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey noted that after reporting to the EU, they may need authorization from the EU before publishing the results to the broader public. She did, however, add that the slides and brochures were available to the general public.*

A participant indicated that while USAID had supported certain schools with homegrown school food, few farmers or farmer cooperatives were able to respond to a request for proposals to offer agricultural produce. She was curious how homegrown school feeding would be possible if all schools in the country were targeted. She questioned why Liberia does not take advantage of its fertile land and abundant water to produce locally, opting to import agricultural produce from other countries. She stated that Liberians should examine why they are not taking advantage of their natural resources and devise strategies to address the why question. She was pleased to learn that children appreciated the school feeding program, but she lamented that the country lacked adequate structures to maintain it. She also encouraged all stakeholders to help enhance school infrastructure and expand the school feeding program to schools in vulnerable communities. *Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey stated that the goal of the project was to bring stakeholders together to solve issues such as structures. She additionally indicated that a lack of awareness led to a small number of farmers applying for a call. She noted that the Cassava Transformation Project, for example, goes beyond what is necessary to demonstrate how MSMEs can apply and meet the standards. According to Maame Kyerewaa, behavioural change could lead to people identifying opportunities for good land and water.*

CLOSING REMARKS

The moderator delivered the final words that brought the session to a close. He explained that the study on children's perspectives on Liberia's food systems was timely because children were the future leaders of the country. He advised communicating research findings to the public even after the event. He also encouraged development agencies to collaborate closely with the media in disseminating research findings. Cyrus K. Wea. Jr., a participant, offered a short prayer to officially end the event.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Programme Outline

Time	Main Activity
8:30 am - 9:00 am	Arrival / Registration/Breakfast
9:00 am - 9:05 am	Opening Prayer
9:05 am - 9:10 am	Welcome Address & Purpose of Gathering
9:10 am - 9:20 am	Opening remarks from the European Union Delegation
9:20 am - 9:30 am	Statement by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
9:30 am - 9:40 am	Statement by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
9:40 am - 9:50 am	Statement by the Ministry of Agriculture
9:50 am - 10:50 am	Presentation of findings from the research on the "Children's Perspective on Liberia's Food System."
10:50 am - 11:10 am	Questions & Comments on research findings
11:10 am - 11:15 am	Group Photo
11:15 am - 11:25 am	Closing remarks by Moderator
11:25 am - 11:30 am	Closing prayer
11:30 am Onwards	Lunch

Appendix B: Lists of Participants

No.	Name	Organisation
1	Aaron Williams	Media
2	Alvin M. Faika Jnr.	Liberia National Students' Union
3	Ambrose Forpoh	Food and Agriculture Organisation
4	Anthony Williams Jnr.	ELBC Radio
5	Caroline Armah	Calaw Foods Inc.
6	Cyrus K. Wea. Jr.	Children's Forum
7	David K. Akoi	Ministry of Agriculture
8	Ekutu Moris	Mercy Corps
9	Emmanuel A. Yarkpozua	United States Agency for International Development
10	Emmanuel K. Robertson	Monrovia Consolidated School System
11	Emmanuel Seyon	Ministry of Industry and Commerce
12	Gladys T. Gborie	CERATH Development Organisation
13	Harris Geno	Ministry of Agriculture
14	Hawa D. Varney	Women in Agriculture for Sustainable Development (WASUDEV)
15	Jekeh F. Koiyan	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
16	Josephine Paye	Agro Tech Liberia
17	Leelah J. Clarke	LEO Nutrition
18	Leroy N.S. Kanmoh	CERATH Development Organisation
19	LordErnest Benjamin	Liberia Standard Authority
20	Maame Kyerewaa brobbey	CERATH Development Organisation
21	Macpherson M. B. Abu	Plan International Liberia
22	Mariam M. Meiplay	MAKO's Fruits
23	Maxford S. Hinson	FLY
24	Moses Dwana	Ministry of Health
25	Norwu K. Harris	Action Aid Liberia
26	Nyantee Togba	OK FM

No.	Name	Organisation
27	Peter K. D. Sumo	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
28	Precious J. Buxton	Rising Academy
29	Ramon Vivanco Mugarra	European Union
30	Sameria Y. Wuo	CHS
31	Stephen V. Bedev	CHS
32	Victor B. Gibson	Media
33	Willie Sirkaf	Smallholders Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project

APPENDIX D: GALLERY



Figure 7: Participants at the event engaged in discussion on children's perspectives of Liberia's food system



Figure 8: Cross section of participants who attended the event



WACOMP

The West Africa Competitiveness Programme aims to support a number of selected value chains at national and regional level to promote structural transformation and better access to regional and international markets, while taking into account social and environmental concerns. The WACOMP consists of one regional component and sixteen national components (15 ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania).

Disclaimer

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