

## Project Background

In 2013, the Isle of Man Government generously committed £300,000 to transform the livelihoods of impoverished communities in the Sherbro Basin, one of the most remote areas of Sierra Leone. The project began in May 2013 and experienced some setbacks, the most prominent of which was the outbreak of the Ebola virus in 2014. At the height of the outbreak, all non-vital travel was stopped and all community and group activities put on hold. By the time Sierra Leone was finally declared free from Ebola on 17 March 2016, over 3,000 people had lost their lives and over 8,000 children and young people were left orphaned.

Having paused activity on all non-humanitarian projects at the height of the outbreak, including the Isle of Man funded project in the Sherbro Basin, Christian Aid Sierra Leone recommenced their development activities in late 2015. Christian Aid would like to thank the Isle of Man for the patience and understanding they demonstrated throughout the delays to the project. We are thrilled to be presenting the final project report, which illustrates how the project has managed to exceed its original objectives despite the many setbacks and the need to repeat work that had been done prior to the outbreak of the virus. We hope you will enjoy reading how your support has impacted the lives of these fifteen remote communities and how the project has helped make their incomes and livelihoods more secure, at a time of national insecurity.

## Project Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of the project was to help small-scale fishing households build thriving and resilient livelihoods, through improved access to diverse markets, and the sustainable utilisation and management of marine resources in 15 communities within 3 chiefdoms (Imperi, Sittie and Bonthe Municipality) of the Sherbro Islands, Bonthe District in Southern Sierra Leone.

### The project had four key objectives:

- Increase access for small-scale fishing groups (comprising men & women) in the 3 targeted chiefdoms to improved fishing gears and fish processing facilities.
- Assist small-scale fishing groups, especially women in the 3 targeted chiefdoms, diversify their income sources and contribute to the effective management and protection of mangrove forest upon which their livelihood depends.
- Increase small-scale fishing households' access to storage, processing and marketing facilities and techniques, thereby resulting in a reduction of fish spoilage, better access to fresh fish markets and improved income.
- Support small-scale fishers to have increased capacity to fish in a sustainable manner and work effectively with government, the Community Management Associations and agencies for sustain and resilient livelihoods.

## Project Results

The key achievements of this project are:

- The **establishment of 15 small-scale fishing groups**, representing 150 male and 150 female fishers.
- The **training and support** provided to these groups in fish processing techniques and the **provision of new boats with outboard engines, nets and protective equipment** to each group.
- The provision of **fish processing facilities**, including 12 'chorkor' fish smoking ovens and five solar powered community cold storage stations, significantly increasing the potential sales and returns available to the fishing groups.
- The **establishment, training and equipment of ten beekeeping groups**, allowing for the diversification of income for more sustainable livelihoods.
- The training and support for women's groups in the **sustainable harvesting of oysters** to further diversify their income.

**Objective One: Small-scale fishing groups (comprising men and women) in the 3 targeted chiefdoms have access to improved fishing gears and fish processing facilities and techniques.**

**Activity One: Support the small-scale fishing groups have access to improved fishing equipment and training**

Through the project we established 15 small-scale fishing groups (150 men and 150 women). All of the groups were provided with a boat, outboard motor, fishing nets and accessories, life jackets and sea lights. The aim of providing this equipment and gear was to encourage them to practice safer and approved fishing activities; as well as be able to travel longer distances in search of fish to increase their catch and in the process, their income.

All of the 15 community fishing groups have been fully registered and are now recognised by their respective councils (Sittie District and Bonthe Municipality) which will enable them to effectively and legally operate as business entities. The beneficiary communities where the fishing groups are based are as follows: King Jimmy, Dumborkor, Seimabu, Nyandehun and Pimbihun in Bonthe Municipality and Bumplake, Mania, Tengesa, Dibya, Njimai, Zogoda, Hanging Site, Saama, Delken and Jayahub in Sittie.



*A fishing boat, decorated with the logos of the Isle of Man Government, Christian Aid and MSCL. The writing reads "Support to Small-Scale Fishing Groups by the Isle of Man Government in the Sherbro Basin".*

Training was provided to all fifteen groups on fishing techniques and why good fishery management is important and how it can be achieved. The topics covered in this session included good leadership; dealing with corruption; working in groups and how to solve conflict. Issues like overfishing, juvenile fishing by-catch; destructive fishing and marine pollution were also discussed. The end of training evaluation demonstrated that the facilitators achieved the expected goal through the positive responses of the participants to the review questions. Tiangay Adu, a female participant from Bumplake fishing group, remarked at the close of the training session: "I have acquired good knowledge and confidence to train my sisters when I return to my village".



**Activity Two: Support the small-scale fishing groups on fish processing, through the provision of processing equipment and training**

Twelve community fishing groups were provided with chorkor ovens. The ovens are to help the fishers practice improved fish processing techniques within a safe and hygienic environment and preserve their fish for market. Being about to preserve and process fish places producers in a better position to price their products and enables increase their return on their fishing activities.



*Internal and External views of one of the fish smoking Chorkor Oven constructed by the project.*

Sixty fishing group leaders (28 women and 32 men) were trained on fish processing including good hygiene and sanitation practices. The objectives of the training included:

- ▶ Training fishing group leaders to practice fish processing techniques in a safe hygiene & sanitary environment to ensure their products will not pose any major health treats to their customers.
- ▶ Train fishing group leaders on different fish preservation methodologies. livelihoods.
- ▶ Raise awareness amongst the leaders on the use of approved fishing equipment that will help keep fish fresh in the processing sites.

The following topics were covered during the training session: approved and recommended equipment/tools by the Ministry of Fishery and Marine Resources (MFMR) for fish harvesting, methods of fish-processing, recommended standards & procedures for fish processing, how to preserve fish for market without reducing its quality; and how to use ovens and the solar-powered cold storage facilities to preserve fish.

Five solar-powered community cold storage stations were established to enable the fishing groups to access creative markets and provide off the grid renewable energy for charging mobile phones. The following five out of fifteen fishing groups were supported with this facility: Mania, Njimai, Nyandehun, Hanging Site and Mbokie. The selection criteria was mainly based on their cooperation in terms of delivering the expected activities on time and the level of fishing activities undertaken.



*Solar-powered community cold storage station at Nyandehun village in Bonthe Municipality*

The installation of these solar-powered CCSS were done by Energy for Opportunities (EnFO) at Mbokie during the first year of project implementation and by the TARA Resource Enterprise in the other four communities in the last few months. It is expected that the facility will provide an alternative energy source for refrigeration to help facilitate the

preservation of fresh fish. As a result, this will strengthen the value chain for fresh fish and consequently contribute to increased income for the project communities.

In addition, the charging component attached to the facility will enable community residents to charge their phones and other appliances on a cost recovery basis. Some community structures were provided with lighting points to facilitate the lighting of those structures, for community use. School children, for example, will be able to use the facility to study in the evenings after school.

**Objective Two: Small-scale fishing groups, especially women in the 3 targeted chiefdoms, diversify their income sources and contribute to the effective management and protection of mangrove forests upon which their livelihoods depends.**

**Activity One: Women from the fishing groups trained in sustainable techniques for oyster harvesting**

Sixty women from the 15 fishing groups were trained in sustainable techniques for oyster harvesting. The overall aim of this training was to increase the income earning potential of women in the project communities which in process will encourage not only their own economic empowerment but the overall development of their communities.

The training objectives were:

- ▶ To raise awareness of sustainable techniques in oyster harvesting
- ▶ To raise awareness of the impact of climate change on oyster marine life and its consequences for both present and future generations.

Topics covered in the training session included:

- ▶ The economic importance of oyster farming
- ▶ Traditional practices that are used in oyster harvesting and their undesirable consequences on the oyster marine life
- ▶ Recommended oyster harvesting techniques

The training also included a learning visit to a neighbouring project community for participants to practice what they have been taught through the training session.

Knowledge gained from the training has helped encourage the women to adopt a positive behavioural change in using the approved recommended oyster-harvesting techniques that are marine-environmentally friendly. As a result, the income of these women is gradually increasing and will eventually enable them to improve the wellbeing of their families and support their children's education, therefore reducing the school dropout rates in these communities which is considerably high.

**Activity Two: Establishment, training and equipping of ten beekeeping groups**

Ten beekeeping groups, consisting of both male and female members were established in the Bonthe Sherbro Basin with the aim to engage in modern honey and wax production as an income generating activity.

We worked with the Hive Group, based in Nairobi to support on this activity. The Hive Group trained the beekeepers in their respective communities. Each group was provided with start-up kits which included 10 CAB hives, 2 bee suits, 1 smoker, 1 double strainer, 50 wax sheets, 1 hive tool, 1 uncapping fork, 1 bee brush. The Hive Group also installed 10 beehives.

The Methodist Church in Sierra Leone will continue to work with the Hive Group beyond the lifetime of the project to monitor the activities of the beekeepers until they start harvesting their honey and wax for the market. This new income generating activity for the communities will not increase the boost of the local economy but also help reduce their reliance on the mangroves.



*Newly installed beehive*



*Beekeepers in training*



### Activity Three: Community members trained on resource management techniques

25 members from the project communities (15 male and 10 female) were trained on resource management techniques. The aim of the training was to raise their awareness on the different marine resources available to them and to learn to conserve those resources in a sustainable manner for both present and future generations.

Through the training, the community members learnt about the following topics: various types of resources, community resource-mapping techniques participatory rural appraisal techniques, and practicable measures in managing resources and climate change and its impacts. Interactive training methods were used by the facilitators to enhance the learning experience for the participants.

**Objective Three: Small-Scale fishing households have improved access to storage, processing and marketing facilities and techniques, thereby resulting in a reduction of fish spoilage, better access to fresh fish markets and improved outcomes.**

### Activity One: Training of fishing group leaders on fish marketing

Sixty project participants (28 women and 32 men), four from each fishing group, were trained on fish marketing. The objective of the training was to improve on the market value of their produce to increase income. Different topics were covered during the training including: the principles of marketing, importance of packaging and advertising. Feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive with a general consensus that they felt more confident to practice what they have learnt when they sell their produce at the markets. This objective works in partnership with objective one, which oversaw the provisions of the fish smoking Chorkor ovens and solar-powered cold storage stations.

**Objective Four: Small Scale fishers have increased capacity to fish in a sustainable manner and work effectively with government, the Community Management Association and Agencies for sustained and resilient livelihoods.**

### Activity One: Training of fishing groups on sustainable fishing practices and techniques

Forty-five members from the fishing groups (20 men and 25 women) were trained on sustainable fishing practices and techniques. The following topics were covered during the training: Sustainable fishing practices/techniques, fishing gears and their effects on the marine resources, comparison between the traditional methods of fishing versus the modern fishing practices, fishing management tools, maximum sustainable yields and marketing methods and processes.

### Activity Two: Exchange and cross learning visits

A learning visit was made to Tombo fishing and processing community. A total of 28 people took part including four project staff members, four government officials and twenty fishing group representatives from the project beneficiary communities. The aim of the visit was primarily to build relationships, consolidate existing knowledge and expose the fishermen to innovative ideas and experiences in relation to maximising production and income from small scale fishing activities as practiced by fishermen in Tombo. The topics and issues discussed included: the role of local and regional government in artisanal fishing and how to build relationships with them and derive benefit, group work on best

practices, lessons learnt and key challenges to small scale fishing and processing and appropriate fishing gears and equipment.

#### Activity Three: Training of Community Management Associations (CMAs)

The Community Management Associations were trained on management and documentation with the Ministry of Fishery and Marine Resources (MFMR). Sixty participants (20 men and 40 women) took part in the training session which was aimed to teach fishing groups to keep records of their daily activities, such as accountability of fish catch, income and expenditure during sales.

The training also aimed to:

- ▶ Improve on the management and documentation practices of CMA's & MFMR with their respective groups in the Bonthe Sherbro Basin.
- ▶ Bring together CMA's representatives in the Bonthe Sherbro Basin to recap on their roles and responsibilities.

The training covered the following topics: the roles and responsibilities of the CMAs, basic book-keeping skills, communication and reporting skills, leadership styles, basic filing techniques and climate change and its impact.

Overall, participants gained the knowledge and skills in basic management and documentation processes that will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency in their operations. The facilitator also encouraged the participants to ensure they practice transparency and accountability in their day to day operations.

#### Activity Four: Training of CMAs on preventing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and reporting procedures

Twenty CMA representatives (16 men and 4 women) were trained on preventing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing procedures. The training objective was to train fishers from the project communities on preventing illegal fishing and reporting procedures on illegal and unregulated fishing activities. The training scope covered the following topics: What is Illegal, Unauthorised and Unregulated fishing (IUU)?, Reporting procedures and channels, challenges in enforcing regulations and participator rural appraisal.

The 15 fishing groups were provided with a mobile phone and a digital camera to record IUU activities and establish processes to record IUU fishing to the appropriate authorities in a timely manner.

### **Participation of beneficiaries**

Community participation remained high through the project implementation. Through frequent awareness-raising campaigns such as local radio panel discussions, community meetings and dialogue sessions, the community members by project completion showed a high level of commitment to the project and in working together.

Communities were also very supportive in providing unskilled labour, local materials and sometimes food for local artisans/contractors. This approach promoted the community ownership of the facilities that were provided for the various project groups. The piece of land for the construction of the chorkor ovens were donated by either individual group members or by the local authorities and the cold storage facilities were installed within community facilities including schools and mosques.

### **Sustainability**

Members of the fishing groups that were established have demonstrated their commitment by making financial contributions towards their group savings. The funds are saved at the Community Bank. The group savings have been used to contribute to the cost of additional fishing nets, fuel for their boats and other facilities required for the continuation of the project activities. This financial commitment will continue beyond the lifetime of the project and will encourage the fishing groups to save enough money to procure additional fishing boat and accessories within the next couple of years. With increased income, the group members will be able to meet their daily needs and be in a financially secure position to support their children's education and other needs.

As an exit strategy, the Project Steering Committee agreed that the fishing groups should provide quarterly updates to the Councils (Municipal and District). It is expected that the local authorities including the Chief Administrators of the Councils and the Paramount Chiefs will continue to monitor the activities of all the established groups in their various communities. Disputes that may arise among group members will be resolved by these authorities without involving the courts. Members of the Community Management Associations affirmed their commitment in ensuring that destructive fishing practices are safeguarded at all times. In terms of institutional sustainability, long-term changes of attitudes, behaviours and relationships could be achieved through increased focus on awareness-raising, exposure

visits and project activities with involvement from the local authorities and government officers such as the Navy Wing of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces (SLAF) and Ministry of Fishery and Marine Resources (MFMR).

## Case Studies

### A TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE IN MANIA FISHING COMMUNITY

Mania community is the bread basket of Bonthe District. It is endowed with so many marine resources. It is because of this endowment, Mania experiences an influx of visiting fishermen and fishmongers both foreign and local nationals. But notwithstanding its natural marine endowment, the inhabitants of Mania live in abject poverty. There is only a primary school in the Community. In short, their natural endowment does not reflect on the people's wellbeing.

The natives of Mania lack the capacity to effectively utilize the fish within their reach. Therefore they resort to fishing within their immediate vicinity using their traditional tools/equipment. Subsequently their harvests are always very small. The other option open to them is to work as labourers for the foreign vessels that come into Mania to fish for very low/small wages. This further exacerbates their economic situation in the area.

Furthermore, most of the children do not attend formal schools and there is a high level of under five mortality, as its inhabitants lack money to take their pregnant women to the government hospital in Bonthe, for a better antenatal and post natal medical care. As a result they mostly fall back on native treatment as an alternative means to save the lives of their relatives or family members.

With the intervention of the Isle of Man Government funded project – “Supporting Small Scale Fishers to build thriving and resilient livelihoods in the Bonthe Sherbro basin”, there has been significant change for the inhabitants of Mania. The Mania fishing group was provided with a newly crafted wooden boat and an outboard motor, some lengths of standard fishing nets with the required accessories and safety gears to introduce them to commercial fishing activities. The support was aimed at transforming the economic livelihoods of the group members thereby providing them with increased income.

According to the chairman, Mr. Ismail Kain “thanks to this project we can now travel to far distances in search of good fish species, as we now possess a motorized boat as opposed to the local canoes we have been using, which normally give us low harvest. Presently, we are now able to raise better income from our fishing activities, which we can use to support our children in formal schools, both within and outside Bonthe District. We can now afford to pay for their school charges and other medical bills. Also in times of any emergency situation, we can offer loan facilities to ourselves in the group at minimal interest rate to settle any pressing financial problem that might be faced by any member of the group”.

These fishing group members (10 men and 10 women) have benefited from several trainings during the implementation of the project such as business management skills, fish processing & marketing and recommended practices for sustainable fishing. The group is formally recognised by the Bonthe District Council and therefore given the authority to operate as a Community Based Organization (CBO). The group has a formidable executive working with a constitution/bye-laws. They keep records of all their activities and meet regularly to discuss issues affecting their Organization. They no longer use the monofilament fishing net as they now know that are marine environmentally destructive.



## DAWN OF A NEW FISHING ERA AT BUMPLAKE COMMUNITY

Bumplake is a moderate fishing community in the Bonthe Municipality. Their main income generation activity is fishing, although sometimes they undertake small-scale crop production activities.

The majority of Bumplake's residents poor and highly illiterate. They previously undertook the traditional methods of fishing i.e. with no appropriate gears and equipments. Frequently this community suffers incidences of sea accidents due to heavy water ties and the lack of appropriate sea safety equipment such as sea lights and life jackets by these fishermen, as this community serves as gateway for many motorised boats that enter or leave the district for fishing.



The inhabitants of Bumplake lack the appropriate resources to travel long distances in pursuit of fishing. They are restricted to fish only in their neighbourhood, where the waters have been over-exploited over the years, thereby making them much poorer than they were 10 years ago. They go out day and night in pursuit of fish, but hardly get good catch and if even they do, the catches are smaller in size, which cannot produce good returns for their adventures.

Their dream has always been to acquire the requisite support to enable them to fish in bigger waters like the ocean at Mania or Dema. Several efforts were made to the Bonthe Municipal Council and the government of Sierra Leone to help with those approved equipments, but to no avail.

With the Isle of Man Government project intervention in Bumplake, their dream of owning a motorised boat and appropriate gears & equipments materialised. They were supplied with a motorized boat and its accessories, which empowered them to fish in the ocean water at Mania and Dema. Twenty people (10 men & 10 women) were supported as a group.

The project provided two pieces of nets for the group. Having realized that the usefulness of the net for ocean fishing, they raised some additional funds to buy thread in order to design more nets. Two artisans among the group skilfully prepared four additional pieces of net to get the desired quantity. With this collaborative effort and teamwork, the group has acquired the necessary equipments to move from localized to deep sea fishing adventures.

Also, a considerable amount of money has been saved at their bank account. The lives of the members of the fishing group are gradually improving, as they can now generate income and support their families with their basic needs. The school enrolment rate of their children has increased considerably with most of their children now attending schools in Bonthe town. The group members have resolved in one of their meetings to make some financial contribution towards a school building project in the community.

Furthermore, the chairlady of the group Mrs. Nenneh Tua said "I am the happiest for the construction of the chorkor oven, as domestic pets & rodents no longer eat our processed fish as they use to do in the past, causing considerable loss to our income. We can now process our fish in a hygienic and protected environment, with less contamination. This has greatly increased the market value of our fish thereby putting more money in our purses/pockets".



## ISATU KONNEH – OYSTER HARVESTER AT GBOGBOMA VILLAGE

16 year old Isatu Konneh lives in a small village about 1.6km from Bonthe City. She is a third-year Senior Secondary School pupil.

Gboghoma is one of the worst badly hit communities in the Bonthe Municipality during the 11 years of rebellion in Sierra Leone. As at now, there is no evidence of government and its development partners' post war reconstruction activities.

All of the buildings in the township are still covered with grass. There are no corrugated zinc roofing structures in the entire village. Fishing and oyster harvesting are the major economic activities of the inhabitants. There is great reduction in the population of fish in their waters, due to their bad fishing methods i.e. the use of monofilament nets that catch fingerlings thereby greatly affecting their breeding.

Also, the oyster harvesting methods practiced by the inhabitants have been detrimental to the mangrove ecology, adversely affecting the existence of the mangroves and consequently affecting the breeding sites of oysters.

Isatu Konneh is a beneficiary of the Isle of Man Government funded training on improved oyster harvesting techniques for women. She is now able to practice the acquired skills and techniques for sustainable oyster harvesting to meet the needs of both the present & future generations. She is now generating so much income from the sales of oyster that Isatu can pay for all her school expenses without assistance from her parents. When asked to comment on her present situation, this was what she said "my parents are all poor and most times my father goes to fish and catch nothing. So if I am to rely on them for my educational needs, I will either marry early or drop out of school".

With her acquired knowledge and techniques on improved oyster harvesting, she is now empowered to harvest oysters with premium quality using the recommended tools and procedures. This will result to increased income and improved living conditions. A remarkable discovery made in the community is the production of white powder from the oyster shells. The powder is mixed with water to produce a white emulsion that is used as white wash to paint buildings. In addition to the Oyster that is harvested, the white powder is also sold in the neighbouring communities As an alternative economic activity to fishing, women are now able to complement the efforts of their husbands in taking care of their families by paying their children's school charges, clothing and medical bills. Consequently, this alternative, in come source by the women has greatly reduced their vulnerability and improved their wellbeing.



**Thank you to the Isle of Man Government for your generous support of this project.**