

SIRLEAF MARKET WOMEN'S FUND FIELD REPORT

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COMPILED BY

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I. Introduction

The Sirleaf Market Women Fund (SMWF) has as its primary goal improving the condition of Liberia's market women. This semi-annual fund report covers the period January to June 2008 during which the SMWF transformed markets into better, more secure, decent and sanitary places for sellers and buyers alike by renovating, extending, and/or constructing six (6) markets. With a special grant from the NoVo Foundation the fund contributed to the creation of comfortable learning environments for Liberian children by renovating and/or furnishing ten (10) public or community schools with stationery, including note books and roll books, chairs, benches, tables and toilets. The SMWF increased and improved access to safe drinking water by providing three (3) hand pumps to communities. And, the fund furthered the restoration of electricity and by extension the enhancement of security and economic acceleration by providing two (2) 65 KVA generators to two county capitals. By improving the dilapidated and filthy condition of markets, by reducing the poor quality, shortages and/or lack of school furniture, by increasing communities' access to safe drinking water, and by gradually re-electrifying communities around the country, the SMWF delivered on the promises of its objectives. The pages that follow provide an update of the key activities undertaken during the period and the progress made thus far.

II. Activities

A. Renovation/Construction of Markets

The SMWF renovated one (1) market, completed construction begun last year of two (2) markets, and has three (3) markets currently under construction in Monrovia, Lofa, and Gbarpolu Counties. The markets include: 1. Nancy B. Doe Market extension (constructed); 2. Barnersville Market extension (constructed); 3. Zogolemai Market (constructed); 4. Gbarpolu; 5. Paynesville Central Market (renovated); and 6. Duala Market extension (constructed).

1. Nancy B. Doe Market:

After the dedication of the Nancy B. Doe Market by the President, Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the marketers expressed the need for SMWF to erect a concrete fence around the market to make it safer and secure for marketers, their products and goods, and their children. The marketers also requested the construction of an annex to the main market building to accommodate the growing number of marketers. The fence construction commenced on December 18, 2007 and was completed on May 15, 2008 while the extension work commenced on June 2, 2008, expected to be completed and dedicated in early August 2008. About 300 marketers are expected to benefit from this extension of the market.

In another development, the Proprietor of the Greater Grace School operating on the upper floor of the market has been instructed by the Ministry of Justice to vacate the market as that section was intended by the government for use by marketers' children as

a day-care and not a private entity. He was expected to vacate the building by July 20, 2008. Additionally, ECO-Bank-Liberia is constructing a banking window in the Nancy B. Doe market to serve the marketers in the area. This was made possible through the collaborative effort of the Board of SMWF. The banking window was expected to be opened by the end of July or early August 2008.



Nancy Doe Market Extension

2. Barnersville Market

Construction of the Barnersville Market necessitated the eviction of squatters from the area surrounding the market to make way for a fence around the facility. A growing number of marketers have sprung up due to the positive developments taking place at the market, thereby prompting the SMWF board to decide to construct an annex to the market. On April 28, 2008, SMWF signed an addendum to the Barnersville Market contract for the construction of a fence and an annex for the market. About 600 marketers will benefit from the market project.

The market was expected to be dedicated in early August 2008 by Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.



Barnersville Market Fence



Barnersville Market Extension

3. Zogolemai Market

The Zogolemai Market project is an initiative of four (4) communities in Lofa. The funding for construction of the market was provided by the SMWF while the community contributed labour and other local materials. The project was delayed for some time due to the lack of cooperation from some community members on grounds that the head of the project from the community was not liaising with them even though they selected him in a mass meeting of representatives of the communities. However, after the personal intervention of the Superintendent of Lofa County and other prominent citizens, the communities came together and successfully completed the project in early June. Anticipated to be dedicated before the end of July or early August, this market is expected to benefit around 900 marketers in the area.

4. Gbarpolu

The Gbarpolu market project, which began in December 2007, has finally been completed and turned over to SMWF by the contractor. The delay in completion was due to an acute shortage of cement on the market during the period. SMWF is planning the official dedicatory program as soon as the local authorities decide on a suitable date. About 1,000 marketers will benefit from the Gbarpolu market project.



5. Paynesville Central Market

The Paynesville market project has been completed and inspected by the Ministry of Public Works (MPW). However, due to the heavy downpour of rain, the MPW has advised that SMWF to construct a low fence and drainage to avoid erosion in the area. SMWF has asked the contractor to review the situation and present a proposal for appropriate action. The Paynesville market will benefit around 500 marketers.



5.2 Paynesville Market annex

As a result of the March 28, 2008 SMWF Liberia Board meeting, a decision was taken to purchase two lots of land for the construction of a market for marketers of the ELWA junction community. The land is currently being occupied by marketers.

During preliminary discussion with the Nimley family to whom the land belongs, they agreed in principle to sell the two lots of land for US\$19,000, and this was accepted by the Board. However, it was learned later that the Nimley family had changed their minds and have decided not to sell the land. The office informed the Board of the situation and is awaiting feedback from the Board on the next course of action.

6. Duala Market extension

The President, Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, paid a visit in early May to the Duala market after the MPW carried out a massive demolition exercise of illegal structures in the area. SMWF was asked to construct an annex to the market so as to accommodate some of the marketers that the existing market could not accommodate.

On May 26, 2008, SMWF signed a contract with LICA, Inc., to construct an extension to the Duala market. The work was expected to be completed by the end of July 2008.



B. The President's Special Initiative

The special initiative of the President supported by the NoVo Foundation is geared towards helping the public or community schools most in need with furniture and other educational materials; provide 10 hand pumps and two 65kva generators to electrify two cities in rural Liberia.

1. School Supplies:

One special initiative of the President is aimed at supporting the Compulsory Primary School Program. Listed below are ten (10) selected public and community schools where a total of 4,500 students are expected to benefit from the project. During the period, various forms of support were provided for these schools, including renovation, stationery, and furniture, among others.

No	School	Location	Kind of Provision	Type of school
1	C.W. Brumskin	Montserrado County	Renovated toilets, windows, doors, ceiling, office cabinet	Public
2	C.D.B. King	Montserrado County	Benches, desk, chairs, copy, tables, copy books, pens, pencils etc	Public
3	Soniwein Community School	Soniwein, Montserrado County	Benches, desk, chairs, copy, tables, copy books, pens, pencils etc	Public
4	Slipway Community	Slipway, Montserrado County	Painting of building, chairs, toilets	Public
5	Monrovia Demonstration Elementary	Clay Street	Library, repair of toilets, painting of building	Public
6	Marvee Sonii	Clara Town	Repair of well, provision of chairs, roll books and plan books	Public
7	M.V.Massaquoi School	West Point	Provision of chairs, notebooks, blackboards, toilets	Public
8	TOP Community	Fiamah	Renovation of school and provision of chairs	Community
9	Webo Central High	Webo, River Gee County	Provision of chairs and blackboards	Public School
10	Isiah Y. Johnson Community School	Gardnersville	Minor renovation of the school's floor	Community School



Chairs donated by SMWF



Marvee Sonii School Students

B. Generator

1. Voinjama

A 65kva generator was presented to authorities of the City of Voinjama to fulfill a promise made to the people of Lofa County. The lighting ceremony was performed by the President during her March cabinet meeting in Voinjama.

2. Bopolu

A 65 kva generator was also presented to the City of Bopolu by SMWF as part of the special initiative of the President to electrify a few cities in rural Liberia. The lighting ceremony was performed by the President, Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.



C. Wells

SMWF has provided hand pumps to three (3) communities during the period under review. They are:

- Totota
- Kaymah Town, Soul Clinic Community
- Barnersville Market



Kaymah Town, Soul Clinic Community

D. Logan Town Children's Playground

The playground project, jointly financed by the UNMIL Quick impact project and SMWF, kicked off on March 19, 2008. It was expected to last for two months. However, due to a delay in disbursing the second instalment of payment from UNMIL and heavy rain, the project was to be completed by the end of the July or early August. This project will benefit about 800-1,000 children of the Logan Town community and environs.



12. Adult education program

A. Training

Nancy Suwarkpala returned from South Africa from phase two of a month-long training program. Nancy was selected from one of Partners (Development Education Network-Liberia) in order for her to work on SMWF's Adult Literacy Program with marketers.

B. Meeting with ALFALIT International Inc.

On July 9, 2008, the Executive Director of the Sirleaf Market Women's Fund had a meeting with the Executive Director of Alfalit International Inc., an international non-governmental organization involved in adult literacy programs in Liberia and other parts of the world.

The meeting was a follow-up to one held in New York in June between the SMWF/USA Board President Dr. Thelma Awori and Minister Vabah Gayflor and an official of ALFALIT International Inc., based in the United States, in which ALFALIT promised to donate adult literacy materials to SMWF for use in their programs.

The meeting between the two Executive Directors centered on the reading materials promised by ALFALIT and the need for greater cooperation geared towards empowering marketing women of this country.

After a lengthy discussion, the two organizations agreed in principle on the following:

- The need to collaborate in the area of adult literacy since ALFALIT has the professional expertise and years of experience in training women
- That the two organization would work together in the future on micro-credit opportunities for the market women
- To share these initial thoughts with our various heads and find another time to concretize these understandings.

Board Meeting

During the period under review, there were three board meetings held: two at the Foreign Ministry with the President and Chief Patron Her Excellency Madame Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in attendance, while the last was held at the Ministry of Gender and Development.

At the March 28 meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, two persons were elected to the Board. They are Professor Euphemia Abdullahi, Dean of Teachers College, University of Liberia, to replace the Late Dr. Oliver Duncan, and Mrs. Morenike Adepoju, Managing Director, ECO-Bank-Liberia.

During the May 28, 2008 board meeting, Cllr. Frances Johnson-Morris was elected as the Co-Chairperson of the National board of SMWF.

Fund-raising program

The Sirleaf Market Women's Fund and the African Women's Development Fund in collaboration with the New York Society for Ethical Culture co-sponsored the SMWF/USA's first fundraising event to launch the newly created Adopt-a-Market campaign in New York City on Wednesday, June 4, 2008.

The President, Her Excellency Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, was the primary speaker at the event, which also was attended by a three-member delegation from Liberia: the Chairperson of the Board, Madam Vabah K. Gayflor, and two (2) market women, Lusu K. Sloan, Acting President of the Liberia Marketing Association, and Massa Cousli, Superintendent of the Frog Island Market.

The goals of the event were as follows:

- To raise US\$1,000,000 to construct or reconstruct at least 10 markets in Liberia over the next 12 months
- To build partnerships with individuals and institutions in the United States for the Sirleaf Market Women's Fund and African women across the continent through the African Women's Development Fund.

Vehicles:

In order to enhance the project activities in and around the country that had stalled sometimes due to the lack of a good vehicle for monitoring and other field visits, the Board in its March 28, 2008 meeting instructed the office to purchase a new four-wheel-drive vehicle and dispose of the old vehicle.



New SMWF vehicle with the driver

Micro-credit program

The SMWF has opened a micro-credit account with the ECO-Bank with an initial deposit of US\$2,200, which was a donation from some members of the cabinet. This amount is expected to be used as a seed fund for the SMWF's micro-credit program. The Nancy B. Doe and Barnersville markets would be the first beneficiaries of this program.

A guideline is being drafted by SMWF in collaboration with the Liberia Marketing Association.

Constraints/Challenges:

- The constant shortages of cement on the market created problems for the timely implementation of project activities
- Delay in the transfer of funds from the African Women's Development Fund to SMWF
- Staffing is another problem as the office has only three (3) persons and the workload is becoming more challenging day by day.
- Reliance on other government ministries and agencies for implementation of some of our activities is a major problem especially when they are working according to their own style and time
- Sourcing funding and putting into place a mechanism for running the day care at the Nancy B. Doe market.

Recommendations:

- SMWF through its Board Chairperson needs to make representation to CEMENCO to give priority to the SMWF project
- The procedures and guidelines of requesting funds from AWDF should be sent to SMWF as soon as possible so as to make the process easier
- Additional staff for the smooth implementation of our project activities
- The need to contract a private engineer to oversee the technical aspects of the projects, especially construction activities
- SMWF is working on a proposal to present to UNICEF and other Partners to support the Day Care at the Nancy B. Doe market.