After Conflict Ends: Providing Technology and Training for Novice Farmers – Sierra Leone’s Experience

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Abstract  
In 1993, rebels attacked Sierra Leone with a brutal onslaught of innocent civilians. Following the decade-long Civil War, decline in agricultural production was significant (Moriba, 2002). Many farmers were killed or had limbs amputated. Hundreds of thousands were displaced and many refused to return to farming areas after the war ended. Scores of farm homes, structures, and equipment were destroyed. Now, a significant number of producers are new to farming and most are unfamiliar with traditional farm tools and how to use the tools properly. The Tikonko Agricultural Extension Centre (TAEC) was established to produce farm tools to be adopted by local farmers and improve food production (Kawa, 1992). The manufacturing of new technologies intended for adoption by farmers is supported by diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 2003).

Issues related to post-conflict reconstruction have become a major concern because inadequate handling of problems emerging from civil wars is debilitating and costly. Collier (2007) asserted that, “the experience of having been through a civil war roughly doubles the risk of another conflict” (p. 27). Thus, the need for systematic inquiries on how to empower farmers in post-conflict countries by providing them with appropriate technologies and training as a way of preventing the reoccurrence of conflict, promoting agricultural productivity and achieving food security exists.

This descriptive study was conducted to investigate how providing appropriate technologies to farmers, including novices, after conflict ends empowers them to become self-reliant and, in turn, achieve food security and contribute to community development in a developing country. The objectives of the study were to 1) identify technologies and training provided for farmers in Sierra Leone post-conflict; and 2) describe how technologies and training influenced farmers’ work activities and livelihoods.

The study was conducted in the Bo District in Sierra Leone. Structured questionnaires were used to collect farmers’ views on the technologies and training provided and how that
influenced their farming activities and livelihoods. The target population consisted of 318 farmers; a sample of 74 was obtained through simple random sampling. To ensure validity, a panel of experts reviewed the instrument. Data were analyzed using frequencies that were calculated as percentages.

Farmers were provided with technologies, which they readily adopted, e.g., threshing, winnowing, and shelling machines. Moreover, they received training on how to use the technologies. Farmers perceived that the technologies and training impacted their farming practices and livelihoods considerably. The relevance of providing technology and training for farmers in countries emerging from conflict was evident. Therefore, organizations concerned with post-conflict reconstruction may learn from this experience. Providing appropriate technologies to farmers in post conflict countries may increase food production, enhance food security, and promote self-reliance (Moriba, Kandeh, & Edwards, 2009). Subsequently, the chances of another conflict occurring are reduced. The poster presentation would feature many of the TAEC-produced technologies, their relevance to smallholder farmers, and special considerations when working with novice farmers as potential adopters.

**Keywords:** Farmers; Post-conflict; Technology Diffusion