



FARMING ON CRUTCHES - REBUILDING RURAL LIVES IN SIERRA LEONE

**Prepared by the Sierra Leone Amputee Sports Association Permaculture and
Agro-ecological Farm (SLASA-PAF), Waterloo, Freetown**

FARMING ON CRUTCHES - REBUILDING RURAL LIVES IN SIERRA LEONE

A proposal prepared by the Sierra Leone Amputee Sports Association Permaculture and Agro-ecological Farm (SLASA-PAF)

1 Project Description:

In this document we would like to share with you our vision of encouraging rural people in Sierra Leone – including those disabled by the civil war - to change the way that they farm, through creating ripples of knowledge and of practical experience of the benefits of farming in harmony with nature. The project aims to encourage both increased awareness of, and the transfer of knowledge to, rural changemakers on ecological, conservational and environmental issues within the local context. The communities shall gain practical education on how to develop and carry out sustainable agricultural management practices through the experience and activities of the Sierra Leone Amputee Sports Association Permaculture and Agro-ecological Farm (SLASA-PAF).

The Project will research, deepen and share understanding of practical organic fertilizer preparation for best use of crops and vegetables growing, on techniques in seed saving and on permaculture functional design strategies that adapt to best human settlement. The project shall address in a practical way the best ecological harmony of Mother Earth and how these learning experiences will be replicated into a local framework that is suitable to the Sierra Leone context.

2 Project Justification

One of the poorest countries in the world, Sierra Leone experienced 11 years of civil war (1991-2002). More than 50,000 people died. Many others lost limbs through amputation. Following the civil war, the Ebola epidemic killed over 8,000 people and devastated the country's major source of livelihood; agriculture and education infrastructures were left in limbo (2014 – 2015). This project will focus on the healing role of farming in rebuilding rural lives in practical ways through the experience of SLASA-PAF. The project is built around a 10-acre land space donated in 2010 by the then UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, but with both infrastructure and farming activities starting only 10 years later in February 2020. This was made possible as the result of a generous grant of £20,000 from the LUSH Foundation in the UK. Details of the progress made on the farm since then were presented to the 2021 Oxford Real Farming Conference and can be found [here](#).

The project focuses on inspiring initiatives to build resilience into the farming practices of our communities and will provide a platform through which poor farmers, community schools and amputees shall gain knowledge in sustainable farming practices.

In 2018, Mambud Samai (founder of SLASA and PAF Project Manager) had the opportunity to spend ten months at the [Asian Rural Institute](#) in Japan learning sustainable agriculture and permaculture; and quite recently gained an inspirational insight during the Oxford Real Farming Conference – Jan 7 – 13th 2021. He will serve as the key resource person for knowledge transfer within this project.

3 Proposed Project Activities

3.1 Increasing the number of amputee farmers. We would like to bring in a group of 15 amputees, three from each of the country's five districts, to plan together a practical training programme that will help the wider, national fellowship of amputees both to learn physical and farming skills and to return home with seeds & tools to start farming & to encourage others to do the same. The intention is that this training programme, designed by and for the amputees [and of which they will have ownership], will be rolled out to a further seven amputees from each region (35 in total) so that there will be 10 changemakers in each region – making a total of 50 across the country. We anticipate that these will be able to share their knowledge with the balance of their peers in their regions – so that all 350 amputees within SLASA will be able to become amputee permaculture farmers.

3.2 Training the changemakers - schoolchildren. We would like to bring to the farm 240 schoolchildren [and their teachers] from surrounding rural communities to see and learn what we are doing and to take the knowledge learnt back to their communities. For this we need to cover the costs of transport, food and materials.

3.3 Training and supporting the changemakers - farmers. We would like to train 150 farmers as well as both train and employ <20 people in a small number of vital activities including compost-making, seed saving and the production of liquid, natural fertilisers so that they can spend time in their communities supporting the changemakers.

4 Anticipated project benefits

The compelling benefits from training and supporting the changemakers in agro-ecology and permaculture farming practices for community localization and revitalization efforts are that;

- i. It enhances food security and human health whilst reducing financial risks
- ii. It eliminates the need for synthetic fertilisers and plant protection chemicals
- iii. It protects the forests from deforestation and reduces erosion
- iv. It rebuilds habitats to preserve biodiversity and aids in sequestering carbon
- v. It provides new economic opportunities for both amputees and whole-bodied people and increases the attractiveness of the rural areas as a place to live and earn a living.

5. **In summary.** In summary the project creates social, cultural and economic opportunities as well as increasing biodiversity and healthy ecosystems through conservation and improving agricultural yield, in the process allowing farmers and farms to become more productive and profitable. It helps to bridge the gap between the poor and rich as the ecological project both brings the community together through creating a team effort and allows the poorest in the community to benefit because it removes the need for external finance. Permaculture, like Agro-ecology, could be described as the growth of agricultural ecosystems in a self-sufficient and sustainable way without causing damage. This form of agriculture draws inspiration from nature to develop farming systems based on crop diversity, resilience, natural productivity and sustainability. It is against this background that the SLASA Farm seeks financial support for this project to benefit our rural communities.

TABLE ONE SUMMARY OF COSTS		
ITEM	COST (£)	PRIORITY (£)
Completion of the training centre & associated equipment	4,321	
Planning the amputee farmer training course	4,971	
Delivering the amputee farmer training course	8,187	
Cost of Priority One		17,479
Training the changemakers (schools)	11,207	
Cost of Priority Two		11,207
Cost of Priorities One AND Two		28,686
Training the changemakers (farmers)	11,038	
Supporting the changemakers	6,917	
Cost of Priority Three		17,955
TOTAL COSTS (priorities one, two and three)	46,641	46,641