Strategies to Prevent (STOP) Spillover

Impact Brief

Sierra Leone

Lassa Food Storage and Community Hygiene Interventions

Activity 2.2.2.1: Lassa Food Storage and Farming Systems Intervention

INTRODUCTION

Figure 1:Traditional methods of storing rice grains in community

STOP Spillover formative research revealed that farmers package their harvested grains and crops in sacks, boxes, jerry cans, barrels, or wrapped in old clothes, and store crops in kitchens, barns, or in their houses until the next planting season. As a result of these storage practices and farmers' proximity to the forest, rodents frequently enter people's homes, eat and contaminate food.

Based on the outcome of STOP Spillover formative research, community representatives and One Health Design, Research and Mentorship (OHDReaM) working group members designed and developed improved grain storage techniques and improved hygiene and waste management systems to reduce rodent-human contact and reduce Lassa virus spillover risks.

Figure 2: Grain storage methods proposed for testing

Expected Outcomes for Improved Grain Storage

The expected outcome for grain storage interventions is the adoption of improved household grain storage and water and food management practices to reduce the frequency of human-rodent contact in target households.

Achievements

Conducted community engagements a total of 200 out of 511 farming households in 6 communities around the Gola Forest, in Guara chiefdom in Kenema district were enrolled for testing grain storage intervention. Criteria for selection of the households were:

1. Female-led farming households
2. Farming households closest to the forest
3. Farming households that harvest more than 6 bushels of rice /season

Figure 3: Enrolment of farming for testing grain storage intervention

4. Youth farming households
5. Mud and thatch houses (the most vulnerable to rats)

Out of the two hundred farming households selected in the four communities, 113 were female-headed households (57%) and 87 were male-headed households.

Launching of Food Safety Interventions and Distribution of Grain Storage Technologies

STOP Spillover is testing grain storage techniques in three communities in Gaura chiefdoms in Kenema district. The launching ceremony brought together representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, OH-DreaM Working Group members, chiefdom representatives, enrolled farmers, STOP Spillover staff and community members.

Figure 4: Distribution of grain storge materials

Participant Reflections

OH-DWG member: "As OH-DReaM working group members, our participation in trainings and community engagements has enhance our capacity in research and community mobilization."

Ministry of Agriculture representative: "Partnering and collaborating with the STOP Spillover project is a laudable approach that has helped us support more farmers in derived communities in Sierra Leone."

Farmers: "We have been struggling with post -harvest loss because of high rat infestation in our homes, barns, and farms. With the introduction of these improve grain storage intervention techniques our grains will be safely store with limited Lassa fever risks."

Next Steps

1. Training farmers in food safety and community hygiene practices.
2. Training community monitors to collect data on the use of grain storage and community hygiene techniques.
3. Monitoring the use of grain storage and community hygiene techniques.

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