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U.S. Ambassador, Family Visit Community-Based Agriculture and Crafts Projects

On January 5, Ambassador Michael S. Owen, his wife, and daughter visited two projects sponsored under the Ambassador's Special Self-Help (SSH) Program, which supports small, community-based initiatives. These projects are designed in cooperation with community members, who contribute their own resources, usually in the form of labor and in-kind donations.

With Embassy assistance, the Muwatima United Development Organization, located in Mogibissie Village, Gbo Chiefdom, Bo District, has launched a cassava and rice-processing operation to improve productivity and storage capacity. This project has provided villagers with a cassava-processing facility, improved rice seed, a rice drying floor, and a storage shed. With increased profits from making garri and foo-foo, community members plan to invest in further development projects and finance the education of their children. Villagers warmly welcomed Ambassador Owen, whom they noted was the first foreign diplomat ever to visit Mogibissie.

In addition, Ambassador Owen visited the Tabanor Women's Group in Grafton, Western District. The U.S. Embassy has provided support for the construction of a storage shed for the scarves, blankets, bags, hanging planters, and other woven materials produced by the group. Started after the war by refugees staying in the National Stadium, Tabanor later relocated to Grafton and hopes to expand its operations. The local community was pleased to receive Ambassador Owen, who pledged to continue working with them.

U.S. Government funding for the projects in Mogibissie and Grafton totaled more than USD 12,000. The Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund (SSH) is a grass-roots assistance program that allows U.S. embassies to respond directly to local requests for small community-based development projects in African countries. These projects are designed in cooperation with community members, who contribute their own resources, usually in the form of labor and in-kind donations. For more information on the Ambassador's SSH program please visit <http://freetown.usembassy.gov>.