



International
Trade
Centre

EXPORT IMPACT
FOR GOOD

TRADE AT HAND FOR LIBERIA'S MARKET WOMEN

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES ON YOUR CELL PHONE



TRADE AT HAND

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EXPANDING AGRICULTURAL TRADE

Liberia needs to stimulate agriculture-based income generation. Expanding agricultural production and trade is a major way forward for economic development by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of Liberia. After 14 years of civil war, physical infrastructure for production and marketing was destroyed. Current inefficiencies in the local food supply chain are having adverse impact on the main Liberian food supplier: the market women. These women play a critical role in the country's reconstruction and constitute one of the strongest forces driving Liberia's economic revival. Linking them to smallholder farmers, and facilitating business transactions is a priority for driving Liberia's rural economic development.

CONNECTING LIBERIAN WOMEN TO GLOBAL MARKETS

The Trade at Hand business matching service enhances the business opportunities of Liberia's market women selling farm products. The Trade at Hand business matching service – utilizing cell phones – facilitates transactions between Liberian market women and agricultural producers, thereby contributing to a more efficient food distribution within the country, and potential use of any surplus produce towards regional trade and export. ITC's Trade at Hand business matching service allows market traders to access information about fresh product offerings, and enables local producers to publicize their available goods for sale to a wide audience of potential business partners.

MATCHING MARKET INFORMATION TO LIBERIAN SUPPLIERS

The service allows users to advertise their products via the GPRS capabilities of their cell phone. Messages carry sale offers regarding a limited number of crops. These crops include the local staples of rice, cassava, plantain and palm nut; bitter ball, pepper, okra and potato greens, commonly used in Liberian cuisine; as well as cocoa and coffee, products of primary importance for ensuring Liberia's future prosperity through exports.

Market women and women farmers are being introduced to the opportunities afforded by the Trade at Hand business matching service through a pilot scheme. A training network (consisting of ITC staff, Liberian trainers from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, extension workers and stakeholders) is market testing the Trade at Hand business matching service.

ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

ITC's Trade at Hand business matching services in Liberia are sustainable as they are directly responsive to local trade information needs and will be managed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The efficiency of sales operations for agricultural products will improve through the delivery of real-time, personalized and location specific business information.

The mobile business matching service is part of ITC's integrated approach to trade development, poverty reduction, and women's economic empowerment in post-conflict Liberia, complementing the Liberia Export Development Project at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Enterprise Competitiveness
International Trade Centre
Palais des Nations, CH-1211
Geneva 10, Switzerland
T+41 22 730 0111
Trade-at-Hand@intracen.org



Ministry of Commerce &
Industry of Liberia
P.O.Box 9041
Ashmun/Gurley Streets
Monrovia, Liberia
T+231 6 219956

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MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND