

Empowering women and supporting children

In some of our origin countries, women make up more than half the agricultural workforce and also take primary responsibility for children's education and family nutrition. Yet too many of these women still face gender-related constraints, and too many children still need a better start in life. We aim to create thriving communities that are armed with the basic social services relating to education, health and nutrition. And where community members will unite to empower women, aim for gender equality and protect children from child labor.



Empowering women and supporting children *continued*

Empowering women

Gender equality is a global goal, but the constraints women face in cocoa-growing communities vary from one country to another. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, cocoa supports the livelihoods of about 3.6 million people and is one of the country's major foreign-currency earners. However, due to their relatively low plantation ownership rates and limited decision-making power, women have very little control over the revenues they generate and are generally unremunerated for their labor. Women in cocoa-growing communities also often find it harder than men to access training and financial services for entrepreneurial ventures.

Despite the rural income gap between women and men, in families and villages across West Africa, women play pivotal roles. They usually run the home, buy or grow food, and pay school fees for their children. We want them to become family income generators in their own right, as farmers with skills to match their male counterparts, or business builders.

Cultural norms and traditions can play a role in women's empowerment. Their role as care givers often clashes with paid employment and from involvement in community decision-making. We are very clear about the fact that we cannot truly empower women as income generators without first working with them to challenge and redefine the cultural conditions and gender norms in which they currently live.

However, in the short term, women need support that fits in with their lifestyles. We need to make sure that the support we provide delivers measurable positive outcomes, so we are currently running a number of research studies and pilot programs. You can find out more about these on page C24.

Bespoke training for women

Training provided in the agricultural sector is mostly attended by men, although a large part of the work on the farm is done by women. Evaluations carried out by UTZ Certified, show that information provided to men during training is often not effectively passed on to women. Consequently, it has a limited impact on the ground. We ran a project mapping out a typical day in the life of a woman living in a cocoa-growing community in West Africa, and in partnership with CARE, we asked women directly how we can make training more accessible. The results show that two of the key obstacles we need to overcome are distance and timing.

At present, Farmer Field Schools generally take place on farms, which may be some distance from the villages where women spend their days and impossible to reach. And training sessions often take place at times when women are busy with doing other things – taking children to school or cooking family meals, for example. We are exploring ways to overcome these problems, possibly by running our Farmer Field Schools and other training sessions at more convenient times, in village locations.

The roles of women in cocoa farming



African women usually work twice as long as men each day (FAO)



Often, women must grow crops on degraded, smaller plots than those owned by men (Gurrung et al, 2006)



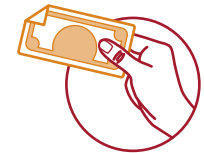
Achieving gender equality in education could increase farm yields by 7–22% (Van Crowder, 1996)



Women produce almost half of the world's food (FAO)



If women had the same access to resources as men, farm yields could increase 20–30% (FAO, 2011)



An increase to a woman's salary of US\$10 achieves the same improvements in children's nutrition and health as an increase to a man's income of \$110 (FAO Committee on Food Security, 2011)



Empowering women and supporting children *continued*

4,000

people have accessed credit through VSLAs to support income-generating activities. Over half are women

“I took a GH¢400 loan from my VSLA at two different times and paid up front for wood for my charcoal production. Since then, I have been able to save to buy wood for production and now I produce 50 bags instead of 20. I do not depend on middlemen to buy the charcoal or sell in small quantities in my village. The Cargill-CARE project is the best thing that has brought happiness and hope to my family.”

Safia Adams
VSLA participant, Ghana



“We believe women’s empowerment produces benefits both for women and children. A mother’s empowerment is strongly linked to her children’s health and education prospects. It is increasingly clear that we need to take a more holistic farmer and community-led approach to address child protection.”

Kate Clancy
Business Development Manager
Cocoa Sustainability
Cargill Cocoa & Chocolate

Financial services for women

We believe that encouraging more women to become income generators will result in better livelihoods and incomes for women. Because of the role women often play as carers and food providers, it will also help to reduce poverty whilst improving family welfare and child nutrition.

Giving women access to affordable financial credit is a key stepping stone in their empowerment. This is why we have introduced community-based savings and loan schemes, known as Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLA).

These self-managed groups provide women (and sometimes men) with safe ways to save money, take out small loans and access emergency insurance. VSLAs provide a low cost, low risk introduction to saving and loans for many people. They also play an important part in boosting members’ self-esteem.

Together with CARE, we have established 165 VSLAs.

Supporting children

Children living in cocoa-growing communities need support in order to stay healthy, complete their education and fulfill their potential when they become adults. It is generally recognized that the most effective means focus on protecting and educating children: protection from the worst forms of child labor, and access to affordable, well-run schools.

We believe that we must always be vigilant to ensure that children are protected from the worst forms of child labor and their consequences, as defined by the ILO¹. Where possible, we ensure that children are enrolled in school. However, in some instances it is considered acceptable for children to work alongside their parents on farms after school, carrying out age appropriate tasks during busy seasons. This is also recognized by the ILO. It is our duty to make sure that children who work on farms outside school hours are not financially exploited, physically endangered or discouraged from studying or playing.

¹ The International Labour Organization (ILO). Worst forms of child labor. www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/WorstFormsofChildLabour/lang--en/index.htm

Empowering women and supporting children *continued*



Reaching children through empowered women

An increasing body of research shows that the most effective ways to address the worst forms of child labor and to ensure that more children attend schools is by empowering women. Why is this? Because women are generally responsible for meeting children and family-related expenses, for example school fees and food shopping.

Children benefit from women's empowerment in another important way. Women usually provide food for the family. If they earn more, they are likely to buy better, more nutritious food. If we teach them how to create and cultivate vegetable gardens, they are better equipped to grow the right food crops. Children and other family members benefit as a result.

The way we tackle child labor issues

We are highly concerned about the safety and wellbeing of children who may be involved in dangerous or forced work on cocoa farms and we are committed to working towards a transparent cocoa supply chain where no children are subjected to these conditions.

The challenges we face to achieve this are complex, as the root-cause of child labor issues is often poverty. The Cargill Cocoa Promise is key to addressing this issue. As part of this, we are working with the governments of cocoa-producing countries, industry partners, NGOs and local farming communities to make a difference in the lives of cocoa farmers, to protect the rights of children and to support cocoa farming communities. See more on page C27.

We believe it is important to train farmers on this topic, so our farmer training addresses and raises awareness of child labor issues. As a long-term member of the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) we have worked in partnership to implement proven ways of helping farmers identify tasks that may harm children and reduce the risks they face on farms, such as using machetes and pesticides or carrying heavy loads. We encourage farmers to alert us if they believe any children are at risk on their farms.

An empowered future

Are we really making a positive difference for women and children in cocoa-growing communities? We believe we are, but we also know that we can do even more to support them in future. Yet again, improving community livelihoods will be the key that unlocks the door to more significant progress, because we know for sure that prosperity brings opportunity, for women and children.

Our results so far

Investment in better educational, nutritional and economic opportunities is central to the work we are doing to empower women and support children. This is the focus for our work with CARE. Together, we want to lift 100,000 people in West Africa out of poverty. We have achieved some impressive results: a 4.7% increase in primary school enrollment over the past two years in Ghana, and 97% of the children we reach have stayed in school for at least five years. You can read more about this on page C27.

An impact study conducted by the agricultural economics research institute, LEI, found that farmers who have been participating in our farmer training program in Côte d'Ivoire over the long term are more aware of labor and children's rights than those who have been participating for a shorter period of time. Through the ICI, we have been training farmers on how to protect and improve the rights of children.