



Policy Brief

THE PARADOX OF WEALTH AS LIVED IN COCOA GROWING COMMUNITIES

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1.0 GENERAL SCOPE

Ghana is the world's second largest producer of cocoa. The pivot of Ghana's economy is cocoa, which is the country's second leading foreign exchange earner and generates about \$ 2 billion in foreign exchange annually (COCOBOD, 2017).

The cocoa sector employs about 2 million people and constitutes a large aspect (25%) of Ghana's GDP(Ayanful,2016). It would have been expected that communities that produce the cash crop which is the mainstay and the centre of Ghana's socio-economic development should have good working conditions and better sources of livelihood.

Despite the importance of the cocoa industry, the welfare and living conditions of farmers in cocoa growing communities are deplorable. A needs assessment and training programme conducted by the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) under the Mondelez Cocoa Life Program revealed that members of cocoa communities' lack basic social amenities, infrastructure and good living conditions. There is absence of advocacy and members of these communities lack the requisite skills to engage and demand accountability from their duty bearers.

Some contributory factors include small farm sizes, low yields and large family sizes. Cocoa farmers in these cocoa communities are prone to intense poverty because of their inability to grow food crops and use good agricultural practices as revealed by other studies. This situation negatively affects the household income and the accumulation of wealth in cocoa growing communities. There is also the issue of gender inequality in cocoa growing communities in Ghana. Rural women have limited access to land and are confronted with greater difficulty in translating their labour into paid work (FAO,2012). Studies have shown that female farmers have levels of income below those of their male counterparts (FAO, 2011). Female farmers are also 25% less likely to receive training and 25% less likely to receive loans for their farming activities (IDEG 2015).

An education needs assessment conducted by the International Labour Organization (2011) shows a low level of commitment by parents in cocoa growing communities regarding their children's education. Since 1988, Ghana has implemented several pro poor social interventions, policies and governance reforms in order to reduce poverty and promote just and equitable development in the country. The rationale had consistently been that, by empowering citizens and communities through decentralized public policies, local governance would become more inclusive, responsive and accountable.

This should culminate in promoting strong socio-economic development. Despite the rolling out of several development initiatives and policies in the past, poverty still remains endemic in cocoa growing communities across the country.

The absence of institutionalized advocacy mechanisms coupled with the inability for cocoa farmers to demand accountability from their duty bearers is a major cause of persistent poverty in these areas.

Against this backdrop, this brief examines the underlying causes and myriad of issues affecting cocoa growing communities in specific reference to cocoa life communities with the aim of strengthening mechanisms, formulating and implementing strategies both at the local and national levels to enhance their socio-economic conditions.

2.0 CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

As an implementing partner under the Mondelez International Cocoa Life Program, the IDEG has had the opportunity to come into contact with real life issues affecting cocoa growing communities. The hardwork of these farmers do not translate into improved economic conditions and better sources of livelihood.

2.1 DEPLORABLE ROADS

Good and accessible roads is a major incentive for cocoa growing communities to increase their yield. This, however, is not the state in cocoa growing communities. These communities are confronted with deplorable roads and poor road networks which makes it increasingly difficult to transport farm produce to the capital of their districts. There is therefore no motivation to cultivate large farms or practice large scale farming which indirectly affects the country's foreign exchange earnings. During a monitoring visit conducted by the IDEG Cocoa Life Team in the Ahafo Ano North District, the team gained first-hand information through interactions with the community members of Nyaama and Pokuakora how the deplorable the state of their roads inhibited the communities' economic activities. This situation is further worsened during the rainy season which makes it difficult for vehicles to ply the roads. It is therefore important that the road networks of farming communities is prioritized and given the needed attention as this would not only serve as an incentive and encourage the youth to go into farming but, more importantly, improve upon their socio economic well-being.

2.2 FOOTBRIDGES

Footbridges serve as the means of connecting communities to their farm lands in cocoa growing areas. Community members rely on the bridges to gain access to their farmlands and engage in their daily activities whose proceeds are used to fend for themselves and their families. One may expect that given the importance of footbridges in farming communities they would be in the best of shape to ensure that the daily economic activity of the communities is not truncated. Unfortunately, this is not the situation as witnessed by the IDEG Cocoa Life Team. In the community of Bosikese, the footbridge which linked several communities to their farmlands was in a deplorable state. Interacting with the community members revealed that the footbridge served as a death trap and regardless of the dangers it posed to their lives, they are unable to prevent themselves from using it.

2.3 BOREHOLES

Cocoa growing communities do not have good sources of drinking water and most often rely on rivers, wells and streams which often times double as bathing areas. This in turn poses health risks to community members. In a community called Daakoho in the Sekyere East District, community members had to travel several miles into another community to get access to water. In the absence of that community members get access to water through the use of a well which is prone to contamination through the death of animals such as snakes and their decay in the water due to the location of the water. In areas where boreholes exist, the community members usually rely on one borehole. The pressure exerted on the borehole in terms of usage by the entire community leads to frequent breakdowns (IDEG Field Monitoring, 2017).

2.4 PASSIVENESS OF COCOA COMMUNITIES

In addition to the afore mentioned problems affecting cocoa -communities, recent and frequent interactions with the community members reveal that they lack the relevant knowledge and skills to champion the course of development and advocate for change.

2.5 EDUCATION

Children and youth of the cocoa communities are often deprived of the access to the education. Among the reasons accounting for this include the use of children as labourers in cocoa farms, lack of qualified and dedicated teachers, lack of well-constructed school

building and the proximity of schools. There is absence of support for students who are able to go through basic education. Available scholarships for cocoa farmers do not trickle down to the intended beneficiaries. In the Okyerekrom community, a young man with the passion to study agriculture at college after successfully completing his secondary school education is unable to do so due to financial constraints. This is just an example of the number of cases that exist.

3.0 MONDELEZ INTERNATIONAL COCOA LIFE INTERVENTION

Mondelez Cocoa Life International working with implementing partners around five major pillars and in four cohorts has allocated and channelled large quantum of resources in ensuring that the lives of community members of selected cocoa growing areas are improved significantly. Whereas, the goal of empowering the cocoa growing communities to ensure sustainable cocoa is being achieved steadily over the years, there is the need for public, private institutions and policy makers to intensify strategies and policies in improving the lives of cocoa growing areas thereby contributing significantly in the advancement of the cocoa industry.

4.0 REFERENCES

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