



**COCOA LIFE: A TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH FOR
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN COCOA COMMUNITIES**

Mondelēz
International





INTRODUCTION

Investing in women’s empowerment across our Cocoa Life program is a strategic business investment for Mondelēz International. Over the years, we have commissioned numerous studies from researchers including Dr. Stephanie Barrientos (University of Manchester), Aarti Kapoor (Embode), Dr. Rose Mensah-Kutin (ABANTU for Development), and Harvard University, among others. Throughout the course of this research, and through our direct engagement, we noted that women play an important but often unrecognized role in cocoa production. Yet women in cocoa communities, both farmers and non-farmers, have significant structural disadvantages that impede not only their own social, economic and physical well-being, but significantly, those of their entire community. Cocoa production is primarily undertaken in fairly remote rural locations where deeply embedded gender norms prevail based on differing social, cultural and ethnic traditions.¹

Empowering women in cocoa-growing communities increases the positive impact on all key human development challenges. At Mondelēz International, women’s empowerment is cutting across the entire Cocoa Life program because we recognize that for our crops and our cocoa-growing communities to thrive while respecting human rights and safeguarding the environment, we must recognize the critical role women play all along the cocoa value chain. Moreover, the benefits of such an approach go well beyond our communities. According to the World Bank 2012 Gender and Equality Report, “greater gender equality can enhance productivity, improve development outcomes for the next generation, and make institutions more representative.”²

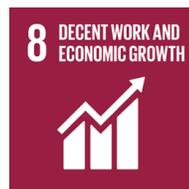
“According to the World Bank 2012 Gender and Equality Report, **“greater gender equality can enhance productivity, improve development outcomes for the next generation, and make institutions more representative.”**”

A Broader Societal Context

Mondelēz’s Cocoa Life program is part of the company’s broader efforts to support internationally agreed conventions and agreements on women’s rights and gender equality. They include the Platform for Action (PFA), The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Cocoa Life program, like the SDGs, is rooted in the philosophy that true sustainability has multiple components that are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. With specific regard to Women’s Empowerment in Cocoa Life, the program targets the following sustainability goals:



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all



Reduce inequalities within and among countries



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns³



An Integrated Approach to Sustainability

Mondelēz's commissioned research echoes findings from numerous other reports from the UN, the World Bank and NGOs, including Oxfam and CARE, which point to another conclusion: the cocoa that our company depends on, and the people who cultivate it, are increasingly threatened. It is therefore our duty to shareholders and stakeholders alike to lead bold, holistic and innovative steps to find ways to address this situation.

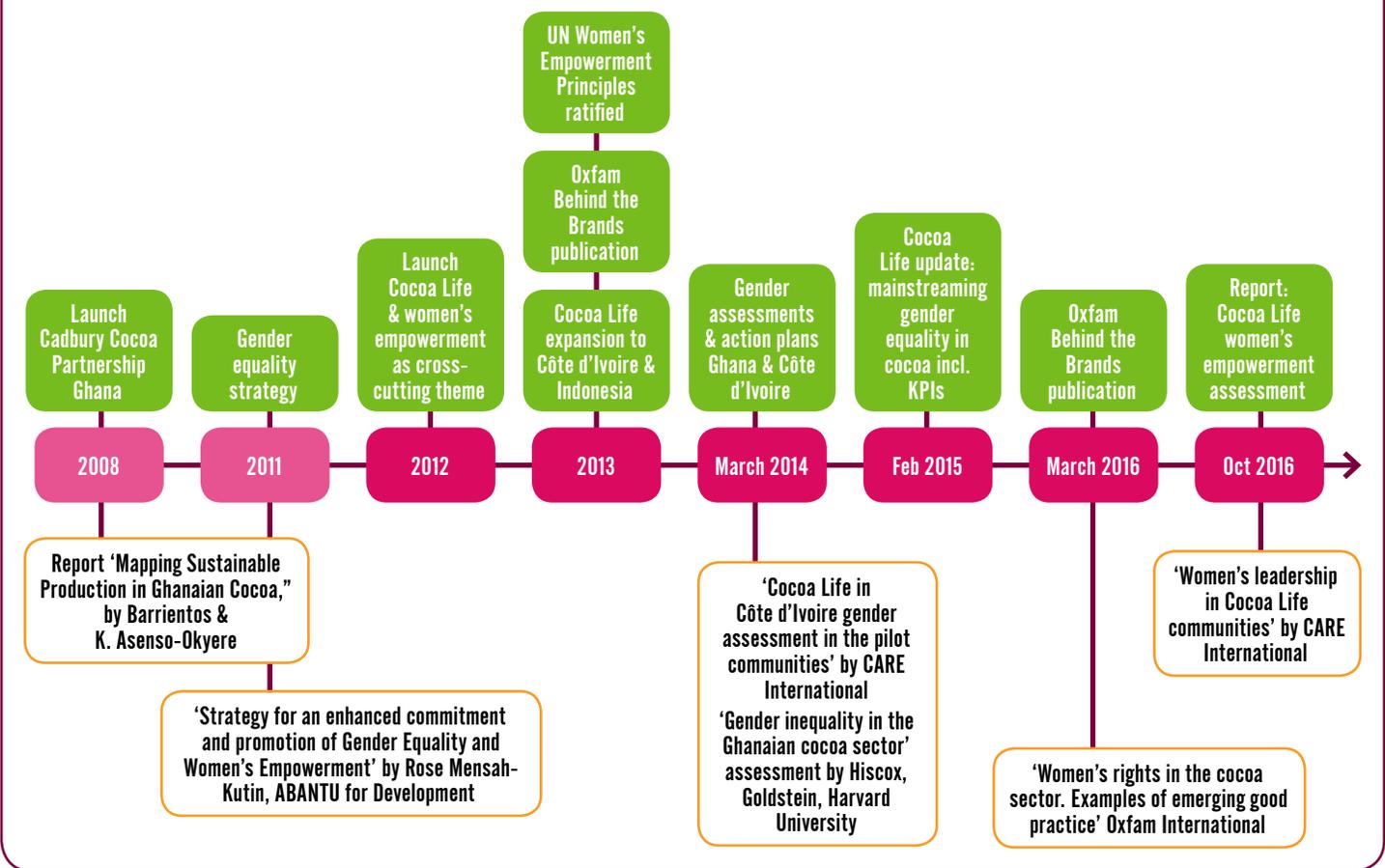
Our program aspires to be transformative. Working in partnership with farmers, suppliers, governments and stakeholders, we are committed to sourcing cocoa that is grown sustainably, harvested without child labor and that provides a viable livelihood for farmers. To achieve such ambitious goals, and cognizant of just how much work remains to be done in the cocoa sector, we designed an integrated Cocoa Life approach that includes five focus areas: farming, community, youth, livelihoods and environment. However, it is our emphasis on women's empowerment across all five focus areas that foster the necessary synergy amongst the programs in each focus area. The transformation we seek in cocoa communities will not be possible without such synergy. In the past the neglect of the important role of women in the sector has limited the extent to which interventions could benefit both women and men equally. It is therefore important to identify and support initiatives that could enhance women's productive and reproductive roles as part of the overall goal of sustaining the growth of the cocoa sector.

“ Our program aspires to be transformative.”





AN 8-YEAR JOURNEY OF MAINSTREAMING GENDER EQUALITY IN COCOA-GROWING COMMUNITIES





From Vision to Reality

Empowering women is a broad concept, but for us it comes down to ensuring that women have agency in every aspect of their lives. Women's increased agency has well-documented macro-level positive impacts on rebuilding post-conflict countries, improving health and educational outcomes⁴ and reducing corruption⁵ and these impacts are also reflected at a more micro level in Cocoa Life communities.

Below we specify how women's increased agency actually translates into improved outcomes for cocoa farming communities in the Mondelez cocoa supply chain. For clarity, we organized the research according to each of the five Cocoa Life focus areas and, wherever possible, included examples from Cocoa Life programming, to illustrate the positive impact of having women's empowerment as a cross-cutting theme.

Further, building on our existing programming and learnings, we have defined Cocoa Life's core programming values and key interventions for each of the focus areas. We will implement these interventions at scale for all of our cocoa communities, starting in our three key origins Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Indonesia.

Cocoa Life Core Programming Values (across all 5 focus areas):

- Mondelez is committed to being a leader on women's empowerment in the cocoa sector.
- We are deliberate about including women in all our Cocoa Life interventions with our implementing partners. Therefore, any training conducted on behalf of Mondelez will be designed with transformative approaches for women's empowerment to the greatest extent possible.
- We will seek innovative, disruptive solutions with existing and new partners that bring benefit to women in cocoa-growing communities.
- We will engage with district and national government institutions as well as local cocoa platforms on issues affecting women, such as land and passbook ownership, and to promote gender goals.
- We will train community leaders, Cocoa Life implementing partners and staff in applying a gender lens to all programming.
- We will tailor interventions to address gender gaps in areas such as training content, materials and methods.
- We will evolve the Women Extension Volunteer model (or similar) which will be progressively rolled out in all origin countries.
- We will ask that, where relevant, any data gathered by researchers, implementing partners or Mondelez will be gender disaggregated to be able to track progress against key performance indicators and have relevant local metrics.
- We will create learning loops with our partners.



WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: FARMING

Although accurate data is difficult to acquire, it is estimated that approximately 20% of cocoa farmers in West Africa are women,⁶ and that 45% of work on cocoa farms is undertaken by women (largely as unpaid family labor).⁷

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, if women had the same access to land, technology, financial services, education, and markets as men, yields on women's farms could increase by 20% to 30%, which would feed between 100 million and 150 million more people.⁸

Research has revealed that women are particularly involved in early plant care and fermentation and drying.⁹ Within the cocoa sector, a number of industry professionals indicate that early plant care, fermentation and drying are critical to enhancing yields and obtaining the quality cocoa required by the chocolate industry.

According to cocoa specialists, the prevailing production culture in Ghana, for example, is that young trees should not be pruned back, which means energy goes into growth of the tree rather than cocoa pods, thereby limiting future yields. If training is reaching only men and not women who care for the young trees, then skill building is failing to reach the people in charge of the relevant farming practice.¹⁰

However, women's contribution is often undervalued, and they are provided with insufficient training or access to inputs and resources to maximize their potential to enhance production. Women could thus play a critical role in the future resilience of cocoa supply, but to achieve this they need to be better recognized, supported and integrated into cocoa programs.¹¹

The concept of the Women Extension Volunteers (WEVs) has been adopted by Ministry of Food and Agriculture in Ghana (MOFA) who oversees them. Women appointed as WEVs provide a focal point for training of women at a community level. They attend district level trainings, encourage women to attend training sessions and provide advice on how to enhance women's participation. This covers good agricultural practices in cocoa production, as well as wider issues such as marriage rights, animal rearing, sanitation and environment. WEVs travel to outlying communities to transfer key messages and provide advice to women working in cocoa farming.¹²

Cocoa Life itself has adopted the concept of Gender Dialogue Platforms (GDPs). The GDPs recognize that community issues and actions have direct implications for the extent to which all the five Cocoa Life focus areas can be realized. GDPs enable women to continually articulate and respond to critical issues of concern to them in cocoa. This collective approach on the part of women themselves is serving as a framework for engagement on policy and practice under the Cocoa Life program.

In addition, past research suggests that many farmers generally, but women in particular, are unable to invest in these and other crucial inputs – such as farm

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machinery and equipment – because they have limited or no access to credit and no contact with financial institutions that can reward saving and provide loans. If the Cocoa Life program can target these disparities, improving participation in training among female cocoa farmers and providing or facilitating greater access to credit and the use of bank accounts, the data strongly suggests it can reduce gender inequality.¹³

Recognised land ownership validates who is recognised as the farmer. It is this person who receives and holds the passbook, sells the cocoa and therefore acquires the cocoa income. The recognised farmer also normally has access to extension services and inputs, participates in training, and receives related support. Land ownership constitutes an asset that provides security for access to banking and credit. Women’s full participation in cocoa farming is therefore constrained by traditional gender norms and practices. Lack of access to land or formal recognition is a major inhibiting factor in women’s equitable participation in cocoa farming.¹⁴ In areas such as the north of Ghana, the percentage of female landholders is estimated at 2%, whilst due to the prevalence of matrilineal systems in the Ashanti region, the percentage of female landholders is estimated at 50%. There is also a lack of clarity in Ghanaian law regarding the property rights of spouses during and at dissolution of marriage.¹⁵ In some communities, women have reported being marginalised from their own land as customary law practices, which previously recognised matrilineal lines of inheritance, change to a more formalised land tenure system.¹⁶ This requires that synergies are built with other national-level initiatives that focus on promoting women’s land rights. This process which has started with information sharing between ABANTU and the Civil Society Coalition on Land (CICOL) needs to be strengthened.

One of the main obstacles for women in agriculture continues to be the limited participation of women farmers within co-operatives and other structures of collective enterprise. There is therefore a need to address structural barriers to women’s membership and participation as well as ensuring the activities of the producer organization are more inclusive. Membership which is linked to ownership or registration of land or crops creates a bias in favor of men. This is perpetuated at the leadership level, as leaders are drawn from the membership. In addition, gender is not taken into consideration in planning and policymaking or in recruitment.¹⁷



COCOA LIFE INTERVENTIONS ON FARMING: INCREASE WOMEN’S ACCESS TO TRAINING, FARM INPUTS, PASSBOOKS & LAND OWNERSHIP¹⁸

-  **Improve farming training for female farmers and women working on cocoa farms.**
-  **Increase women’s access to finance, farm inputs, land ownership and membership of producer groups and cooperatives.**
-  **Increase women’s access to passbooks as a critical enabler to be recognized as cocoa farmers and provide access to inputs and resources.**
-  **Sensitize men and women farmers on the importance of passbook and land ownership.**



WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: COMMUNITY

Women's agency is improving in Cocoa Life communities, which is in turn positively impacting all of the other focus areas. In Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, for example, CARE¹⁹ interviewed male farmers in several communities.²⁰ The changing gender dynamics that they reported at the household and community levels point to wider systemic human development improvements. Men reported that they were increasingly involved in food preparation, childcare and water-gathering – all of which have numerous implications, notably by reducing the time poverty that contributes to women's disempowerment.

At the more structural level, there is evidence that the quotas for women's participation in community decision-making are being broadly implemented. Specifically, Cocoa Life has hired gender experts, like ABANTU for Development, to train implementing partner NGOs in each community to facilitate community action planning using a gender-transformative process. Gender equity is integrated into all decision-making processes to ensure that women's voices come through.

As a result, women are increasingly shaping the decisions being made at the community level. The CARE report shows there is evidence of women's leadership emerging in various community or institutional groups, including VSLA leaders, Women Extension Volunteers, Community Action Committee Chairpersons, Cooperative Societies or local government institutions. The wider value of these nascent cases of improved decision-making is underscored by other studies that affirm allowing women to participate, even in a limited role, changes cultural perceptions of women's decision-making capacity. This in turn prompts the formation of other initiatives and cooperatives for women, allowing them to become more active outside the home.²¹



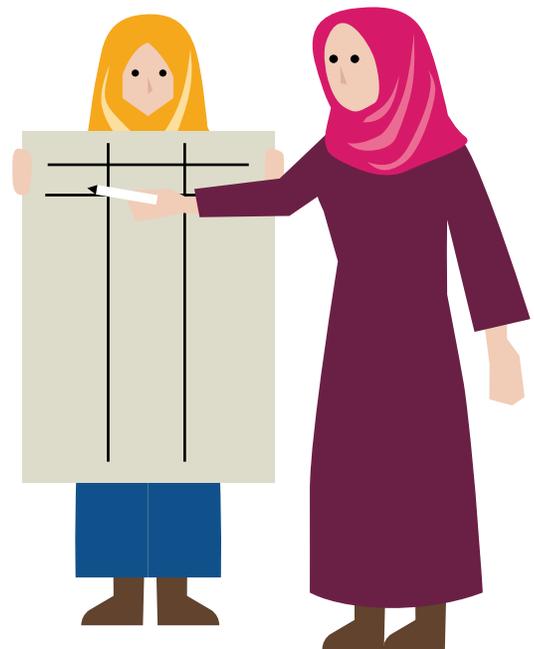


There remains, however, more to be done to improve women's agency in cocoa communities. Embode, for example, noted in their recent report that, "there was a general experience shared amongst the women that their views were not heard or sufficiently represented by the Community Development Committees."²²

Cocoa Life's gender-transformative, multi-focus area approach is, in fact, the key to delivering the most significant impact. First, women's livelihoods are improving (from farming and income-generating activities), as are their savings through the Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs). At the same time, women in Ghana, for example, are also receiving leadership training (from ABANTU for Development). The effect of these simultaneous interventions is that more women are reporting that they are able to send their children to school. Further, there is early evidence of a maturing cocoa sector as women are reporting that they are increasingly able to hire labor.

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COCOA LIFE INTERVENTIONS ON COMMUNITY: INCLUDING WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

-  **Promote leadership positions for women as part of the Community Development Committees and Community Action Plan processes and include a floor of 30% for women representatives in the process.**
-  **Ensure women are equally represented on all the committee levels such as chairperson and other key positions.**

-  **Mentor women to help them take up leadership positions.**
-  **Empower women through continued capacity-building to play an active role in decision-making in households, communities and district and national farmer forums.**



WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: YOUTH

It is well-recognized²³ that the well-being and protection of all children, both boys and girls, is directly connected to the well-being and equality of women. Of course, as child bearers, women's health and well-being are directly and biologically linked to the health of the child before, and for some years after, birth. After the mother, the most prominent caregiver within the family tends to be the grandmother. In Ghana, at the community level, Queen Mothers are traditional female leaders who are responsible for family and child welfare.²⁴

In research conducted on child labor by Kapoor (2016), it was found that women in cocoa-growing communities prioritized their children over most other considerations when deciding how to spend their money and resources.^{25,26} It was further found that those women who had benefited from Cocoa Life's livelihood programs were more likely to invest their increased earnings into the education of their children. In Côte d'Ivoire, a clear distinction between male farmers and women in communities was identified in relation to aspirations for their children. Whereas male farmers wanted their children to take over their cocoa farms and even questioned the importance of children's education, the women were much more adamant about the role of education in the future of their children as well as for cocoa sustainability. They argued that people who were more educated could make better decisions and take better care of the community.²⁷

Reduction in child labor is closely linked to increases in the quality and access of children's education.²⁸ It has been found that the more parents prioritize the education of their children, the less likely they will be to depend on their child's labor and/or income. Studies^{29,30} have also indicated that educating parents is a causative factor on whether children remain in school. The more educated the parents, the more likely children will be to remain in school. The research shows that this causative link is stronger for mothers and their children, than their fathers.



COCOA LIFE INTERVENTIONS ON YOUTH: INCLUDE YOUTH IN OUR PROGRAMMING

-  All youth-oriented programming will have quotas for 30%, to progressively attain 50% of participation by young women (15+ years old).
-  Explore innovative new gender-transformative programs through existing and new partners.
-  Support literacy programs in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and community reading clubs.



WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: LIVELIHOODS

Women's economic empowerment and gender equality are first and foremost about basic human rights. According to the UN High-Level Panel on Women's Empowerment, empowering women economically is not only the "right thing" to do to honor the world's commitments to human rights. It is also the "smart thing" to do for development, economic growth and business. The economic and human development costs of large and persistent economic gender gaps are enormous.³¹

Women's economic empowerment yields human development gains through many channels, such as enabling greater agency and choice for women and boosting investment in children. Increasing the share of household income controlled by women tends to increase spending on children's education and health.^{1,32}

There are numerous examples of the spillover benefits of livelihood interventions on areas like youth (education) and health. According to the FAO, "when women have more influence over economic decisions, their families allocate more income to food, health, education, children's clothing and children's nutrition."³³

These examples from Cocoa Life communities directly illustrate the findings in a recent report by Oxfam which notes that, "when women have control over their own income or family earnings, they reinvest in their families, children and communities, increasing the well-being and the sustainability of cocoa-growing communities."³⁴



COCOA LIFE INTERVENTIONS ON LIVELIHOODS: INCREASE ACCESS TO FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF ADDITIONAL LIVELIHOODS

-  **Help women develop other livelihoods by increasing their access to finance, improving business entrepreneurial skills, and teaching the importance of household food security.**
-  **Expand access to Village Savings & Loan Associations (VLSAs) and include other financial products tailored to women's needs.**
-  **Establish criteria to guarantee women's involvement in training and access to finance to help ensure women are benefiting equally from Cocoa Life, even when the participating household farmer is male.**



WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: ENVIRONMENT

The important roles that women play in helping to conserve natural resources, develop innovative renewable energy approaches and adapt to a steadily deteriorating global climate, are well-established by the UN, World Bank, NGOs (like Oxfam and RECOFTC) and academia. Rebecca Pearl-Martinez at the Tufts University Renewable Equity Project, for example, refers to gender equity as a “smart climate change innovation”³⁵ for a variety of reasons (for example, higher numbers of women in government correlate to lower greenhouse gas emissions nationally). At the community level, by extension, we expect that the increased participation of women in community decision-making (see CARE report) will lead to improved environmental outcomes in Cocoa Life communities and the environment more broadly.³⁶ Clearly, making progress on the environment goes well beyond the scope of any one company, however, through Cocoa Life we are working to contribute to the broader global effort.



COCOA LIFE INTERVENTIONS ON ENVIRONMENT: ENSURE INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMING

-  Explore additional UN collaborations that bring together UNDP and UN Women in support of strengthened gender-transformative environmental programming.
-  Ensure that extension services (farmer field schools, etc.) for women are aligned with current environmental best practices (from UNDP, etc.).
-  Evaluate opportunities for collaboration with additional gender and environment experts.
-  Review all current farm training materials to ensure that they are best in class on both gender and environment, and are inclusive for illiterate farmers.





Conclusion

Governments, companies and civil society clearly need to do more to disrupt the intertwined cycles of poverty, gender inequality, human rights violations and environmental degradation that trap cocoa farmers and their families. While changing deep-seated attitudes and behaviors related to gender is a complex and lengthy process, civil society experts, academic researchers, economists, and agronomists have all nevertheless noted, in their own respective fields, that there is a direct correlation between levels of women’s empowerment and the well-being of both people and planet. In short, it is this positive correlation between women’s empowerment and human development that is the case for elevating the role women play all along the cocoa value chain. It is unarguable that expanding the potential of women will release a multiplier of impact throughout communities. Walk through one of our communities today, and you’ll see nascent examples of how we are working to ensure that “gender equality benefits everyone and is critical for a whole community to thrive.”³⁸

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