



Women at CAYAWÉ co-operative in Aniassue in Côte d'Ivoire chaff cocoa beans at the end of a day drying them in the sun. Photo: Sean Hawkey

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## WOMEN AND COCOA

Fairtrade Foundation research paper into the links between female participation in cocoa production and women's economic empowerment.

By Dafni Skalidou

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION

This research paper has been commissioned by the Fairtrade Foundation and was written by independent researcher Dafni Skalidou.

In 2019, the Fairtrade Foundation launched our She Deserves a Living Income campaign, calling on everyone to play their part in making living income to become a reality for cocoa farmers, especially women.

Fairtrade has been working hard to secure a better deal for the farmers who grow the cocoa in our chocolate. On 1st October last year, we increased the Fairtrade Minimum Price and the Fairtrade Premium by 20% each, and now has a living income strategy which sets out a comprehensive approach bringing together tactics such as increasing prices, raising productivity, farm efficiency and Fairtrade sales.

As part of this campaign, we published 'Craving a Change in Chocolate', which set out an ambitious agenda for action showing how governments, chocolate companies, traders, retailers and shoppers can help achieve living incomes for cocoa farmers.

A year on momentum is building in the chocolate industry towards making this goal a reality – by governments in the key cocoa producing countries of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, governments across Europe, and by forward thinking chocolate companies.

As welcome as this progress has been, there is still a long way to go, particularly for women farmers. We commissioned this research because we wanted to better understand the diverse set of challenges facing different groups of women working in cocoa farming. Drawing on this research, we have published a new report, 'The Invisible Women Behind Our Chocolate,' which contains our updated agenda for action, and can be read [here](#).

Additionally, we are publishing Dafni Skalidou's research paper in full so that the important analysis is made available to policy and programme stakeholders working in the cocoa sector. We hope you find it a valuable contribution to the debate.

- David Taylor, Policy Manager, Fairtrade Foundation, [david.taylor@fairtrade.org.uk](mailto:david.taylor@fairtrade.org.uk)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report argues that cocoa in West Africa, far from being a ‘men’s crop’ as commonly depicted (for example, see<sup>1</sup>), is the result of a system of labour and kinship relations, involving both men and women in dynamic and fluid roles. In these complex production systems, women (i.e. wives, daughters, sisters, young girls sent out as household and farming help) play an essential and not just an ancillary role. Nevertheless, despite their fundamental contribution in cocoa production, women’s access to resources (i.e. land, tools and inputs, services, networks and opportunities) is far more restricted compared to men.<sup>2</sup> As a result their ability to improve their economic position from cocoa production is significantly hindered. Additionally, women have less agency to “act upon the acquisition of those resources and influence the systems in which they live”,<sup>3</sup> resulting in their voice, choice and control being significantly constrained.<sup>4</sup> For example, women involved in cocoa production are far less visible in terms of research, policy and programme implementation, mainly because they tend to lack ownership of the land they farm. We have less data on women farming cocoa (for example, see<sup>5</sup>), particularly when they are farming alongside male partners, as lack of land ownership prevents them from being recognised as farmers by farmers’ organisations, extension services,<sup>6</sup> as well as research and policy actors.<sup>7</sup> Lack of recognition as farmers also hinders women’s ability to participate in farmers’ organisations and other initiatives aiming at improving cocoa farmers’ livelihoods.

Drawing on the Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) framework,<sup>8</sup> this report examines the links between female participation in cocoa production and women’s economic empowerment. The discussion is structured around the concept of ‘access’, understood as a woman’s capacity to obtain economic resources, such as “opportunities, services and assets required to upgrade her economic position”, and the concept of ‘agency’, understood as a woman’s “capacity to make decisions and act on opportunities that lead to economic advancement”.<sup>9</sup> Following Hunt and Samman,<sup>10</sup> the analysis also recognises the heterogeneity across women contributing labour in the cocoa value chain in terms of their socio-economic, migrant, labour and, most importantly, land ownership status. The recommendations provided are based on the ground that a combination of structural transformation and bottom-up change interventions are needed,<sup>11</sup> if cocoa production is to contribute to sustained empowerment for women.

<sup>1</sup> C.Doss, ‘Men’s crops? Women’s crops? The gender patterns of cropping in Ghana’, *World Development*, vol. 30, no.11, 2001. p.1987; B. Duncan, ‘Cocoa, Marriage, Labour and Land in Ghana: Some Matrilineal and Patrilineal Perspectives’, *Africa*, vol.80, 2010, p.301; R.Vargas Hill and M. Vigneri, ‘Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains’, *ESA Working Paper No.11-08*, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> R.Vargas Hill and M. Vigneri, ‘Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains’; L. Bertelli, ‘Women’s economic empowerment - What do we know?’, *DCED Synthesis Note*, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, ‘Women’s economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development’, *USAID & LEO Brief*, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> DFID, ‘Stepping-up a gear for girls and women: updates to DFID’s strategic vision for girls and women, to 2020 and beyond’, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> R. Bymolt et al., ‘Respondent and household demographics’ in KIT (eds), *Demystifying the Cocoa Sector in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire*, KIT, 2018, p.22; M. Hiscox and R. Goldstein, ‘Gender inequality in the Ghanaian cocoa sector’, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> S. Barrientos and A.O. Bobie, ‘Promoting gender equality in the cocoa-chocolate value chain: opportunities and challenges in Ghana’, *GDI Working Paper*, 2016-006, 2016

<sup>7</sup> D. Skalidou, *In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana*, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, ‘Women’s economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development’, *USAID & LEO Brief*, 2014; L. Bertelli, ‘Women’s economic empowerment - What do we know?’, *DCED Synthesis Note*, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, ‘Women’s economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development’, p.3

<sup>10</sup> A. Hunt and E. Samman, ‘Women’s economic empowerment. Navigating enablers and constraints’, *ODI Development Progress Research Report*, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, ‘Women’s economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development’.

It is important to note that although this report adopts an empowerment perspective, human rights-based approaches should not be disregarded. In fact, such approaches are based on empowerment, among other principles.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, as Luttrell and Quiroz<sup>13</sup> argue (citing Fox) “rights may be recognised institutionally, but power imbalances often mean that actors are not able to actually claim them”. For this reason, this report has opted for the WEE framework, as it appears to be more operational in the current cocoa production landscape. This does not mean, however, that the potential of a right’s perspective to transform ‘structures’ for empowerment should be overlooked. This report is structured as follows. First it sets the broader context of cocoa production in West Africa, focusing in particular on the role women play in the cultivation of the crop. Then it reflects on how women involved in cocoa farming in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire have been depicted so far in the relevant literature. It does so by highlighting the knowledge gaps, but also the methodological aspects that can be problematic when collecting and analysing data on women involved in cocoa production. Finally, based on these main reflections, the last section of the report provides some key policy recommendations that can improve our understanding and analysis of the role of women in the cocoa sector, as well as the reach and effectiveness of interventions designed to improve their livelihoods.

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<sup>12</sup> C. Luttrell and S. Quiroz, ‘Understanding and operationalising empowerment’, ODI Working Paper 308, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> J. Fox, ‘Empowerment and Institutional Change: Mapping “Virtuous Circles” of State-Society Interaction’, in R. Alsop, *Power, Rights and Poverty: Concepts and Connections*. Washington, DC: World Bank., cited in C. Luttrell and S. Quiroz, ‘Understanding and operationalising empowerment’, p.19.



## 2. COCOA AND WOMEN IN WEST AFRICA

### CONTEXT OVERVIEW

More than four million tonnes of cocoa beans are produced every year<sup>14</sup> for a chocolate industry which is worth an estimated \$110 billion a year.<sup>15</sup> An estimated 62.3% of these beans are produced in West Africa, the driving force of cocoa production, with Côte d'Ivoire alone producing about 2 million tonnes, and Ghana 900 thousand tonnes.<sup>16</sup> Between five and six million farmers are estimated to be involved in cocoa production globally, using about ten million hectares to produce the crop.<sup>17</sup> Two million of cocoa farmers are located in West Africa, 25% of which are estimated to be women.<sup>18</sup> This figure is likely to be considerably higher when women farming cocoa alongside husbands or other partners, without owning the land they farm, are taken into account. For instance, the Fair Labour Association<sup>19</sup> estimates that women comprise 58% of the workforce in the cocoa farming industry in Côte d'Ivoire. Nevertheless, they are reported to earn only 21% of the generated income.<sup>20</sup> This gap is possibly explained by the fact that only 25% of the cocoa farming land is owned by women.<sup>21</sup> In Ghana the same figure is estimated to be 20%.<sup>22</sup> Such low percentages of female land ownership suggest that the majority of women in both countries are farming on farms they do not own under unclear remuneration systems.<sup>23</sup>

Growing cocoa is a labour intensive process with little margin of mechanisation. The crop is delicate and sensitive and farmers must protect the trees from wind and sun, while also constantly observing for signs of pests and disease. Cocoa pods, which contain around 20 to 30 cocoa beans each, may ripen at any time, although in most cocoa producing zones there are two main periods of peak production, one heavier than the other, each lasting several months. The need to monitor trees continuously for ripe or infested pods makes human presence on the farm necessary on a year-round basis. Ripe pods are manually harvested and opened to extract the beans, while the fermentation and drying of the beans also require frequent attention to attain exportation quality standards. These tasks are therefore undertaken on or very close to the farm, allowing few

<sup>14</sup> ICCO, 'ICCO Quarterly Bulletin of Cocoa Statistics, Vol. XLIII, No. 3, Cocoa year 2016/17', 2017.

<sup>15</sup> I. Torre and B. Jones, 'Cocoa-nomics explained: Unwrapping the chocolate industry', [website], 2014, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/02/13/world/africa/cocoa-nomics-explained-infographic/index.html>, (accessed 15 July 2018); M. Percival, 'Cocoa-nomics: Why chocolate really doesn't grow on trees', [website], 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/02/13/world/africa/cocoa-nomics-does-chocolate-grow-on-trees/>, (accessed 21 November 2015).

<sup>16</sup> ICCO, 'Quarterly Bulletin of Cocoa Statistics Volume XLIV No. 1, Cocoa Year 2017/18', 2018, cited in A.C. Fountain and F. Hütz-Adams, 'Cocoa barometer 2018', [website], 2018, <https://www.voicenetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2018-Cocoa-Barometer.pdf>, (accessed 1 December 2018).

<sup>17</sup> J. Potts et al., 'The State of Sustainability Initiatives Review - Standards and the Green Economy 2014', ITC, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> S. Barrientos, 'Women in cocoa production: where is the gender equity?' The Guardian, 8 March 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/women-cocoa-production-gender-equity>, (accessed 04 September 2019); A.C. Fountain and F. Hütz-Adams, 'Cocoa barometer 2018', [website], 2018, <http://https://www.voicenetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2018-Cocoa-Barometer.pdf>, (accessed 1 December 2018).

<sup>19</sup> Fair Labour Association, 'Assessing women's roles in Nestlé's Ivory Coast Cocoa Supply Chain', 2014, [https://www.fairlabor.org/sites/default/files/documents/reports/nestle\\_gender\\_report\\_7-9-14\\_0.pdf](https://www.fairlabor.org/sites/default/files/documents/reports/nestle_gender_report_7-9-14_0.pdf), (accessed 2 December 2019)

<sup>20</sup> African Development Bank, 'Empowerment of African Women through Equitable Participation in Agricultural Value Chains, 2015', [https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Economic\\_Empowerment\\_of\\_African\\_Women\\_through\\_Equitable\\_Participation\\_in\\_Agricultural\\_Value\\_Chains.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Economic_Empowerment_of_African_Women_through_Equitable_Participation_in_Agricultural_Value_Chains.pdf), (accessed 04 Jun 2019).

<sup>21</sup> A. Marston, 'WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE COCOA SECTOR Examples of emerging good practice', Oxfam Discussion Papers, 2016; Fairtrade Foundation, 'Craving a change in chocolate: how to secure living income for cocoa farmers', [website], 2019, <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/-/media/FairtradeUK/Resources%20Library/Fairtrade%20Fortnight%202019/Craving%20a%20Change%20in%20Chocolate%20-%20February%202019.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> S. Barrientos and A.O. Bobie, 'Promoting gender equality in the cocoa-chocolate value chain: opportunities and challenges in Ghana', GDI Working Paper, 2016-006, 2016

<sup>23</sup> A. Marston, 'WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE COCOA SECTOR Examples of emerging good practice'; Fair Labour Association, 'Assessing women's roles in Nestlé's Ivory Coast Cocoa Supply Chain', 2014, [https://www.fairlabor.org/sites/default/files/documents/reports/nestle\\_gender\\_report\\_7-9-14\\_0.pdf](https://www.fairlabor.org/sites/default/files/documents/reports/nestle_gender_report_7-9-14_0.pdf), (accessed 2 December 2019)

economies of scale and requiring the constant care and labour of several individuals.<sup>24</sup> As a result, most cocoa beans are -and historically have been - produced on small or medium-sized, family-run farms, making use of a combination of family, sharecropping, and hired labour, involving both men and women.<sup>25</sup>

Sharecropping agreements are particularly significant for cocoa production, at least in the Ghanaian context where they are still widespread.<sup>26</sup> They have been documented as early as the 1910s,<sup>27</sup> with Polly Hill attributing to them the production of “as much as three-quarters of Ghanaian cocoa” in the 1950s.<sup>28</sup> Under sharecropping agreements, land owners leave the care of already developed farms (i.e. already bearing fruits) to sharecroppers who receive one third of the crop in exchange for performing all the necessary production tasks of a mature farm (i.e. spraying, weeding, harvesting).<sup>29</sup> Sharecroppers, usually migrant farmers from poorer areas neighbouring the cocoa lands (e.g. the northern and eastern regions of Ghana, Burkina Faso and Togo included), can be considered both tenant farmers and labourers, “dependent yet independent”, at the same time.<sup>30</sup> Therefore they can be seen as a hybrid between the two, being paid their share as ‘labourers’, but also paying over a share of the crop as ‘tenants’.<sup>31</sup> This ambiguity often turns sharecroppers (and those farming with them, such as wives and other family members) invisible to research and policy actors, since they tend to be overlooked as non-decision makers. For this reason they are likely to be under-represented in survey data.<sup>32</sup>

## GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR

Following the frequent distinction made in the literature that “cash and export crops are male crops, while subsistence crops are female crops”,<sup>33</sup> cocoa has been broadly considered a male occupation in West African societies, possibly due to the “physically arduous” work that its production requires.<sup>34</sup> Studies providing desegregated data by gender tend to confirm that the crop is grown predominantly

<sup>24</sup> R. Kaplinsky, ‘Competitions policy and the global coffee and cocoa value chains’, United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2004.

<sup>25</sup> R. Kaplinsky, ‘Competitions policy and the global coffee and cocoa value chains’; S. Barrientos, ‘Gendered global production networks: Analysis of cocoa– chocolate sourcing’, *Regional Studies*, vol. 48, no.5, 2014, p.791; A.F. Robertson, *The dynamics of productive relationships. African share contracts in comparative perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987; C. Okali, *Cocoa and Kinship in Ghana: The Matrilineal Akan of Ghana*, London, Kegan Paul International Ltd and International African Institute, 1983.

<sup>26</sup> S. Boni, ‘Clearing the Ghanaian forest. Institute of African Studies’, University of Legon, Ghana, 2005; T. Takane, ‘Incentives embedded in institutions: the case of share contracts in Ghanaian cocoa production’, *The Developing Economies*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2000, p.374.

<sup>27</sup> C. Okali, *Cocoa and Kinship in Ghana: The Matrilineal Akan of Ghana*; A.F. Robertson, *The dynamics of productive relationships. African share contracts in comparative perspective*.

<sup>28</sup> P. Hill, ‘The Gold Coast cocoa farmer. A preliminary survey’, London, Oxford University Press, 1956, cited in A.F. Robertson, *The dynamics of productive relationships. African share contracts in comparative perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p.53.

<sup>29</sup> T. Takane, ‘Incentives embedded in institutions: the case of share contracts in Ghanaian cocoa production’, *The Developing Economies*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2000, p.374; M.H. Knudsen, and N. Fold, ‘Land distribution and acquisition practices in Ghana’s cocoa frontier: The impact of a state-regulated marketing system’, *Land Use Policy*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2011, p. 378.

<sup>30</sup> A. Robertson, ‘On sharecropping’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol.15, no.3, 1980, p.411.

<sup>31</sup> A. Robertson, ‘On sharecropping’, p.411

<sup>32</sup> S. Kolavalli and M. Vigneri, *The cocoa coast: The board-managed cocoa sector in Ghana*, Washington DC, International Food Policy Research Institute, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> R.Vargas Hill and M. Vigneri, ‘Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains’, *ESA Working Paper No.11-08*, 2011, p.5.

<sup>34</sup> S. Barrientos and A.O. Bobie, ‘Promoting gender equality in the cocoa-chocolate value chain: opportunities and challenges in Ghana’, *GDI Working Paper*, 2016-006, 2016, p.14; S. Barrientos, ‘Gendered global production networks: Analysis of cocoa– chocolate sourcing’, *Regional Studies*, vol. 48, no. 5, 2014, p.791.

in male-headed households.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, it is also well documented that women have been systematically supplying labour to cocoa farming related tasks, either farming in their own right or as family or hired labour, since the beginning of the cocoa-growing industry in West Africa.<sup>36</sup> Barrientos and Bobbie<sup>37</sup> provide a detailed list of cocoa farming related tasks undertaken by women in Ghana. This includes weeding and preparing the land for planting; purchasing seeds and seedlings; planting cocoa seedlings; caring for young trees and intercropping of food crops while the trees are young; harvesting and plucking; pod breaking; carrying the beans to the homestead or depot; fermenting and drying, and bagging the dried beans. In fact the authors show that there are few tasks which are mostly undertaken by men alone and these are cocoa spraying (although women usually are the ones who fetch the water to mix the chemicals), thinning and pruning, and selling to local buyers (with the exception of women who own their farms, in which case they do the selling themselves). Barrientos<sup>38</sup> further highlights that activities undertaken mainly by women tend to be crucial for “ensuring good yields and quality cocoa”, two elements that are key for targeting the increasingly important “high-volume mid-quality” emerging BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) and MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey) markets, as well as the “high-end niche markets” in Europe and the US, where consumption of dark, premium chocolate is on the rise.<sup>39</sup> This means that female labour is not only fundamental for the production of the crop, but also essential for ensuring it reaches the export premium markets.<sup>40</sup>

In any case, it is characteristic of women to combine various tasks besides those related to cocoa farming, such as farming subsistence or other crops, caring for livestock, doing household chores (i.e. fetching water, cooking, washing, cleaning, etc.) and taking care of children.<sup>41</sup> Vargas Hill and Vigneri<sup>42</sup> estimate that women spend on average 1.5 more time on domestic (unpaid) work than men (26 hours vs 10), while when considering household and farming and other non-farm tasks together, female working hours exceed those of men by 29 percent.

What is more significant, however, is that men farming cocoa, either as landowners or as sharecroppers, would not be able to do so without counting on female labour, even if this was restricted to non-cocoa farming tasks alone. Duncan<sup>43</sup> stresses how cocoa production in Ghana is increasingly being viewed as ‘conjugal business’, whether the conjugal unit is formalised through

<sup>35</sup> C.Doss, ‘Men’s crops? Women’s crops? The gender patterns of cropping in Ghana’, *World Development*, vol. 30, no.11, 2001, p.1987; R. Bymolt et al., ‘Respondent and household demographics’ in KIT (eds), *Demystifying the Cocoa Sector in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire*, KIT, 2018, p.22.

<sup>36</sup> C. Okali, *Cocoa and Kinship in Ghana: The Matrilineal Akan of Ghana*, London, Kegan Paul International Ltd and International African Institute, 1983; B. Duncan, ‘Cocoa, Marriage, Labour and Land in Ghana: Some Matrilineal and Patrilineal Perspectives’, *Africa*, vol.80, 2010, p.301.

<sup>37</sup> S. Barrientos and A.O. Bobie, ‘Promoting gender equality in the cocoa-chocolate value chain: opportunities and challenges in Ghana’, GDI Working Paper, 2016-006, 2016, p.14.

<sup>38</sup> S. Barrientos, ‘Gendered global production networks: Analysis of cocoa– chocolate sourcing’, *Regional Studies*, vol. 48, no. 5, 2014, p. 791.

<sup>39</sup> R.J. Whitehead, ‘Barry Callebaut targets China’s premium market with ‘refreshed’ range’, [website], 2017, <https://www.foodnavigator-asia.com/Article/2017/04/03/Barry-Callebaut-targets-China-s-premium-market-with-refreshed-range>, (accessed 12 April 2018); O. Nieburg, ‘The chocolate league tables 2014: Top 20 consuming nations’, [website], 2014, <https://www.confectionerynews.com/Article/2014/10/09/Chocolate-consumption-by-country-2014>, (accessed 15 July 2018); K. Salter, ‘Save our chocolate: expert tips to halt the cocoa shortage’, [website], 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/wordofmouth/2014/nov/18/save-our-chocolate-expert-tips-halt-cocoa-shortage>, (accessed: 12 April 2018).

<sup>40</sup> S. Barrientos, ‘Gendered global production networks: Analysis of cocoa– chocolate sourcing’, p.791

<sup>41</sup> S. Barrientos, ‘Gendered global production networks: Analysis of cocoa– chocolate sourcing’, p.791; R. Maconachie and E. Fortin, ‘On Ghana’s cocoa farms, Fairtrade is not yet working for women’, *The Guardian*, 11 March 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/globaldevelopment/2016/mar/11/ghana-cocoa-farms-fairtrade-not-yet-working-for-women>, (accessed 17 February 2019); Fair Labour Association, ‘Assessing women’s roles in Nestlé’s Ivory Coast Cocoa Supply Chain’, 2014, [https://www.fairlabor.org/sites/default/files/documents/reports/nestle\\_gender\\_report\\_7-9-14\\_0.pdf](https://www.fairlabor.org/sites/default/files/documents/reports/nestle_gender_report_7-9-14_0.pdf), (accessed 2 December 2019).

<sup>42</sup> R.Vargas Hill and M. Vigneri, ‘Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains’, *ESA Working Paper No.11-08*, 2011.

<sup>43</sup> B. Duncan, ‘Cocoa, Marriage, Labour and Land in Ghana: Some Matrilineal and Patrilineal Perspectives’, *Africa*, vol.80, 2010, p.301.

marriage or informal. Skalidou<sup>44</sup> supports this view by showing how, marriage, or informal conjugal units, are crucial for male farmers transitioning from labouring to sharecropping and then to land ownership. This is because female labour is considered to be indispensable for a successful cocoa farm management. The author observes that there is a clear connection between marriage (or informal partnership) and male access to cocoa farming land, noting that soon after getting married (or finding a partner), a landless male farmer is able to secure his first sharecropping farm, while when a single male farmer obtains his first sharecropping farm the tendency is to get married soon after. The following quote by a male sharecropper clearly illustrates that female participation is essential for the production of the crop, as it relies on the labour of at least two spouses (or informal partners):

*“When you become a sharecropper you need a wife to help you. If you go to the farm and you are drying cocoa, somebody must be at home to attend the cocoa. If it rains, you spoil the cocoa beans. You also need someone at home to be turning it in the sun. There must be somebody around cooking for you, maintaining the house. You need a wife. And even the farm owners, if you don't have a wife, they will not give you [their land to farm on a sharecropping basis]. It's one of the characteristics farm owners look out for”.*

Skalidou<sup>45</sup> also shows that male farmers heavily rely on female labour in order to acquire more farming land (i.e. expand as farmers), but also in order to upgrade. Upgrading involves moving to larger, better maintained and overall more productive farms, that can provide better income with less effort, but also entering labour-land exchange agreements (known as Abunu contracts) that will eventually provide land entitlements, since successfully completed contracts involve the transfer of half of the property to the tenant farmer. In this respect, polygamy plays a particular role in accumulation of land and wealth. In the Ghanaian context, for instance, having multiple wives is common practice among cocoa farmers, particularly among the previous generation of Ashantis and Fantis, where wives were often used as supervisors of sharecroppers. Male farmers with multiple farms in different locations would often have one wife in each site to oversee the sharecropper.<sup>46</sup> Currently, polygamy appears to fade away among the current generation of cocoa farmers owning land, as it is increasingly considered as a source of discord within the conjugal unit, compromising the “consensus required in marriage for successful cocoa enterprise”.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, it appears to remain popular among sharecroppers (mostly migrants from poorer areas neighbouring the cocoa growing areas) as it provides a valuable injection of unpaid labour. For example, Skalidou<sup>48</sup> illustrates how the decision of one sharecropper to marry his second wife has triggered a series of events which actually allowed him to both expand and upgrade his farming land. After his second marriage, the sharecropper was able to acquire two new sharecropping farms. One was in an isolated area without any infrastructure or services (shops, school, etc.), a considerable walking distance from the cocoa farming community. Moreover, the extra family labour resulting from his second marriage allowed him to obtain a new land under Abunu terms.<sup>49</sup> It is interesting to note that the decisions regarding which wife should work in which farm, were taken unilaterally by the husband without the wives necessarily consenting to the division of labour, as the following quote illustrates:

*“The work is for all of us, the money is for all of us. If I say the younger [wife] should go [to the isolated farm], she will go. If I say the older should go, she will go.”*

<sup>44</sup> D. Skalidou, In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> D. Skalidou, In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana.

<sup>46</sup> D. Skalidou, In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> B. Duncan, 'Cocoa, Marriage, Labour and Land in Ghana: Some Matrilineal and Patrilineal Perspectives', Africa, vol.80, 2010, p.308.

<sup>48</sup> D. Skalidou, In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana.

<sup>49</sup> The reader is reminded that Abunu contracts are labour-land exchange agreements, under which a tenant farmer undertakes the task to clear and replant a farm in exchange of gaining rights over half of the newly planted trees (and as result, land).



In this case, the first wife was to support her husband with the clearing and planting of the new farm. Although she was not going to be directly remunerated for her labour, she had clear expectations that her participation in setting up the new farm was going to result in land entitlements, if not for her, surely for her children. In other words, her involvement in cocoa farming was going to improve her access to economic resources and possibly also improve her agency, as land entitlements are typically linked to greater visibility (i.e. eligibility to join farmers' organisations, selling rights over the crop, etc.), and therefore also decision making power. The second wife, however, was left with little choice or control, as she and her children would have to move to the isolated farm, against her will. This clearly undermined her agency, in terms of being able to decide where to live, work and raise her children. Living in a considerable walking distance from the community also meant less opportunities to attend any training or meetings taking place in the community, or to benefit from social networks. Overall, this case indicates how women's access and agency can vary significantly even within the same household. The first wife, for instance, had land ownership expectations in return from her labour in her husband's Abunu land, while the second one was likely to provide unpaid labour to her husband's sharecropping farm, at best benefiting from the sales of any food crop excess.

Finally, the above discussion reiterates how cocoa as a cash crop (i.e. involving expansion and upgrading of the farming land in order to make economic sense), far from being exclusively male business is a crop that requires female participation (of one or more women) in order to be produced. Therefore, the conceptualisation of cocoa as a "male crop" where men do all the "hard work" and women "help" with the light tasks is problematic because it conceals the real role of women in the cocoa family economy. Male farmers are able to intensify their cocoa farming, and expand and upgrade as farmers, because they rely on women (single or multiple spouses, sisters, daughters, other younger women in their care) growing food crops and doing the household work, while also undertaking certain cocoa farming tasks.

## GENDER GAP IN LAND OWNERSHIP

The previous section hints at the complexity and lack of clarity regarding the different ways women in West Africa can profit from their work in cocoa production and thus improve their position in terms of access and agency. Barrientos<sup>50</sup> largely classifies female labour in the Ghanaian context as "unpaid family labour". Guyer,<sup>51</sup> on the other hand, notes that among the Yoruba farming cocoa in Nigeria and Cameroon "systems of reward in kind for agricultural services rendered by wives to their husbands" that applied to other crops were also extended to cocoa. Okali<sup>52</sup> supports the view that there was some kind of remuneration for wives farming food crops on young cocoa farms in Ghana, as they were allowed, at least partial, control over the sales of these crops. Duncan<sup>53</sup> also reports that wives have clear expectations of (non-monetary) remuneration from their involvement in cocoa farming in their husbands' land. This can take the form of male labour to develop farms on the wife's ancestral land, or the provision of land from the husband's own plots.

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<sup>50</sup> S. Barrientos, 'Gendered global production networks: Analysis of cocoa– chocolate sourcing', *Regional Studies*, vol. 48, no. 5, 2014, p. 791.

<sup>51</sup> J.I. Guyer, 'Food, cocoa, and the division of labour by sex in two West African societies', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1980, p.364.

<sup>52</sup> C. Okali, *Cocoa and Kinship in Ghana: The Matrilineal Akan of Ghana*, London, Kegan Paul International Ltd and International African Institute, 1983.

<sup>53</sup> B. Duncan, 'Cocoa, Marriage, Labour and Land in Ghana: Some Matrilineal and Patrilineal Perspectives', *Africa*, vol.80, 2010, p.308.

When it comes to direct profits from cocoa production, however, these appear to be directly linked to land ownership status. Barrientos and Bobie<sup>54</sup> explain why land tenure is crucial, both in terms of access to resources and agency, in the Ghanaian context:

*“Recognised land ownership validates who is recognised as the farmer. It is this person who receives and holds the passbook, sells cocoa to [the local buyer], and acquires the cocoa income earned. 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.”*

A farm passbook is a registry book where the quantities of cocoa sold to a PC are noted and is often used as a proof of who is operating the farm. In order to register with a cooperative or PO, a farmer needs to present the passbook of the farm he/she owns or operates. Passbooks are usually held by the owner of the farm, even if they don't farm the farm themselves. As a result, wives of land owners, or sharecroppers and their wives, tend to lack passbooks for their farms. The implications of the above is that recognised land ownership, represented in the ability to hold the passbook of a farm, not only provides rights to the farming land and the profits from the harvest, i.e. access to tangible economic resources. It also provides visibility and therefore access to cooperative membership, agricultural extension, inputs, training, premium payments and credit.<sup>55</sup> This means that besides tangible assets, such as inputs and premium payments, being recognised as a farmer is linked to improved access to agricultural and financial services as well as opportunities to improve one's human and social capitals. It also leads to improved agency, in terms of both farming and community related decision making, through the participation in farmers' organisations, development interventions, etc. On the other hand, those who are not able to hold the passbook of the farm they farm, tend to remain uninvolved in cooperatives or producers organisations and therefore also miss out on extension services, or other programmes targeting farmers already organised in POs. As a result their access and agency are significantly constrained.

It is unclear whether there can be multiple passbooks for the same farm, a possibility which would allow different farm operators (e.g. husband and wife or owner and sharecropper) to each hold a passbook of their own. Given the discussion about the importance of providing wives with their own passbook,<sup>56</sup> this seems unlikely. Nevertheless, Skalidou<sup>57</sup> reports on the case of a farm owner who had voluntarily split his farm into three parts and provided one passbook for the part his wife was farming and another one for the part his sharecropper was farming. Although this appeared to be an exceptional case, it demonstrates that if the farm owner has the will, wives and sharecroppers can hold their own passbooks and thus have greater visibility.

Land tenure systems in the cocoa growing areas of West Africa are complex and based on customary practices that vary by locality and ethnic group. The common norm, however, is that women have been historically excluded from land tenure.<sup>58</sup> In Ghana, for instance, the matrilineal Akan households have traditionally practiced uterine inheritance, in which land is transferred from the deceased man to his uterine brother or nephew (sister's son). According to this practice, children

<sup>54</sup> S. Barrientos and A.O. Bobie, 'Promoting gender equality in the cocoa-chocolate value chain: opportunities and challenges in Ghana', GDI Working Paper, 2016-006, 2016, p.13.

<sup>55</sup> S. Smith, 'Assessing the gender impacts of Fairtrade', *Social Enterprise Journal*, vol. 9, no.1, 2013, p.102; R. Meinzen-Dick et al., 'Women's land rights as a pathway to poverty reduction: Framework and review of available evidence', *Agricultural Systems*, vol.172, 2019, p.72; D. Skalidou, *In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana*, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018.

<sup>56</sup> S. Barrientos and A.O. Bobie, 'Promoting gender equality in the cocoa-chocolate value chain: opportunities and challenges in Ghana', GDI Working Paper, 2016-006, 2016, p.13.

<sup>57</sup> D. Skalidou, *In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana*.

<sup>58</sup> C. Okali, *Cocoa and Kinship in Ghana: The Matrilineal Akan of Ghana*, London, Kegan Paul International Ltd and International African Institute, 1983; P. Hill, *The migrant cocoa farmers of Southern Ghana. A study in rural capitalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1963.

do not inherit land from their parents, but sons may inherit land from their matrilineal relatives.<sup>59</sup> In any case, land would pass from uncle to nephew, skipping any female figures, whether mothers, sisters, daughters or nieces.

Despite these customary laws, transfers of cocoa property to wives and offsprings as gifts are reported as early as 1948.<sup>60</sup> This trend appears to have intensified and solidified over the years.<sup>61</sup> Particularly in the cases where the wife and the children participate in establishing the cocoa farm (clearing the land, planting the seedlings and caring for the young trees till they start bearing fruits), then the expectation is that this land will be given to them as a gift while the husband is still alive. Quisumbing et al.<sup>62</sup> attribute this trend to the “increase in the demand for women’s labor due to the expansion of labor- intensive cocoa cultivation”, which apparently has created incentives for husbands to transfer the land to their wives and children. Duncan<sup>63</sup> stresses that especially in matrilineal communities in Ghana wives have “expectations of rewards in land as compensation for labour”, while there are also indications of women accepting support for children’s education instead of land or farm resources as a form of reward. Skalidou<sup>64</sup> notes that this trend also applies to non-Akan, (patrilineal) migrant households, observing that among migrant farmers from the North of Ghana, women working with their husbands to establish new cocoa farms, while not directly remunerated, had clear expectations that their work will result in land entitlements over the farm they have helped establish, if not for them, surely for their children, as the case of the sharecroppers and his two wives described above indicates.

Women who own land and hold the passbooks for their farms are recognised as farmers in their own right which means that -under normal circumstances - they have choice and control over the cocoa sales, while they can formally participate in farmers’ organisation and are in principle also eligible to participate in other productive programmes targeting ‘cocoa farmers’ (understood as land owners). This means that women with landholdings are also more likely to have access to extension services, inputs, training and credit through their participation in cocoa producers’ organisations or other cocoa programmes.

It is important to highlight, however, that female land owners are likely to face greater constraints than their male counterparts, as their farms tend to be smaller, less fertile and more remote.<sup>65</sup> Smaller land plots means less ability to benefit from economies of scale, i.e. less ability to bear fixed marketing costs associated with cash crop production.<sup>66</sup> Coupled with the fact that women face higher land tenure insecurity, female land owners tend to have lower investment incentives,<sup>67</sup> and that also affects the profitability of the land. Goldstein and Udry,<sup>68</sup> for instance, attribute differences in profitability between husbands’ and wives’ plots in Ghana to the “longer fallow periods on men’s

<sup>59</sup> A.R. Quisumbing et al., ‘Are Wealth Transfers Biased Against Girls? Gender Differences in Land Inheritance and Schooling Investment in Ghana’s Western Region’, FCND Discussion Paper No.186, 2004.

<sup>60</sup> C. Okali, *Cocoa and Kinship in Ghana: The Matrilineal Akan of Ghana*, London, Kegan Paul International Ltd and International African Institute, 1983.

<sup>61</sup> A.R. Quisumbing et al., ‘Are Wealth Transfers Biased Against Girls? Gender Differences in Land Inheritance and Schooling Investment in Ghana’s Western Region’

<sup>62</sup> A.R. Quisumbing et al., ‘Are Wealth Transfers Biased Against Girls? Gender Differences in Land Inheritance and Schooling Investment in Ghana’s Western Region’, p.2

<sup>63</sup> B. Duncan, ‘Cocoa, Marriage, Labour and Land in Ghana: Some Matrilineal and Patrilineal Perspectives’, *Africa*, vol.80, 2010, p.301.

<sup>64</sup> D. Skalidou, *In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana*, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> M. Goldstein and C. Udry, ‘The profits of power:land rights and agricultural investment in Ghana’, Center Discussion Paper No. 929, 2005, p.2; S. Barrientos and A.O. Bobie, ‘Promoting gender equality in the cocoa-chocolate value chain: opportunities and challenges in Ghana’, GDI Working Paper, 2016-006, 2016, p.13; Vargas Hill and Vigneri, 2001, Doss, 2001, KIT, 2018, Hiscox and Goldstein, 2014).

<sup>66</sup> R.Vargas Hill and M. Vigneri, ‘Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains’, ESA Working Paper No.11-08, 2011, p.5.

<sup>67</sup> R.Vargas Hill and M. Vigneri, ‘Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains’.

<sup>68</sup> M. Goldstein and C. Udry, ‘The profits of power:land rights and agricultural investment in Ghana’, p.15.

plots". They cite Quisumbing et al.,<sup>69</sup> to explain that as land rights "tend to become weaker if land is put into fallow over extended periods", women facing greater land tenure insecurity may not be able to leave their land to recover, undermining its fertility and thus future profitability. Moreover, female farm owners are reported to make more use of hired labour, a fact that reflects women's greater difficulty in mobilising (unpaid) family labour.<sup>70</sup> In other words, although there is a clear link between land ownership and women's access and agency, women with land holdings still face greater constraints in terms of their ability to profit from their farming activity than male land owners.

Women who do not own land, on the other hand, but farm cocoa on other's people land tend to be far less visible. These can be wives farming cocoa along their husbands or other relatives, on land owned by their male partners or under sharecropping contracts. They can also be women sent from a young age to other cocoa growing households to help with house and farming tasks. Skalidou<sup>71</sup> shows that this was an extended practice some decades ago, particularly among poor households who could not take care of all their children. Girls as young as four years old were sent to adoptive households to take care of children and assist with household chores. As they grew older, instead of attending school they gradually got involved in food crop and cocoa farming activities. This work was not remunerated, but was regarded by the 'host' family as a contribution to the household economy in exchange of food and housing. Many of these girls, now women in their 40s and 50s, never returned to their original families and home towns, but remained in the areas they grew up, farming cocoa along their 'adopted' family or their husbands. It is unclear whether this practice persists, or has been restricted over the last years as schooling for girls became more accessible across Ghana.

In any case it is important to highlight two things. First, "issues of intra-household bargaining" are important when considering cash crop participation of women.<sup>72</sup> Women without land holdings are also differentiated and cannot be considered as a homogenous group with equal access and agency, or (in)ability to benefit from cocoa returns. On the contrary, there is a considerable heterogeneity within households in the way landless women can profit from cocoa farming, as shown by the case of the sharecropper and his two wives described above.

Second, women lacking land ownership, whether wives of landowners or sharecroppers, in monogamous or polygamous households, or young girls working in adoptive households, tend to be invisible to market, research and policy actors. Thus, a policy gap is created, whereby an important section of the farmers providing labour to the production of the crop, are not being officially considered in terms of profit distribution, training, incentives provided in exchange of adoption of new agricultural practices, inputs, etc. Skalidou<sup>73</sup> shows how wives involved in certified production but not recognised as farmers due to lack of land tenure, tend to be systematically left behind in terms of membership in farmers' organisations. As a result their access to any material of financial incentive resulting from certified production (i.e. premium, agricultural inputs, etc) is severely undermined, despite producing certified cocoa themselves. Moreover, they tend to be considered (or consider themselves) non-eligible to participate in other programmes targeting cocoa farmers, therefore missing out on interventions that could potentially improve their access to resources and agency. A paradox therefore is created, whereby while cocoa and chocolate industry actors, as well as aid, policy and implementing actors appear preoccupied by the welfare of women within the cocoa sector, the programmes they are funding and implementing fail to reach these exact women, made invisible by their lack of land ownership.

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<sup>69</sup> M. Goldstein and C. Udry, 'The profits of power:land rights and agricultural investment in Ghana', p.3.

<sup>70</sup> R.Vargas Hill and M. Vigneri, 'Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains', ESA Working Paper No.11-08, 2011.

<sup>71</sup> D. Skalidou, In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018.

<sup>72</sup> R.Vargas Hill and M. Vigneri, 'Mainstreaming gender sensitivity in cash crop market supply chains', p.3

<sup>73</sup> D. Skalidou, In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018.



### 3. RESEARCH REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reviewing the literature with a focus on women and their role in cocoa farming in West African societies leads to the following reflections and recommendations:

#### 1. ENSURE THE INCLUSION OF HARD-TO-REACH WOMEN IN THE RESEARCH DESIGN

There is a need for gender appropriate sampling which can account for the heterogeneity among women underlined in section 2.2, in order to reach women who, despite contributing to cocoa production, are less visible to research and programme implementing actors.

Surveys can be problematic in this respect because they tend to focus on the household unit and interview only the household-head who is viewed as the ‘decision-maker’. Kolavalli and Vigneri,<sup>74</sup> for instance, note that our knowledge on the role of sharecroppers (and their wives) in cocoa production is limited because they do not get interviewed as non-decision makers and therefore tend to be under-represented in survey data. It is highly likely that the same applies to women farming cocoa without owning land or simply without being household heads. Hiscox and Goldstein<sup>75</sup> in their study on gender inequality in the Ghanaian cocoa sector, for example, define female cocoa farmers as those who “are the heads of households and main farmers”, which resulted to be only 18 percent of their sample. Nevertheless, it is estimated that women run 25% of cocoa farms in the country,<sup>76</sup> a figure which is likely to exclude the number of women farming cocoa alongside male partners. A similar example is provided by the KIT study,<sup>77</sup> regarding their analysis on the cocoa sector of Côte d’Ivoire. Although the authors took particular care to include in their sample female respondents, they are often unable to present statistically significant results when comparing male and female headed households due to the low number of observations on female headed households they were able to collect. Once more, this does not mean that women in Côte d’Ivoire are not farming cocoa, simply that when the focus is placed on household heads, surveys are unlikely to capture data on women who farm cocoa alongside partners, which happen to be the majority of cases in both Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire.

Moreover, a survey focus on the ‘household’ and its ‘residents’ is problematic, particularly in cases of hard-to reach populations and “fluid households” where rural-urban boundaries are blurred.<sup>78</sup> In the case of cocoa production in Ghana, a ‘household’ focus is likely to miss on migrant women with multiple residencies, sharing time between different farms, and/or between the cocoa growing community and their home towns, where they commonly care for elderly parents, children at school, or food crops. Moreover, as Cramer et al<sup>79</sup> highlight, such a focus fails to capture data “on the most vulnerable, poorly educated, casual and seasonal workers, especially temporary migrant workers”. In the context of cocoa production this means that sharecroppers and their wives, as well as wage workers hired on a daily basis, will escape data collection if only members of the land owning household are interviewed.

<sup>74</sup> S. Kolavalli and M. Vigneri, *The cocoa coast: The board-managed cocoa sector in Ghana*, Washington DC, International Food Policy Research Institute, 2017.

<sup>75</sup> M. Hiscox and R. Goldstein, ‘Gender Inequality in the Ghanaian Cocoa Sector’, Harvard University, 2014, p.2.

<sup>76</sup> S. Barrientos, ‘Women in cocoa production: where is the gender equity?’, *The Guardian*, 8 March 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/women-cocoa-production-gender-equity>, (accessed 04 September 2019); A.C. Fountain and F. Hütz-Adams, *Cocoa Barometer 2018*, [website], 2018, <https://www.voicenetwork.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2018-Cocoa-Barometer.pdf>, (accessed 1 December 2018).

<sup>77</sup> R. Bymolt et al., ‘Methodology’ in KIT (eds), *Demystifying the Cocoa Sector in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire*, KIT, 2018, p.10.

<sup>78</sup> C. Oya, ‘Who counts? Challenges and biases in defining ‘households’ in research on poverty’, *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2015, p.336.

<sup>79</sup> C. Cramer et al., ‘How to do (and how not to do) fieldwork on Fair Trade and rural poverty’, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d’études du développement*, vol. 35, no.1, 2014, p.178

One way to tackle this is by collecting data on “the entire network of labour and kinship relations surrounding a cocoa farm” and not the household (or worse, only the household head), in order to gain a “deeper understanding of the power relations revolving around cocoa production”.<sup>80</sup> This would mean collecting data on landowners (even if they no longer reside in the community) and their wives, older children contributing labour sporadically during harvest time, sharecroppers and their wives, as well as wage labourers, men and women, hired on a daily basis for weeding, pruning, etc. Currently the focus of the literature is placed on landowners, which as most surveys show for both Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire tend to be male farmers (for example, see<sup>81</sup>). Male sharecroppers are rarely taken into account in recent cocoa research, and their wives contributing labour to sharecropping farms even less so. This is despite a widespread and fairly structured and established sharecropping system operating in the country for more than a century.<sup>82</sup> Finally, mobile migrant workers, both male and female, hired on a daily basis in periods when extra labour is needed (i.e. harvest or weeding seasons) tend to be even more invisible, despite the fact that their labour returns may be vital for poor households residing at long distances, such as the north and east regions of Ghana.<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, efforts should be made to include women farming in remote and isolated farms, in considerable distances from the closest cocoa growing community/village. Researchers should be willing and motivated to leave the comfort of the tarmac road in order to reach farms that can only be reachable by motorcycle or foot. Research budget should account for the extra costs linked to such visits. Care must also be taken to include women with multiple residencies, sharing their time between their home towns and the cocoa farms. These residencies may be located thousands of kilometres away, yet they are financially connected, as cocoa income is often spent at the home towns of migrant farmer (for school fees, building and restoring houses, care for elders, etc). There is probably a lot to learn about the impact of the cocoa economy by conducting fieldwork in non-cocoa growing areas which, nonetheless, provide male and female labour to the cocoa industry. Women may be particularly difficult to capture as they tend to travel more between residencies to provide labour in peak moments of extra labour demand, such as during crop harvest in both places. If research time and financial constraints does not allow expanding beyond the cocoa growing areas, it should be carefully timed to include women providing labour during specific moments of cocoa production (i.e. harvest, planting new trees, etc.)

## 2. ADOPT APPROPRIATE RESEARCH METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Mixed methods, and particularly qualitative approaches to data collection can improve the quality of data collected on poverty and labour<sup>84</sup> and gender inequality<sup>85</sup> and reveal new aspects of how the cocoa economy is gendered. In this respect, care should be taken to create safe spaces of data disclosure. Data collection should be sensitive to intra-household power relations and ensure women with different roles in the household (i.e. senior wife, junior wife, girls sent to help with household

<sup>80</sup> D. Skalidou, In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018, p.181.

<sup>81</sup> M. Hiscox and R. Goldstein, ‘Gender Inequality in the Ghanaian Cocoa Sector’, Harvard University, 2014, p.2.; R. Bymolt et al., ‘Respondent and household demographics’ in KIT (eds), *Demystifying the Cocoa Sector in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire*, KIT, 2018, p.22.

<sup>82</sup> C. Okali, *Cocoa and Kinship in Ghana: The Matrilineal Akan of Ghana*, London, Kegan Paul International Ltd and International African Institute, 1983; A.F. Robertson, *The dynamics of productive relationships. African share contracts in comparative perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987; T. Takane, ‘The cocoa farmers of Southern Ghana: Incentives, institutions, and change in Rural West Africa’, Chiba: Institute of Developing Economies Japan External Trade Organization, 2002.

<sup>83</sup> C. Oya, ‘Who counts? Challenges and biases in defining ‘households’ in research on poverty’, *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2015, p.336.

<sup>84</sup> C. Oya, ‘Who counts? Challenges and biases in defining ‘households’ in research on poverty’, *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2015, p.336.

<sup>85</sup> L. Bertelli, ‘Women’s economic empowerment - What do we know?’, DCED Synthesis Note, 2019.

chores) feel comfortable to disclose data. At the same time, they should be able to capture the dynamics of intra-household bargaining and document how women with different roles within the same household are able to benefit from cocoa farming. Researchers should take care to facilitate women's participation by timing and locating research activities in ways that do not exclude hard-to-reach women.

Participatory methods can also provide revealing insights in terms of female contribution to, and gain from, cocoa production (e.g. exploring male and female workloads, agendas, non-cocoa income generating activities, etc). They are suitable for exploring local and gendered conceptualisations of "wellbeing" and "empowerment" and therefore can better inform policy and future interventions. Additionally, they can create awareness on the role of women in the cocoa sector among both male and female participants and therefore can potentially contribute to female empowerment and social change.<sup>86</sup>

Finally, beyond data collection, we also need a "gender-responsive market systems analysis"<sup>87</sup> that identifies gender inequality and empowerment opportunities at the different levels of market systems: at the macro level which focuses on the high-level theory of change (macro-economic and demographic trends, social and agricultural development, etc.); at the meso level looking at the mechanics of how market systems operate and why; and at the micro level, which focuses on mechanics of a specific intervention.<sup>88</sup>

At the micro level, an integrated approach towards labour division is needed to make fully visible women's contribution. The discussion in section 2.1 argued that cocoa is not a 'male' crop assisted by female labour. Instead, it should be viewed as a crop supported by a system of labour and kinship relations, at the core of which there is a conjugal unit (with one or multiple wives) while other women may also make varying labour contributions (i.e. daughters, sisters, girls assisting with household and farming tasks). Studies that examine gender labour division in cocoa production by focusing exclusively on cocoa farming activities fail to capture the dynamics and complexity of the economic system surrounding the cocoa farm. Whether women are recognised as cocoa farmers or not, contributing heavily in cocoa farming or dedicating more time in other productive and reproductive activities, their labour is fundamentally linked to the production of the crop. Studies looking at gender issues in the cocoa sector will benefit by adopting an integrated approach towards gender labour division which can illuminate the entangled connections between the different productive and reproductive activities that enable both men and women to farm cocoa.

### 3. RE-BALANCE THE LITERATURE PLACING FOCUS IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

A greater focus on cocoa production in Côte d'Ivoire would enable a more complete picture of the global cocoa sector gender dynamics. Côte d'Ivoire alone produces about 42% of the global cocoa production,<sup>89</sup> nevertheless the literature appears to be skewed towards its neighbouring Ghana, at least to the extent that the anglophone literature is concerned. Historically much more studies have been conducted on the Ghanaian cocoa sector than any other country on West Africa (for example, see<sup>90</sup>). The fact that the country has been peaceful and stable might have facilitated the production

<sup>86</sup> R. Chambers and L. Mayoux, 'Reversing the paradigm: quantification and participatory methods', EDIAIS Conference: New Directions in Impact Assessment for Development: Methods and Practice, 2003.

<sup>87</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, 'Women's economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development', USAID & LEO Brief, 2014, p.10

<sup>88</sup> R. Campbell, 'A framework for inclusive market system development', USAID & LEO Brief, 2014.

<sup>89</sup> ICCO, ICCO Quarterly Bulletin of Cocoa Statistics, Vol. XLIII, No. 3, Cocoa year 2016/17. [website], 2017, [https://www.icco.org/about-us/international-cocoa-agreements/cat\\_view/30-related-documents/46-statistics-production.html](https://www.icco.org/about-us/international-cocoa-agreements/cat_view/30-related-documents/46-statistics-production.html), (accessed: 15 July 2018)

<sup>90</sup> P. Hill, *The migrant cocoa farmers of Southern Ghana. A study in rural capitalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1963; P. Hill, *Studies in rural capitalism in West Africa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970; B. Beckman, *Organising the Farmers. Cocoa Politics and National Development in Ghana*, Uppsala, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1976; J. Gordon, 'Cocoa

of such a large and rich literature, particularly in contrast with Côte d'Ivoire where the eruption of armed conflicts is likely to have discouraged researchers from doing fieldwork there. Language could be another determinant, as anglophone researchers tend to prefer doing work in Ghana than its francophone neighbour.

Nevertheless, given the cocoa volumes produced by Côte d'Ivoire and the differences in the institutional and socio-economic contexts it is imperative to cover this gap and conduct research that looks at how women in Côte d'Ivoire contribute and benefit from the crop. The first step would be to systematically review the literature on both countries, with care to include francophone studies on the cocoa sector of Côte d'Ivoire. Second, as long as it is safe for researchers to work in Côte d'Ivoire, the country should be incorporated in their study design, despite the linguistic or other logistic difficulties.

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production in West Africa', in J. Simmons (ed.) *Cocoa Production. Economic and Botanical Perspectives*, New York, Praeger Publishers, 1976; C. Okali, *Cocoa and Kinship in Ghana: The Matrilineal Akan of Ghana*, London, Kegan Paul International Ltd and International African Institute, 1983; S. Berry, *No condition is permanent. The social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993.



## 4. POLICY GUIDELINES

The following policy guidelines emerge from the discussion presented in the previous sections and focus on designing gender-sensitive interventions that are based in gender-sensitive theories of change, can trigger structural transformation and bottom-up change, and their implementation is able to enhance both female access and agency. These are presented along with some more specific recommendations to explore, adapt and pilot within given contexts.

### 1. DEVELOP GENDER-SENSITIVE THEORIES OF CHANGE

Public policy and private sector actors aiming at enhancing women's economic empowerment should base their efforts on a gender-sensitive Theory of Change (ToC) to critically think about the design, implementation and evaluation of their initiatives and programmes. This will allow identifying ways to effectively engage with all women involved in cocoa farming, including the hard-to-reach ones, while also assessing possible women-specific risks resulting from the intervention.<sup>91</sup> Market and Jones<sup>92</sup> further highlight that preliminary intervention analysis and regular monitoring is crucial for spotting unintended and unforeseen programme effects that may have potentially negative effects to participants or their communities. In the case of potential risks, these should be incorporated in the ToC, coupled with context-specific response procedures. In this respect, gender-sensitive data collection and analysis (see section 3 for specific recommendations) is crucial for "assessing people's reactions to interventions and shifting gender norms" and mitigating any intervention-related adverse effects.<sup>93</sup> The following specific steps are recommended:

- Gender-sensitive Theories of Change to effectively engage all women involved in cocoa production

Cocoa policies and programmes should have a "comprehensive description and illustration of how and why" the desired changes in terms of female socio-economic empowerment are expected to happen in the particular contexts of cocoa production (Theory of change, 2019). Capillo and Somerville-Large<sup>94</sup> in their review of initiatives aiming to achieve sustainable livelihoods for cocoa farmers and their communities in West Africa, have identified 35 different initiatives aiming at supporting women's empowerment, while they also report that 42% of the initiatives they have identified are working with women. It would be interesting to review the ToC of these initiatives (when available) and to analyse the effectiveness of their targeting and engaging strategies when it comes to the female population involved in the cocoa sector, particularly the hard-to-reach women.

Programmes should have clear, context tailored, targeting and participant selection strategies in order to effectively reach all the women contributing labour in cocoa production, and not only the ones made visible by their land tenure status. Overcoming the assumption that producers, both male and female, are a 'homogenous' group with the same resources, abilities, and interests becomes crucial in this respect. Cocoa production has previously led to varying degrees of land accumulation and wealth creation, with some farmers being able to significantly improve their socio-economic status, while others being "systematically excluded" from the profits resulting from cocoa

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<sup>91</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, 'Women's economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development', USAID & LEO Brief, 2014

<sup>92</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, 'Women's economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development'.

<sup>93</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, 'Women's economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development', p.11

<sup>94</sup> A. Capillo and N. Somerville Large, 'Regional Cocoa Sustainable Livelihoods Landscape Study: Ghana & Côte d'Ivoire', The Fairtrade Foundation, forthcoming.

commercialisation.<sup>95</sup> It is important to be aware that without addressing the barriers to participation faced by the more poor and less visible women, interventions aiming to improve cocoa farmers' livelihoods may play into the same dynamics. Given these deep-rooted dynamics, working with hard-to-reach women may provoke varying degrees of resistance from male partners and relatives, or women with greater access and agency. Context-specific procedures involving trust building should be in place in order to enable access to hard-to-reach women.

In particular, gender-sensitive ToC should include explicit 'implementation' theories about how specific programme objectives aiming at female socio-economic empowerment are translated into "ongoing service delivery and programme operation" for women.<sup>96</sup> These must detail who should be targeted: female land owners; female sharecroppers; women farming alongside male landowners; women farming alongside male sharecroppers; women providing labour only at peak labour periods, etc. They should be explicit about how programme activities will reach and engage different women: how should programme placement decisions be taken; what staffing levels and characteristics are needed to deliver effective support to different women; how should different programme activities, such as training, delivery of inputs, financial support through premium payments or credit target different women involved in cocoa production, etc. In this process, ToC should also include procedures to deal with possible resistance from more privileged members of the farming community in order to effectively open up space and engage hard-to-reach women with constrained access and agency.

- Identification of contextual factors that can enhance or hinder the effectiveness of cocoa programmes aiming to support women involved in cocoa production

Gender sensitive ToC should explicitly identify contextual factors that hinder female participation (e.g. land ownership, geographical isolation, lack of education) and elaborate realistic strategies to address them. For instance, contextual factors are only briefly and incidentally referred to in the theories of change of the three main cocoa sustainability standards (Fairtrade, UTZ and Rainforest Alliance), despite the fact that context is a crucial component of the interplay between intervention mechanisms and outcomes<sup>97</sup> and plays a particularly decisive role in the case of sustainability standards.<sup>98</sup> Any future review of ToC aiming at improving women's economic empowerment would benefit from taking a closer look at how every particular context can create very different success or failure stories. Revising and learning from these cases can make a significant difference to the effectiveness of future interventions.

- Visualise trade-offs between engaging hard-to-reach women and programme efficiency

Reaching the poorest and most marginalised women involved in cocoa production can be resource demanding both in terms of time and financial resources. It can also require an extensive (and costly) process of trust building to mitigate resistance from more privileged farmers and obtain access to hard-to-reach women. In order to facilitate programme implementation, ToC should put in evidence the amount of resources needed to effectively include hard-to-reach women in the programme design and implementation. Possible trade-offs between efforts to bring on board hard-to-reach women and the long-term economic viability of a project should also be made clear. Nevertheless, this should not discourage public policy and private sector actors from supporting the poorest and most marginalised women of the sector. On the contrary, it should serve to make available the extra

<sup>95</sup> S. Berry, No condition is permanent. The social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993, pp.157-158.

<sup>96</sup> A. Blamey and M. Mackenzie, 'Theories of change and realistic evaluation: peas in a pod or apples and oranges?', Evaluation, vol. 13, no.4, 2007, p.439.

<sup>97</sup> T. Greenhalgh et al., 'How do you modernize a health service? A realist evaluation of whole-scale transformation in London', The Milbank Quarterly, vol. 87, no. 2, 2009, p.391; H. White, 'Theory-based impact evaluation: principles and practice', Journal of development effectiveness, vol.1, no. 3, 2009, p.271.

<sup>98</sup> C. Oya et al., Effects of certification schemes for agricultural production on socio-economic outcomes in low- and middle- income countries: a systematic review. Campbell Systematic Reviews, 2017.

resources needed and hence guarantee the successful and sustainable implementation of the programme.

## 2. DESIGN GENDER-SENSITIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION AND BOTTOM-UP CHANGE

Processes of women's economic empowerment are complex and challenging. Working within dynamic and fluid market systems significantly adds to this complexity. Therefore, we cannot expect from one intervention to tackle all the access and agency constraints that women face within a particular context.<sup>99</sup> We can, however, optimise the degree of systemic change to women's economic empowerment that one intervention can trigger by using gender-sensitive research to inform culture- and context-specific interventions (see recommendations gender-sensitive methods of data collection and analysis in section 3). Such interventions should aim both at structural transformation and bottom-up change.<sup>100</sup> The following specific steps are recommended:

- Use participatory approaches to programme design for bottom-up change.

Women's participation in the design of initiatives results in programmes which are better aligned with their needs, while they also account for female-specific constraints.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, participatory processes not only increase the acceptability of an intervention, but also enhance ownership and empowerment among stakeholders.<sup>102</sup> For these reasons, all women involved in cocoa production, particularly those who are hard-to-reach, should be a critical part of the design process of programmes aiming to enhance women's access and agency. Their constraints should be voiced directly into the design of the programme to guide initiatives. These could be related to cocoa farming (e.g. producing cocoa seedlings for the market), non-cocoa farming (food crops, staples for the local market, etc), manufacturing of products (e.g. soap, and brooms, petty trading, selling food, etc.). Programme activities should be informed by participatory processes in order to ensure that they are accessible to all women in terms of workload, location and timing. Training should be facilitated in culturally sensitive ways that are focused on enhancing women's participation and learning.<sup>103</sup> Logistic and financial support should be provided for women to undertake their own entrepreneurial projects.<sup>104</sup> Participatory approaches should also be used to involve women in the design of products and services that are intended for their use.<sup>105</sup>

- Account for socio-economic factors that can prevent effective female participation in the programme design and activities

Land ownership appears to be significant barrier to female participation in interventions aiming to improve cocoa farmers' livelihoods. Therefore, programme funding and implementing actors should explore ways to disconnect landownership ownership/entitlements from participation in order to

<sup>99</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, 'Women's economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development', USAID &LEO Brief, 2014

<sup>100</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, 'Women's economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development'.

<sup>101</sup> J. Ashby et al., Investing in women as drivers of agricultural growth. Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, 2008.

<sup>102</sup> B.K. Nastasi et al., 'The Participatory Intervention Model: A framework for conceptualizing and promoting intervention acceptability', School Psychology Quarterly, Vol.15, No.2, 2000, p.207.

<sup>103</sup> S. Barrientos, 'Women in cocoa production: where is the gender equity?', The Guardian, 8 March 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/women-cocoa-production-gender-equity>, (accessed 04 September 2019).

<sup>104</sup> Cocoanect, 'The Women in Cocoa Business Initiative, Ivory Coast,[website], 2017, <http://www.cocoanect.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Women-in-cocoa-business-initiative-2017.pdf>, (accessed 4 September 2019); J. Ashby et al., 'Investing in women as drivers of agricultural growth', Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, 2008.

<sup>105</sup> J. Ashby et al., 'Investing in women as drivers of agricultural growth'.

facilitate the participation of women farming cocoa but lacking land. Programmes who target farmers through cooperatives and POs should review whether membership to these organisations is linked to land ownership/entitlements and reflect on the implications for the participation of women (and men) lacking land holdings. Non-economic factors, such as gender-based violence, education levels, or reproductive health issues may also represent significant barriers to female participation in programme design and activities.<sup>106</sup>

- Use effective communication to engage with hard-to-reach women.

Women involved in cocoa farming may also face greater constraints than men in terms of social capital and ability to obtain information and identify opportunities. Programme implementers should employ effective communication particularly regarding the eligibility of women working alongside male partners to participate in the programme design and activities. This is because (mis)conceptions of eligibility linked to land ownership often persist, with women (and men) lacking land holdings considering themselves non-eligible to join community meetings related to cocoa farming, and hence self-excluding themselves from cocoa related activities.

- Allow space and resources for permission/trust building to avoid negative push back

The above recommendations may need permission/trust building processes to open up the space to engage more marginalized women. Both female and male farmers often see women involved in cocoa production as helpers and not as co-farmers. Moreover, there is a tendency for women to self-exclude themselves from producers' organisations and programmes targeting cocoa farmers, perceiving themselves as non eligible.<sup>107</sup> Participatory research and programme design processes have the potential to change these perceptions among both men and women.<sup>108</sup> Any permission/trust building process should include working with men to build awareness and support for gender equality, at the farm, community or cooperative/PO level.

- Create awareness among service providers, public policy and private sector actors for structural change

Male and female service providers (e.g. agricultural extensionists and programme implementers) should also be involved in this process. Women are often discriminated by service providers, who tend to prioritise delivering agricultural inputs, training, credit to male farmers. Public policy and private sector actors should ensure that their policies and programmes are gender mainstreamed across all their stages, from design to implementation. Care should be taken to ensure that service providers and programme implementing actors interacting with the farmers are gender sensible and able to reach and support women who are likely to be less visible and experiencing deeper levels of poverty and lack of agency. Involving women in service delivery aiming to support female access and agency is also crucial. Recruiting and training women as service providers, or running a scholarship schemes for girls have proven to be effective ways to improve the gender balance in service delivery.<sup>109</sup>

In order to effectively gender mainstream future policies, programme funding and implementing actors (i.e. governments, public institutions, aid agencies, NGOs, cocoa trading and processing companies, chocolate manufacturers) should use gender-sensitive research to inform their

<sup>106</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, 'Women's economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development', USAID & LEO Brief, 2014.

<sup>107</sup> D. Skalidou, In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018, p.181.

<sup>108</sup> B.K. Nastasi et al., 'The Participatory Intervention Model: A framework for conceptualizing and promoting intervention acceptability', School Psychology Quarterly, Vol.15, No.2, 2000, p.207.

<sup>109</sup> J. Ashby et al., 'Investing in women as drivers of agricultural growth', Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, 2008.



campaigns and programmes aiming at supporting women involved in cocoa production. Capillo and Somerville-Large<sup>110</sup> report that 71% of all cocoa initiatives are working towards increasing productivity of farmers. Actors involved in funding and designing these activities need to be aware that without properly and effectively engaging women involved in cocoa production the effectiveness of their efforts will be undermined.

In this sense, there is evidence that the creation of national bodies have been effective in creating awareness on gender issues and helping mainstream gender across national policies (see the case of Gender National Services in Côte d'Ivoire<sup>111</sup>). It would be interesting to explore the idea of creating a cocoa specific body aiming at gender mainstreaming all cocoa related policies and programmes. In the case of Ghana this could be hosted by the Project Coordination Unit at COCOBOD.

### 3. IMPLEMENT INTERVENTIONS THAT SUPPORT BOTH WOMEN'S ACCESS AND AGENCY

Interventions targeting women involved in cocoa production tend to focus mainly on improving women's access to resources. However, issues of agency, understood as enhancing their voice, choice and control over those resources as well as their influence on the systems in which they live, are equally important and should not be sidestepped.<sup>112</sup> Programmes aiming at the creation of economic opportunities (i.e. increasing income, providing access to inputs, training, credit, etc.) should also consider how these opportunities enhance women's self-confidence, leadership and decision making abilities. The following suggestions aim at supporting both access and agency:

- All women participating in cocoa production should be made visible and recognised by public policy, private companies and programme implementing actors.

Cocoa should be seen as the product of a system of labour and kinship relations, with a conjugal unit at the core (monogamous or polygamous), and labour contributions from other individuals around the conjugal unit (other relatives, older children, sharecropping and wage labour, non-relatives providing labour in exchange of housing and food)<sup>113</sup>. Women in roles of unpaid family and wage labour should be recognised by public policy, private companies and programme implementing actors.<sup>114</sup> In the case of cooperatives and POs, whether certified or not, the possibility of extending membership benefits to spouses and daughters should be explored.<sup>115</sup> Extending membership to non-land owners may find resistance from land owners. A process of sensitisation and awareness raising amongst men and possibly women owning land may be required to avoid backlash.

In the Ghanaian context, encouraging husbands to hand out passbooks to wives can also lead to female access and agency enhancement. As discussed in section 2.3. it is not uncommon for husbands to reward their spouses with part of their land at some point in their conjugal life, particularly if the wife participated in the setting up of the farm. Such transfers vary across locations

<sup>110</sup> A. Capillo and N. Somerville Large, 'Regional Cocoa Sustainable Livelihoods Landscape Study: Ghana & Côte d'Ivoire', The Fairtrade Foundation, forthcoming.

<sup>111</sup> The World Bank et al., *Gender in agriculture sourcebook*, Washington DC, 2009, p.74.

<sup>112</sup> E. Markel and L. Jones, 'Women's economic empowerment: pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development', USAID & LEO Brief, 2014; DFID, 'Stepping-up a gear for girls and women: updates to DFID's strategic vision for girls and women, to 2020 and beyond', 2013.

<sup>113</sup> For more on how young people offer unpaid labour in exchange of housing and food in order to gain cocoa farming experience that will eventually allow them to manage a farm on their own see D. Skalidou, *In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana*, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018, p.181.

<sup>114</sup> S. Barrientos, 'Women in cocoa production: where is the gender equity?', *The Guardian*, 8 March 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/women-cocoa-production-gender-equity>, (accessed 04 September 2019).

<sup>115</sup> C. Oya et al., *Effects of certification schemes for agricultural production on socio-economic outcomes in low- and middle- income countries: a systematic review*. Campbell Systematic Reviews, 2017.

and ethnic groups and may occur in different points of a couple's life.<sup>116</sup> As noted in section 2.3, Skalidou<sup>117</sup> illustrates the case of land owner (who was also a community leader) who had provided both his wife and his sharecropper with a passbook for parts of his land with very positive effects in terms of access and agency for both of them. This is because although the move does not signify a transfer of property, it does enhance agency as the new passbook holder is now recognised as a decision-maker by farmers' organisations, cocoa buyers, programme implementing actors, etc. It would be interesting to explore how extended this practice is and in which ways it could be mainstreamed. A good understanding of the land tenure system and traditional norms that this could disrupt would be necessary to avoid any negative push back.

- Review how financial incentives and benefits provided by interventions relate to land ownership.

Given that women involved in cocoa production are far more likely to lack land holdings than men, it is crucial to review how financial incentives and benefits provided by cocoa interventions are directly or indirectly (through PO membership) conditional to land ownership. Efforts should be made to ensure that all those responsible for cocoa production, including more marginalized members of the community such as women and labourers, are receiving the benefits that come with being recognised as a 'cocoa farmer' by certification agents and programme implementing actors. Interventions should ensure that women lacking access to land still get access to other resources, such as premium payments, inputs and credit.<sup>118</sup> Similarly, activities that can boost one's agency such as training and extension services should be "open to all those engaged in cocoa farming", regardless of membership status.<sup>119</sup> The Cocoa Life programme provides an interesting (and to a great degree successful) experience in this respect, as its training programme is accessible to the entire cocoa farming community, whether landowners, family labourers sharecroppers or wage workers. These recommendations are particularly relevant in the case of sustainability standards, as incentivising the ones who own the land but not those who farm it may have severe implications in terms of standards adoption, since the people who are supposed to adopt the standards do not receive the appropriate training or the financial incentives for doing so. These distributional dynamics affect both landless men and women, however women may be more affected as their access to land is far more constrained.

- Design interventions that explicitly target women in the cocoa sector, without excluding men

Interventions explicitly targeting women involved in cocoa production are necessary "to catalyze a change process for ending gender discrimination and securing women's access to key resources".<sup>120</sup> However, these should not exclude men. Programmes should reach "both men and women, taking their gender-differentiated roles and opportunities into account. Evidence suggests that getting men's support is critical to, and often necessary for the success of gender-responsive projects".<sup>121</sup>

<sup>116</sup> B. Duncan, 'Cocoa, Marriage, Labour and Land in Ghana: Some Matrilineal and Patrilineal Perspectives', *Africa*, vol.80, 2010, p.301.

<sup>117</sup> D. Skalidou, *In or out?: Exploring selection processes of farmers in cocoa sustainability standards and certification programmes in Ghana*, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2018, p.181.

<sup>118</sup> S. Barrientos, 'Women in cocoa production: where is the gender equity?', *The Guardian*, 8 March 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/women-cocoa-production-gender-equity>, (accessed 04 September 2019).

<sup>119</sup> S. Barrientos and A.O. Bobie, 'Promoting gender equality in the cocoa-chocolate value chain: opportunities and challenges in Ghana', GDI Working Paper, 2016-006, 2016, p.32

<sup>120</sup> J. Ashby et al., 'Investing in women as drivers of agricultural growth', *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*, 2008.

<sup>121</sup> J. Ashby et al., 'Investing in women as drivers of agricultural growth'

## 4. SPECIFIC IDEAS TO EXPLORE, ADAPT AND PILOT

The following section provides some ideas that could potentially enhance women's access and agency. These have been identified in the literature as successful cases in different contexts. Nevertheless, they should not be seen as isolated recommendations, but are provided here for further exploration, adaptation within given contexts, and piloting. They should be considered through a WEE lens (or other appropriate gender framework), informed by a participatory and inclusive process of programme design and aligned with the intervention's gender-sensitive ToC.

- Improve **women's** access and agency

Quotas may be used to increase the representation of women and to ensure their participation in management decisions. This can apply to user groups, rural producer organizations, service provider organizations, governing boards and policy-making bodies.<sup>122</sup>

(In the case of certification) Make explicit gender equity programmes a requisite for POs to become certified or participate in other programmes. Take measures to foment female participation in decisions related to social premium investments in order to ensure that the spending of social premium benefits also women.<sup>123</sup>

Women -targeted unconditional, or conditional Cash Transfers (conditional on children's school attendance), could be an option to explore and pilot. Such transfers could allow women to pay school fees, and hire extra labour when needed. They could also take the form of direct access to credit.

- Support **women's** organisations

Women-only POs emerge as a mechanism to facilitate female market participation, as women may feel that their interests are better served, in comparison with male- dominated POs.<sup>124</sup> They could improve women's access to inputs and certification-related premium use, serve as a product and price differentiation strategy by creating a 'female-produced' brand, increase female participation in organisational decision making and visibility women's work across the value chain.<sup>125</sup> However, women-only groups may be more restricted by a lack of knowledge, communication and resources than mixed POs, and may therefore ultimately be damaging women's interests. This is why it is important to directly support women's organisation with pre-finance or sustainability programmes that can provide them with working capital.<sup>126</sup>

- Provide legal and institutional support

Support and promote "regulations that defend women's control over loans against the demands of other family members".<sup>127</sup> Carefully assess and account for prospective threats to women's access to, and control over, productive assets, including their own labor and the income it generates.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>122</sup> J. Ashby et al., 'Investing in women as drivers of agricultural growth', Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, 2008, p.6

<sup>123</sup> C. Oya et al., Effects of certification schemes for agricultural production on socio-economic outcomes in low- and middle- income countries: a systematic review. Campbell Systematic Reviews, 2017.

<sup>124</sup> C. Oya et al., Effects of certification schemes for agricultural production on socio-economic outcomes in low- and middle- income countries: a systematic review.

<sup>125</sup> C. Oya et al., Effects of certification schemes for agricultural production on socio-economic outcomes in low- and middle- income countries: a systematic review.

<sup>126</sup> Cocoonect, 'The Women in Cocoa Business Initiative, Ivory Coast,[website], 2017, <http://www.cocoonect.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Women-in-cocoa-business-initiative-2017.pdf>, (accessed 4 September 2019).

<sup>127</sup> J. Ashby et al., 'Investing in women as drivers of agricultural growth', Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, 2008, p.5

<sup>128</sup> J. Ashby et al., 'Investing in women as drivers of agricultural growth', Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook, 2008, p.5

## 5. CONCLUSION

This report has raised the following points:

- Women's labour is crucial for cocoa production. Therefore, far from being a 'male' crop, cocoa should be viewed as a crop supported by a system of labour and kinship relations, at the core of which there is a conjugal unit (with one or multiple wives) while other women (and men) may also make varying labour contributions (i.e. daughters, sisters, girls assisting with household and farming tasks).
- Despite their central role in cocoa production, women face much more constraints than men, both as female land owners or female labour providers.
- As land owners, women tend to have smaller, more remote and less productive farms, have less ability to mobilise (unpaid) labour, face more restrictions in accessing inputs, extension services, training and credit. As a result they also have lower returns from cocoa production.
- Women who lack land ownership but farm cocoa alongside male partners (whether these are owning land or sharecropping) are commonly not recognised as cocoa farmers by researchers, public policy, aid or private sector actors. This lack of visibility significantly hinders their ability to be part of research projects, join farmers' organisations, receive extension services and participate in, and potentially benefit from, interventions targeting cocoa farmers.
- Women without land holdings are also differentiated and cannot be considered as a homogenous group with equal access and agency, or (in)ability to benefit from cocoa returns. Issues of intra-household bargaining are crucial, as even within households women's access and agency can vary considerably. This report has illustrated how junior wives in polygamous households can be particularly disempowered.

In terms of research this reports makes the following recommendations:

- There is a need for gender-sensitive research designs with appropriate sampling which accounts for the heterogeneity among women involved in cocoa farming and includes hard-to reach and especially disempowered women.
- Data collection and analysis should also be gender-sensitive and context-specific. The use of mixed methods, and particularly qualitative approached can improve the quality of data on poverty, labour and gender inequality. Data collection should be sensitive to intra-household power relations and ensure that all women feel safe and comfortable to disclose data. Participatory and action research approaches can also provide illuminating data, while making a potential contribution to awareness creation and empowerment at the same time.
- An integrated approach towards gender labour division which illuminates the entangled connections between the different productive and reproductive activities that enable both men and women to farm cocoa is needed in order to make fully visible women's contribution in cocoa production.
- The current (anglophone) literature appears to be skewed towards Ghana. To re-balance the literature and capture a more complete picture of the global cocoa sector gender dynamics, a greater focus on cocoa production in Côte d' Ivoire is required.

In terms of policy this reports makes the following recommendations:

- Public policy and private sector actors aiming at enhancing women's economic empowerment should develop gender-sensitive theories of change to critically think about the design, implementation and evaluation of their initiatives and programmes. This should ensure that the intervention will effectively reach and engage all women involved in cocoa production, including those who are hard-to-reach and especially disempowered. It should

also consider how women with different degrees of access and agency can potentially benefit from the intervention.

- Interventions should adopt a participatory gender-sensitive design informed by all women involved in cocoa production, particularly those who are hard-to-reach.
- Programme participation should be disconnected from land ownership/entitlements. Other factors preventing women from participating in programme design and activities, such as education or reproductive health should be identified and accounted for. Programme fundings and implementing actors should review how financial incentives and programme benefits are linked land ownership.
- Effective communication regarding participation eligibility should be used to engage hard-to-reach women and ensure their participation in programme design and activities.
- A process of permission/trust building may be necessary in order to open up the space to engage more marginalized women. This should include working with men to build awareness and support for gender equality, at the farm, community or cooperative/PO level.
- Awareness on gender equality and women's economic empowerment should be created among service providers, public policy and private sector actors in order to achieve structural change.
- Interventions aiming at supporting women's economic empowerment should focus both on women's access to resources and agency, understood as voice, choice and control over those resources as well as their influence on the systems in which they live.
- All women participating in cocoa production should be made visible and recognised by public policy, private companies and programme implementing actors, particularly those who are more marginalised, hard-to-reach and especially disempowered, such as junior wives in polygamous households. Interventions should explicitly target women, without, however, excluding men.



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