

Cocoa Livelihoods Program: *Lessons Learned*



INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE & STRUCTURE

The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) Cocoa Livelihoods Program (CLP) (2009-2019) contributed significantly to WCF's capacity as an organization, strengthened companies' capacity to manage and implement programs, and furthered learning about topics related to cocoa sustainability. This report captures the lessons learned by WCF and company staff over the course of the program. It is intended to inform the future work of donors, companies, and other stakeholders in cocoa sustainability and agricultural development. The report details ten lessons learned about program design and management as well as technical lessons about food crops and cocoa.

METHODOLOGY

This report draws on information from a number of sources including: annual reports to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Walmart Foundation, the final evaluation, interviews with WCF staff, input from matching grant company partners (through reports, presentations, guided interviews and an open-ended written response exercise) and stakeholder feedback through a two-day CLP Learning Event.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW & CONTEXT

The Cocoa Livelihoods Program was implemented in two phases. The first phase (2009-2014) was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and 16 WCF member companies. The program covered four countries (Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria) and included activities aimed at increasing productivity, improving marketing efficiency and strengthening farmers' business skills. Activities were implemented by organizations including the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, ACIDI/VOCA, GIZ, SOCODEVI, and TechnoServe.

The second phase (2014-2019) was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation using a model through which ten companies were awarded matching grants to implement their own individual projects that aligned with an overall set of program objectives and desired outcomes. Matching grant projects took place in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria. The program focused on outcome incentives related to increased cocoa productivity (through pruning) and improved production of food crops (through adoption of good agricultural practices and improved planting material). Unlike the first phase, which relied on non-governmental organizations and government agencies, in the second phase companies had direct management and implementation responsibilities. There were a number of external factors that impacted the implementation of the second phase including a decline in cocoa prices, changes in government policies, the development of a new industry-wide sustainability platform (CocoaAction), and adverse weather conditions.





LESSONS LEARNED

The following ten lessons learned reflect the Cocoa Livelihoods Program's experience.

Technical

LESSON LEARNED #1

Use a market-driven, value chain approach to food crop production and income diversification activities.

LESSON LEARNED #2

Take an iterative and participatory approach to gender integration that involves farmers, communities, companies and governments as important stakeholders and change agents.

LESSON LEARNED #3

Adapt extension and advisory approaches to local needs using group trainings or individualized coaching as appropriate.

LESSON LEARNED #4

Take a holistic approach to soil fertility that looks beyond inorganic fertilizer to include overall soil health.

LESSON LEARNED #5

Aggregate company and/or farmer demand to improve access to inputs (such as spray services, pruning equipment, planting material, etc.) required to implement good agricultural practices.

LESSON LEARNED #6

Strengthen the whole cocoa planting material supply chain from seed garden to farm.

Process

LESSON LEARNED #7

Motivate companies to expand their views of supply chain sustainability through direct partnerships with donors.

LESSON LEARNED #8

Give companies management and implementation responsibilities to foster learning by doing and internalize learnings.

LESSON LEARNED #9

Consider cost-benefit analysis when determining the structure and rigor of incentive-based payment systems.

LESSON LEARNED #10

Design programs that remain flexible to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances.



CONCLUSION WCF recently launched a new strategy focused on prospering cocoa farmers, empowering communities and ensuring a healthy planet. The strategy is anchored in the creation of an enabling environment that has the following three drivers: 1) multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships; 2) effective government policy and regulatory frameworks; and 3) aligned public-private investment to create impact at scale. This strategy builds, in part, on organizational capacities that WCF and partner companies developed through the process of managing CLP.