



Members of the women's association Bah-Mé-Tioh in Yaokouakoukro showing Nestlé's Supplier Code distributed to raise their awareness of labor standards

NESTLÉ GENDER DIALOGUE PROJECT: GALS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT TRAINING FOLLOW-UP VISITS

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Yaokouakoukro and Zaranou, Côte d'Ivoire

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A woman in the eggplant farm of a GALS participant group from Yaokouakoukro



A small ranch of kitchen created by a GALS participant woman in Zaranou

I. BACKGROUND

The Fair Labor Association (FLA) and Nestlé are collaborating on a project focusing on the establishment of women's forums as a dialogue platform for women to raise and address their grievances, and to give them a greater voice in two cocoa-growing communities supplying to Nestlé: Yaokouakoukro (Gagnoa) and Zaranou (Abengourou) in Côte d'Ivoire.

The baseline assessment conducted for this project through the introductory visit¹ and the baseline social impact assessment² (SIA) held in the two communities highlighted that economic empowerment, independence of women, and social change (gender balance, social inclusion, etc.) are essential to achieving the aforementioned objectives. To address these identified needs, the FLA applied the Gender Action Learning for Sustainability (GALS) approach in the two communities.³ During these trainings, individuals and groups of participants built their own action plans and committed to implementing income-generating activities. Nestlé also undertook other activities directly in collaboration with the sourcing cooperatives in the two communities.

FLA project staff based in Abidjan conducted follow-up visits on January 18-22 and February 1-6, 2016 in Yaokouakoukro and Zaranou, respectively. The objectives of these follow-up visits were two-fold: 1) to monitor

¹ The introductory visit was conducted in March 2015. Please refer to the introductory visit report: http://www.fairlabor.org/sites/default/files/documents/reports/nestle_gender_dialogue_introduutory_visit_report_2015.pdf

² The baseline SIA was conducted in two communities in July 2015. Please refer to the SIA baseline report: http://www.fairlabor.org/sites/default/files/documents/reports/nestle_gender_dialogue_baseline_social_impact_assessment_2015.pdf

³ The first GALS training was conducted in August 2015. Please refer to the GALS training report: http://www.fairlabor.org/sites/default/files/documents/reports/nestle_gender_dialogue_gals_training_report_2015.pdf

the implementation of the individual and group projects and commitments made by the participants since August 2015 when the first GALS session took place; and 2) to initiate the establishment of the women-oriented dialogue structure and grievance mechanism in the two communities. This report presents an update on the activities conducted and progress in the communities observed during these visits.

II. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

a. Commitments Made by Participants and Identified Activities

In Yaokouakoukro, the small number of community members - and their similarities and cohesive functioning - allowed for the initial training session to identify group projects for building economic capabilities in the following areas:

- Pig ranching
- Food crops⁴ farming
- Cocoa farming⁵

In Zaranou, given the high number of participants, the diverse origins of trainees with few common interests, and the existing language barriers between the gender expert and the trainees, the activities that the group could undertake collectively (also known as group projects) could not be achieved during the training held in August 2015. Nevertheless, based on the active

⁴ Food crops include cassava, eggplant, groundnuts, tomato, and pepper.

⁵ During the GALS trainings held in Yaokouakoukro, cocoa farming was not retained as a group activity, therefore not included in the training report. Nevertheless, cocoa farming was part of the visions of some participants, in addition to the other activities, and therefore is reflected here.

participation of the community members⁶ in the training and the efficiency of the training methodology, participants developed individual commitments to improve economic status, and related activities were made in the following areas:

- Food crop production
- Food crop trading
- Shoes and clothes trading
- Chickens, pig, and sheep ranching
- Fish farming
- Cocoa farm creation
- Hardware trading and retail store

Both communities undertook activities in their respective capacities, with locally-available resources and based on the action plan developed during the initial training session (see Annex 1 for Yaokouakoukro), since August 2015.

⁶ Trainees were members of cooperative COOPAZA, Women's Association AFEDZ and other community members.



Tomatoes farm of a GALS participant group from Yaokouakoukro

b. Observed Progress in Yaokouakoukro

In Yaokouakoukro, FLA staff visited all eight communities linked to this village to monitor the implementation of the group projects commitments made during the initial GALS session. FLA staff observed that all group projects are at various implementation stages: four have started; two are advanced; one is tangible (meaning the produce is being harvested and sold in the market); and one was unsuccessful (due to poor weather, yet is being replaced by another commodity). Annex 1 provides further details.



Women from Yaokouakoukro maintaining a women-oriented cocoa nursery funded by Nestlé.

Similar to the other community, women felt positive and encouraged by their capability to start a process using their existing means and without external assistance. In the past, they waited for an external influence, but they are starting to understand that change can be initiated from within. The project team believes that for this change to be impactful and have a long-term effect, it will require that these women still receive outside help with technical training and agriculture inputs (e.g. for new varieties of cassava cuttings).

During the GALS trainings, participants conducted a SWOT analysis. With the help of the training team, they were able to overcome perceived **weaknesses**, but overcoming threats was a **challenge** at the time, and was still a challenge during the follow-up visit.

c. Observed Progress in Zaranou

The women's association AFEDZ is coordinating the work related to this project in Zaranou. The initial training involved a number of community members. The project staff advised the women's association linked to the community to be in regular touch with the training participants, to follow up on implementation on the plans as discussed



A GALS participant performing her small trade



A woman from Zaranou in her okra farm created after the GALS Training

during the training, and to register progress. According to AFEDZ, more than 50 individual participants have initiated additional income-generating activities and/or improved their current activities. During the follow-up visit, FLA staff visited the projects of 15 participants (11 women and four men) implemented and/or improved after the GALS training. These projects include: food crops farming; pig, sheep, and goat ranching; fish farming; ice juice trading; clothes and shoes trading; and miscellaneous food products trading. In addition to these individual projects, a group of women from AFEDZ (about 200 members), supported by the local cocoa cooperative COOPAZA (supplying to Nestlé), is producing food crops and conducting fish farming.

Although it was early in the process to conduct an evaluation of the success of the interventions, participants were positive and encouraged that they could start a process



A cocoa nursery funded by Nestlé that is maintained by women from Bah-Mé-Tioh of Yaokouakoukro

on their own, without external assistance. The discussions highlighted that the work they are currently conducting can be self-managed with existing resources, but if these operations need to be scaled up (in terms of better quality, higher yields, and more production area), all individuals will require additional assistance and resources.

Given that some of these initiatives could continue to operate even after the project closeout, Nestlé, along with COOPAZA and AFEDZ, should start planning for regular follow-up visits, and discuss what can be done to mobilize community members who drop out, even after receiving the training.

d. Other Initiatives Related to Economic Empowerment

To support the economic empowerment of women's associations in the two project areas, Nestlé developed cocoa nurseries in each village. Women's associations are paid to maintain these nurseries. This activity generates income for these associations. The nurseries will further facilitate access of

community members, including women, to cocoa seedlings for their cocoa farms.

III. SOCIAL CHANGE

a. Raising Awareness of Workplace Standards

As part of the FLA recommendations for increasing awareness of workplace standards made following the first visit to the communities, Nestlé has distributed the new version of its illustrated supplier code of conduct to the members of the women's association Bah-Mé-Toh in Yaokouakoukro. These women will benefit from greater instruction about labor standards, especially the importance of using personal protective equipment (PPE). Findings during the baseline assessment and other monitoring work conducted by the FLA as part of the annual independent external assessments found a low percentage of women using adequate PPE. Nestlé plans to distribute the supplier code of conduct in Zaranou as well.

As next steps, the FLA will encourage the cooperative to invite members of the women's associations, wives of the cocoa growers members, and other interested females to trainings held by Nestlé and/or the cooperative on workplace standards and other technical aspects. Cooperatives and women's associations will be encouraged to collectively engage technical partners to develop and disseminate information on food crop production and good agricultural practices. Finally, during the next session of the FLA trainings to be held in May 2016, the project staff will cover issues such as the importance of PPE use and better time management so that women can make time to attend training and participate in Farmer Field Schools.

b. Establishment of Women's Dialogue Structure and Grievance Mechanism

These follow-up visits were also used by the FLA project staff to strengthen the work on a dialogue structure and grievance mechanism, particularly available for the women in the two communities. To reinforce the importance and take a structured approach, FLA project staff organized meetings in each community to explain the framework of the mechanism and its functioning. FLA staff developed a guidance document by taking into account the community context, considering the

cooperative structure and its position in the community, and engaging in discussion with the women's associations.

In order to support women's associations to establish a grievance-handling mechanism, it is important to respect the social organization of the community (including cooperatives and women's associations). There are four main levels at which the communication occurs:

Level 1: At a sub-division village level (inside the community)

Level 2: At the section level (a section is a group of several villages in the same geographical area)

Level 3: At the departmental level (several groups of villages (sections) form a department and in most cases the cooperative headquarters is located at this level)

Level 4: At the national level (later on, as and when the initiative is extended to other departments, they could collectively establish a national forum)

These various levels provide opportunities for women to voice concerns, as and when they are necessary. The role of the FLA is to facilitate the establishment of these structures, strengthen the capacities of the responsible persons, and link such persons



FLA field staff in meeting with women at the farmer field school of Yaokouakoukro



The president of AFEDEZ is building her own house after a commitment made during GALS training

to the existing opinion leaders⁷ at each level for any necessary consultation. In the framework of this project, the two women's associations will provide the base for creating this structure, and they will address issues that may arise amongst women's association members, women cocoa suppliers to Nestlé, and wives of male cocoa suppliers.

The goal of the guidance document is to provide them ways to set up a dialogue platform to serve as a grievance-handling mechanism within existing community structures, in order to meet the overall objective of the project. The document was purposely kept brief so that the target audience can understand it use it effectively.

The proposed platform should help the women in the communities to meet and discuss common challenges and successes, share their experiences, and report grievances and complaints related to the household or community. As described in the initial FLA Gender Report, women sometimes do not have confidence in themselves, and due to fear of being reprimanded by family or friends, they refrain from using existing and formal community structures and public reporting of issues. Therefore, this platform will enable women to find solutions in a private way and receive they assistance they need, thereby keeping their confidence in adverse situations.

IV. NEXT STEPS

Based on the guidance provided to the two women's associations, they need to identify (with names and contact information) women representatives from their existing membership and mobilize them for the four proposed dialogue structures. The kick off meeting of the Local Women Representation

⁷ Opinion leaders are those who are respected and listened to by all community members (e.g. village chief, clergymen, president of women, etc.)

(LWR) made up of the identified female representatives (from the women's association and other relevant community members) will occur during the next visit of the FLA project team scheduled in May/June 2016. During this visit, the team will discuss the objectives and tasks of the LWR and the SCW, and provide them with a preliminary overview of the elements of effective dialogue, the elements of an effective grievance mechanism and handling, and disciplinary procedures.

Additionally, in the upcoming visit, the project staff will continue to build their capacity on economic empowerment strategies (such as marketing). Finally, the project staff will provide community members with guidance on the topic of gender justice and equality.



A GALS participant lady from Zaranou performing her small trade of fishes



A GALS participant lady from Zaranou achieving her commitment of clothes and shoes trading

V. LESSONS LEARNED

This follow-up visit highlighted the following findings:

- Group projects aiming for economic independence are more effective when they are administered to a group of people from the same origin (community), with similar interests and a shared vision. When people are from different origins (communities) and hold varying interests, it is better to opt for the implementation of individual projects.
- A locally-based follow-up process is an important component of this methodology. Thus, at the start of project activities, there should be a person or organization at the community level, with the local know-how and trust of community members, designated to be responsible for regular follow-up.
- The income-generation activity conducted as part of the GALS training proved to be an excellent icebreaker and the entry point into the community. If the dialogue structure had been used as the first discussion point, it may not have yielded the same results.
- Despite the proven effectiveness of the GALS methodology, it is necessary to plan for external support needed to overcome the weaknesses and threats that cannot be resolved within the existing means of a community (e.g. technical support, inputs, advice, market linkages, etc. With this extra guidance, there are chances of realizing greater successes.
- Self-realization is an important feature for effort and success. When participants self-identify their visions and define their own projects, there are more chances of success.
- An empathetic and effective facilitation approach is required to mobilize communities. It is difficult for communities to self-mobilize.
- For any training program to be successful, it needs to be deconstructed into various components and modules, and introduced into the communities over a period of time with regular follow-ups. It is difficult for the local community members to absorb all information at one time and then act upon it.



A cocoa nursery funded by Nestlé that is maintained by women from AFEDEZ at Zaranou

ANNEX 1: MONITORING OF INCOME-GENERATING PROJECTS AT YAOKOUAKOUKRO

COMMUNITY NAME	PROJECT IDENTIFICATION	COMMITMENTS TO ACHIEVE THE FIRST STEP OF THE PROJECT	ACHIEVEMENT	IMPLEMENTATION STATUS
Yaokouakoukro	Pig Rearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain land for enclosures Create an enclosure with wood Cassava farming to feed the pigs Ask a friend for the first couple of pigs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land is available Enclosure is created 	<i>Started</i>
Goli N'guessankro	Pepper and Cassava Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for land Land clearing Creation of the pepper seed nursery Looking for improved cassava cutting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land is available Land is cleared Cassava is planted 	<i>Advanced</i>
N'zuékro	Cassava Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for land Land clearing Looking for improved cassava cutting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land is available Land is cleared 	<i>Started</i>
Kopakro	Cassava Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for land Land clearing Looking for improved cassava cutting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land is available in two different areas First part of land about 0.5 hectare is cleared Cassava is planted on this first plot Waiting for the first rain in order to continue with the second land 	<i>Advanced</i>
Zigbouyaokro	Tomato Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for land Land clearing Creation of the tomato seed nursery Creation of wells for watering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first initiative to establish tomato nurseries was destroyed by the rain. Therefore, the group decided to change the commodity to be maize. The land is available and waiting for the first rain. 	<i>Unsuccessful</i>
Danielkro	Eggplant Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for land Land clearing Creation of the eggplant seed nursery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land is available Land is cleared Eggplant and tomato seed nurseries are created and seeds are planted Eggplants and tomatoes are harvesting 	<i>Tangible</i>
Blaisekro	Groundnut Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for land Land clearing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land is available Land is cleared 	<i>Started</i>
Chantier	Cassava Farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for land Land clearing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land is available Land is cleared 	<i>Started</i>

Projects' implementation status

