

# ANALYSIS OF THE WORKLOAD AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF WORK BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN COCOA PRODUCTION

Recommendations to improve the participation of women in the PRO-PLANTEURS project for the different project regions



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## Summary of the study

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## Introduction

PRO-PLANTEURS commissioned a study to analyse the distribution of work between women and men in cocoa production and develop recommendations for improving their participation of women in activities within the second project phase (2020 – 2025). The analysis was conducted in the three regions Agboville, Abengourou and Aboisso in the east and south-east of Côte d'Ivoire where PRO-PLANTEURS was implemented in the first project phase (2015 – 2020).

The study showed that the low participation of women in project activities is partly related to the heavy burden of women's unpaid work, which often results in a severe lack of time. This heavy workload is caused by socio-cultural burdens, men's indifference to gender equality and a lack of support for women in domestic work.

Women are engaged in almost all stages of cocoa production starting with the installation of cocoa plots, up to cocoa harvest and post-harvest activities. Women are less involved in planting and agricultural maintenance activities as well as the commercialization of cocoa beans. Cocoa production is not the only activity women are engaged in, usually they are also involved in other agricultural activities. Also, women are solely responsible for reproductive activities of the family, like housekeeping and childcare. Finally, they engage, together with men, in community activities like the organization and participation at cultural or religious ceremonies or local political activities.

The summary discusses the following issues of gender and cocoa: (1) women's access to land, (2) work distribution in cocoa farmer households, (3) decision-making in cocoa farmer households, (4) women's membership in farmer organizations and participation in trainings and (5) commercialization of food and vegetable crops. Based on the analyses of the different topics, recommendations to adapt activities in order to improve the participation of women are presented.

## 1- Women's access to land

The issue of access to land is important as long-term investment in agriculture can only be made on secure land with a land title to be sure that property rights enjoyed by land title holders are clearly defined.

Women face difficulties in accessing land for food production, as one of the participants in the interviews in Aboisso testified: "Here we don't have land to cultivate because of the occupation of the land by cash crops, so even if we do the training, it won't serve us, we prefer to do our small business". The lack of a site to put into practice the lessons learned from the project is also a hindrance to women's involvement.

Women's access to land differs in the different project regions. The differences can mostly be attributed to differences within ethnic groups and traditions. Migration also plays a role as migrants cannot obtain full property of land in Côte d'Ivoire and women often do not have access to financial resources. In Abengourou, in contrast to Agboville and Aboisso, an important number of women own land and have their own cocoa plots. Participants reported that, when in 1964 the new law on inheritance was passed, the then sub-prefect was very engaged in disseminating information and promoting an inheritance law that favours children and wives abandoning matrilineal inheritance<sup>1</sup>. The fact that children inherit from their fathers in an equitable manner, increasingly gives women the

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<sup>1</sup> Matrilineal inheritance means that men inherit from the men of their mother's side, e.g. an uncle or grandfather on their mother's side.

possibility to inherit land from their husbands or fathers. This has had an impact on women's access to land as they are able to claim their husband's or father's inheritance. Women who inherit land from their fathers' can dispose of the land, unlike in other localities where tradition is still a burden in land management.

Another aspect is that the population in Agboville and Aboisso often are migrants or have a migrant background. A doctoral thesis in these regions found that natives are the owners of 80% of cultivated areas in the regions but only represent 15% of the farmers. Migrants or people with migration background represent most of the agricultural workforce. The same study reveals that around Aboisso, 98% of the workforce is foreign to the region. The low proportion of women owners could therefore be explained by this strong presence of foreign labour. Female workforce in cocoa farming works mostly alongside their husbands while the husband manages the family resources. As the acquisition of land by this foreign population is often done by purchase, women have difficulty acquiring land.

## 2- Work distribution in cocoa farmer households

Women spend about in average 10 hours of their 16 hours of being awake (5.30am - 9.30pm) on household chores and childcare. In contrast, out of the 16 hours of being awake, men devote 9 hours to productive activities, such as farming, and 7 hours to leisure or rest. Thus, women do not regularly and intensively carry out productive activities in cocoa production and only engage in cocoa activities after fulfilling the needs of the family.

Women participate in almost all tasks but show a preference for those activities requiring dexterity and attention to detail, such as growing seedlings in greenhouses, transplanting and weeding (see annex). In contrast, men take on heavier manual tasks, such as land preparation, logging, etc.,. Activities carried out by women, although less hard, require more time compared to the activities of men, who, although very hard physically, take up less time in carrying them out. Furthermore, men take generally care of cocoa commercialization. For example, on a one-hectare plot of land, the harvest of pods, according to information received from the groups, does not exceed three days, while the collection of pods and grouping in heaps can take one week.

Household chores, like food preparation, cleaning, washing dishes or fetching water are largely the sole responsibility of the woman (compare Table 1). It is only in some households, where men are involved in helping their wives with certain household chores, such as fetching water and food for the family. Though, teenage boys (ages 10-18) may help their mothers with tasks such as fetching water and firewood or looking after the youngest.

Table 1: Distribution of non-productive activities of a household with man and woman in partnership

Type of activity	Activity	Women	Men
Reproductive	Fetching water	x	
	Collecting firewood	x	
	Food (Purchase, preparation of food...)	x	
	Childcare (bathing, feeding, sitting)	x	
	Care for the sick family members	x	
	Household chores	x	
Community-based	Village maintenance	x	x
	Conflict resolution	x	x

Moreover, the study found that the distribution of the workload between men and women in cocoa production also depends on marital status and the status of the farmer, i.e. whether he or she is married or single or whether he or she is a farm labourer or the owner of the cocoa farm.

- Single men take on almost all the activities except for some activities such as shelling, for which they usually seek help from friends or acquaintances.
- Single or widowed women share the tasks of installing a cocoa plantation with (male) farm labourers who are paid on an occasional basis. When the cocoa plot goes into production, all work which is considered men's work is given to labourers except the commercialization of the cocoa.
- Women living in a partnership with a man including married women who have their own cocoa plots (usually on their parents' plots), will generally entrust harvest related activities to paid farm labourers.

### 3- Decision making in cocoa farmer households

Decision-making within the household is generally done by men in consultation with women. In some households the man also decides on how to use the income resulting from the wife's agricultural activities. Social and ethnic context, age and the contribution to household expenses influence the women's participation in decision-making within the household.

Women reported that nowadays they sometimes feel pressure and stress related to changes in their evolving responsibilities within the household. They increasingly contribute to household expenses, such as those related to children, schooling, health, or house maintenance, which used to be the sole responsibility of men. These financial burdens lead them to favour small non-agricultural activities that enable them to make a financial gain in the short term and are more flexible.

At the level of community activities, although many activities are left to young (male) people, there are still enormous challenges to be met in order to achieve full gender equality as, apart from physical activities, women do not yet have decision-making power over the implementation of most of these activities and control over resources. Even for women's group activities (within the village or the farmer organization), it was mentioned during the interviews that the agreement of the husband is required beforehand, or when the woman is widowed or single, the membership of an uncle or head of the large family.

### 4- Women's membership in farmer organizations and participation in trainings

Women, who have their own cocoa plots and are married, are members of the farmer organization in the same capacity as men. Though their participation is limited, as seen in a comment made by a male farmer in the region of Abengourou:

*“Most of the time we ask our women (...) to watch the children or to clean the food crop plots, so they don't have a lot of time. And for the project activities, many of us ask our wives to stay for domestic work and that if we attend the training, we will come and share what we have learnt with our wives since we work together with our wives”.*

An insight of a female farmer in Aboisso reinforces:

*“The problem we have with training is that we do everything at home, we have no one to help us with the household chores and our small plots of food crops. Often, our husbands won't let us work in our own plots until we finish the work they request from us. The only days when we are a little free are market days or on the days for our social activities, thus many women use this time for their own activities”.*

The study showed that women do not have free time during most days. However, according to them, there are days of the week where they are free from cocoa activities, usually Wednesdays and Fridays. These days can be used for project activities with women. In addition, women have more

free time during the dry season, particularly from January to early April to participate in trainings as there are less agricultural activities to carry out.

## **5- Commercialization of food and vegetable crops**

As stated above, men are fully in charge of cocoa commercialization. However, women are in charge of the commercialization of food crops.

Women's low financial resources in combination with the bad states of the roads makes transport and access to markets difficult. Additionally, there is some competitive pressure in the commercialization of non-transformed products, since all women produce the same or similar products. As a result, they do not benefit much from food and vegetable production. These are reasons for women to engage more in non-agricultural activities.

Although women expressed great satisfaction with the diversification activities of PRO-PLANTEURS, they find it difficult to balance their roles, work and daily time in order to participate in them. In conclusion, women have the need for more support regarding commercialization.

## **Recommendations for improving the participation of female farmers in Abengourou, Aboisso and Agboville in activities promoted by PRO-PLANTEURS**

In the three regions covered by PRO-PLANTEURS, equality between men and women is still far from being achieved, due to the socio-cultural burdens that attribute a domestic role to women and insist that domestic and household work is part of a woman's obligations in the home.

Four main factors influencing women's participation in the project activities of PRO-PLANTEURS are identified. These are:

- Women's responsibility towards the family in terms of domestic work and to produce and provide food for subsistence (low pay and high time-intensity), thus, low availability of time for additional activities
- Insufficient outreach of farmer organizations to female members
- Limited access of women to land for cocoa production and other productive resources
- Mismatching of training schedules with female attendance possibilities and long waiting times (delays) of trainers due to logistical difficulties (bad state of the roads)

Women's participation in training sessions is strongly affected by several factors. The gender division of labour is one of the greatest obstacles to women's participation in training and capacity building activities. It must therefore be taken into account in order to improve the status of women and their participation in PRO-PLANTEURS project activities. The overall strategy to increase women's participation should aim to reduce or eliminate the effects of these main factors, among others:

- Improve communication from farmer organizations to women and engage farmer organizations in the practical organisation of training courses with a gender strategy
- Adapt trainings to time availability of female participants: Work with trainers based in the community to reduce delays and waiting time of women; Adapt training schedules to fit women's time availability (for example early in the morning between 8:00 and 10:00 am or on Sunday afternoon)
- Increase motivation of women to attend including additional smaller trainings in topics they are interested in (like improvement of market access, finance access, etc)

- Increase women's autonomy through activities such as the formalisation of informal women's groups, including Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA'S) and functional alphabetisation
- Increase men's participation in domestic work, e.g. by gender sensitization programs (with women and men)

When looking at the regional specificities, some recommendations were the following:

- Include an approach to motivate especially young women in Abengourou to participate. Trainings should not be restricted to production but should include transformation and marketing of vegetables/foods which are already produced in high quantities like tomato.
- The strategy for Aboisso and Agboville should include sensitisations on. Because of their proximity to Abidjan, these regions have benefited from major projects. As a result, young people and women are more oriented towards commercial activities and wage employment. In addition, the difficulties of access to land mean that training related to agricultural production is of little interest to young people and women. The project should therefore give priority to training in aquaculture and animal husbandry in view of the watercourses.

Annex : Breakdown of activities of men and women in cocoa production

Production stage	Activities	Tasks	Who realizes the task	
			Women	men
Creation of a new plantation	Establishment of new nursery	Construction of the shadehouse		X
		Filling of plastic bags	X	X
		Sowing of cocoa beans	X	X
		Water transport for irrigation	X	
		Irrigation/Watering	X	
		Pesticide application	X	X
		Clearing the field		X
		Burning of the cleared area		X
		Weeding	X	X
		Transport of seedlings	X	
		Staking		X
		Digging for the planting of seedlings		X
Harvest	Planting of seedlings	Planting		X
		Planting of plantain and other food crop	X	
		Maintenance (cleaning) of the new field	X	
		Phytosanitary treatment of the new field		X
		Sanitary maintenance of plants		X
		Phytosanitary treatment of the plantation in production		X
		Cleaning of the plantation in production		X
		Picking the cocoa pods		X
		Collecting the cocoa pods	X	
		Grouping the piles of pods	X	
		Opening of pods		X
		Food/water provision for workforce	X	
Post-harvest	Marketing	Transport of fresh beans to fermentation station	X	
		Preparation of fermentation site		X
		Brewing and separation of beans from the placenta	X	X
		Transport of the fermented beans to the drying site	X	X
		Spreading on the rack		X
		Brewing	X	X
		Surveillance of beans	X	X
		Sorting of beans	X	X
		Bagging of dried beans		X
		Transport of dried beans to storage		X
		Sale of dried beans		X
		Receipt of income		X