



Policy Brief

ISSUES CONFRONTING THE YOUTH IN COCOA GROWING AREAS

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1.0 CONTEXT

Agriculture is imperative to the success of every developing country and is an integral sector in the economy of the most developing countries in the world. In Sub Saharan Africa, it accounts for 25% – 40% of total Gross Domestic Product, although this share has been declining over the past decade (AGRA, 2013). For a country like Ghana, cocoa production is a major contributor to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but ironically persons involved in the sector are located in the hinterlands and these communities are plagued with a myriad of challenges.

2.0 PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Primary data solicited across five cocoa districts indicate that in most cocoa communities, access to basic social services is a huge problem and, principally, the youth are faced with these challenges. Cocoa farming, although has a wide range of people involved, attracts limited investment and this has ultimately hindered the development of the cocoa growing communities. Participation in agriculture by the youth is very minimal. Though the youth have desirable qualities that can promote agriculture, most of them have strong apathy toward it and this has resulted in mass unemployment and lack of sustainable livelihood among youth.

There is limited control of resources or products by the youth even though farming is profitable. Resources such as capital and land and products from farming are not in the control of the youth and as such do not motivate and attract them to agriculture and the profits thereof.

Similarly, inadequate access to quality education, and the often the lack of opportunities and resources are glaring problems facing the youth. To this end, there is little or no access to particularly, practical sustainability avenues that are directly relevant to their lives.

Migration pressures and the search for better sources of livelihood in the cities are predominant in cocoa growing areas. Consultations with community members reveal that, the youth in cocoa growing areas are forced to migrate to cities as there is often times the lack of incentives, profitable economic opportunities and attractive environments in their communities. This could further be attributed to poor policies coupled with poor performance of the sector itself, which, in turn, leads to the youth's disinterest in the agriculture sector despite its available opportunities.

The absence of mentorship schemes is key among the issues confronting the youth in cocoa growing areas. There is a paradigm shift from the traditional kinship structure that provides nurturance, safe places and mentors young people to be socially, emotionally, ethically, physically and academically competent. With the inability of the traditional family system to act as the agent for the transmission and renewal of socio-cultural values the erosion of traditional youth development systems becomes inevitable.

Lack of rural credit, weak profitability of the sector and capacity constraints are perceived to be the factors which hinder youth participation in agricultural activities in rural areas (Akpan, 2010). The youth in cocoa growing areas do not have access to loan and credit facilities which could serve as incentives in going into medium and large scale cocoa farming.

3.0 MONDELEZ INTERNATIONAL COCOA LIFE PROGRAM

The Mondelez International Cocoa Life Program through its intervention has put in measures and implemented project activities aimed at improving and transforming the lives of the youth in five Cocoa Life Districts. These interventions are yielding the desired outcome coupled with tangible impacts and as such the need to strengthen and sustain these interventions through effective policy formulation and interventions (IDEG, Success Story 2016).

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of the under-listed recommendations by policy makers, Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations would significantly advance the effort initiated by Mondelez Cocoa Life International in improving the lives of the youth in cocoa growing areas. The recommendations include:

- a. The need to provide training opportunities for the youth in mechanized farming intended to serve as an incentive to cultivate medium to large scale cocoa farms. Once the youth have the right knowledge and skills, they can turn their land into an abundant paradise full of food and materials, to meet all their own needs and still have a healthy surplus to sell.
- b. An enabling environment should be created, for instance, land ownership arrangements should be restructured in a way that resources such as capital and land and products from farming can also be controlled by the youth.
- c. Mentorship centers should be made available across cocoa growing areas to provide leadership and guidance to the youth in these areas.

5.0 REFERENCES

1. AGRA, (2013) “Africa Agriculture Status Report”
2. Akpan, S.B (2010) “Encouraging Youth Involvement in Agricultural Production and Processing in Nigeria. Policy Note.No.29: International Food Policy Research Institute Washington, D.C