



Solidaridad

COMMUNITY LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMME

PLANTATIONS SOCFINAF GHANA LIMITED (PSG)



Introduction

Plantations Socfinaf Ghana (PSG) Limited, is a wholly owned subsidiary of the SOCFIN Group. The SOCFIN Group is an agro-industrial group of companies headquartered in Luxembourg. The Group is a large-scale producer of palm oil and natural rubber and currently operates in over 10 countries in Asia and Africa. Over the years, the company has been committed to the sustainable exploitation of natural resources in a socially acceptable and an environmentally friendly manner.

In Africa, PSG has been legally registered in Ghana. It has been a business entity under the Ghana Companies' Code since 2012. It acquired the assets of the erstwhile Subri Industrial Plantations Limited (SIPL) in the same year to commence its operations as part of the Ghana's Divestiture Implementation Programme.

PSG conducted an HCV assessment on its land holdings which is a key requirement of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) certification. This exercise was conducted by experts from Proforest led by an experienced and licensed HCV assessor and included relevant discipline specialists. The activity timeline for the HCV assessment spanned across October 2020 to July 2021. The HCV assessment entailed pre-assessment, field assessment, community and stakeholder consultations, data analysis and report drafting.

Data collected covered their physical, environmental, biological and ecological characteristics; social, cultural and economic land use; development trends; land cover classification and major conservation issues within these landscapes. Some efforts have been made by the company to improve upon the living conditions of the communities through provision of social amenities and development interventions including the drilling and repair of boreholes, construction of community centers and roads, among others. Over the years, the company has worked to improve its relationship with the communities.

PSG intends to support communities with additional livelihoods. The project will go a long way to provide the community members with opportunities to create other income sources, which would cause an improvement in their living conditions. The project will be implemented within the 15 communities on whose land operations of PSG are being carried out.

Co-design

To achieve the above objectives, Solidaridad West Africa and PSG adopted a process to co-create a livelihood project together with the communities. The co-creation process involved consulting with the local community members and identifying and refining livelihood options

based on many factors. The co-design process involved the establishment of a participatory process among relevant stakeholders within the community to identify sources of alternative income generation activities and to co-create the implementation with them. This approach will empower community members to take up proposed alternative interventions to create income, reduce poverty and create an improvement in their living conditions. The findings from all community engagement are discussed below.

Phase 1 findings

From the assessment, the following findings were made:

- Issues of pest infestation on their farms and homes were raised as some community members assumed that the operations of PSG were causing it.
- Most of the inhabitants in the affected communities were migrants and had a sharecropping land agreement and other annual rentals.
- About 50% of the selected communities do not have access to electricity which is key to the choice of livelihood programs in these communities especially those dependent on electric power.
- Gari processing is the main additional source of income in the communities with cocoa and oil palm production as the main economic activities.
- The only laws or traditions that restrict some forms of livelihood in the communities are taboo days.
- There is a need for training and capacity building of people in all the communities in areas of women empowerment, financial literacy (including business advisory services), Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), and group formation especially VSLA to boost their financial accessibility.
- Key among the barriers impeding the growth of economic activities or threats to new opportunities are poor market arrangements, lack of start-up or working capital, migration of youth to the urban centers, lack of technical know-how, lack of exposure and poor road network.
- The District Assemblies interviewed have Business Advisory Centers who are willing to partner to implement the project.
- Two private entities (Roland Rice and Narubiz) have been identified as possible opportunities for farmers to go into rice and rubber out-grower schemes respectively.

The comprehensive report has the results from 15 communities on their community characteristics, economic activities and socio-cultural factors that affect livelihood. It also explores the economic opportunities for women and youth and economic livelihoods derived from the forest (NTFPs). Lastly, it highlights the proposed additional livelihood options and available resources to facilitate this.

Phase 2 findings

The second phase of the project focused on selecting three priority livelihood ventures for each beneficiary community. Community members were engaged through focus group discussions to achieve this. After deliberations with participants, three livelihood ventures were selected from the previously proposed livelihood options. Also, the implementation approach for each of the three selected livelihoods was agreed on.

Project Approach and Strategies

The PSG project will run for a period of 4 years. After this period, the project will be reviewed and redesigned with the community to further improve its impact. The approach for this project is detailed in the theory of change below.

Theory of Change

The PSG Livelihood Project seeks to address and improve community resource governance in the selected communities by making beneficiaries economically. To obtain income improvements among beneficiaries, they will be provided with training, technical and resource support for livelihood setup, and intensive coaching. Each of these activities is briefly discussed.

Training - The beneficiaries will be equipped with training to build thriving businesses. Training would cover skillset development in areas of financial literacy, VSLA setup and operation, record-keeping, technical knowledge on livelihoods, entrepreneurship and business management. To boost the personal development and overall wellbeing of beneficiaries, they would be given additional training on gender, sexual reproductive health and hygiene. The men will be the primary beneficiaries of gender training to particularly allow their wives and daughters to participate in the livelihood project for the general good of their homes in terms of increased income, standards of living and self-reliance. This will decrease the number of dependents each man has to cater to and reduce the pressure of

being the sole breadwinner of the family. The women and youth will be the primary beneficiaries of the sexual reproductive health training. All and sundry will be beneficiaries of the hygiene training.

Technical and resource support for livelihood setup - The beneficiaries will be provided with the technical assistance required for their livelihood setup. They would also be given resource support in the form of starter packs to reduce their capital expenditure for their livelihood setups. A revolving fund will be created to finance the operations of the project, including the procurement and distribution of starter packs. As a monitoring mechanism, the starter packs will be distributed through the VSLAs to beneficiaries. Hence all beneficiaries must be VSLA members. The starter packs will be loaned to the beneficiaries for an agreed period. After this period, they would pay back their loans to the VSLAs at a reduced interest rate. The money remains with the VSLA.

Mentoring and Coaching - The beneficiaries will have access to mentorship and coaching directed towards business incubation and market access to help them to successfully develop their livelihoods.

Key performance indicators:

Activities	KPIs
Training	Number of individuals trained
Livelihood setup	Number of livelihood setups Number of individuals with improved incomes
Mentoring and coaching	Number of individuals coached Number of individuals adopting coaching recommendations

Capacity building

Capacity building is important for the development of the potential of the people in the beneficiary communities to help them become economically resilient. Beneficiaries will be provided with training on financial literacy, VSLA operation, livelihood establishment, access to markets and gender and social inclusion. The purpose of this strategy is to refine and develop the mindset and skill set of beneficiaries. These training sessions would result in a general improvement in their lives since it will help them to create and effectively manage

their various sources of income. Furthermore, women champion groups and youth networks will be created and utilized to increase the engagement of both groups in capacity building programmes. Mentoring and livelihood specific coaching to help beneficiaries start and run their businesses smoothly would be provided.

Starter pack - Livelihood packages

The starter pack will be utilized to support beneficiaries who successfully complete their livelihood training programme(s) to start a business either individually or as a group. The starter pack would include the resources required to start the business. The VSLAs would be used as a channel for distributing starter packs to beneficiaries.

To prevent beneficiaries from mismanaging or redirecting funds allocated to starting their respective businesses, they would be mostly provided with the materials needed to start the business. Thus, minimal cash assistance would be offered. Beneficiaries would also be required to make commitments in various forms such as land and infrastructure to enable the swift implementation of the livelihood options selected.

To create livelihood options that would be economically relevant to the people, it is important to engage the community members and together identify livelihood options for the empowerment of the respective communities. Based on the findings from prior engagements with beneficiaries, the following livelihood packages have been selected for this project.

Poultry Farming

Poultry farming has become an important division in the agricultural sector, providing a significant source of protein-rich food and jobs for the society. Consumption of poultry and poultry related products are mainly fed by imports with current figures of about \$600 million imports reportedly coming into the country annually.

Small-scale meat production (broiler production) within the Daboase enclave provides opportunities for protein supply as well as incomes for those engaged in the production. The focus of the project will be on meat (broiler) production for beneficiaries interested in the option. Technical support on poultry housing, selecting breeds, managing day old chicks, nutrition and medication, biosecurity and disease management, litter management, records keeping, processing and sales will be provided through training, mentoring and coaching to ensure the beneficiaries have full appreciation to sustain the livelihood.

Soap/Pomade Making

Soap is an essential product that supports the removal of sweat and dirt both on our skin and on surfaces. Pomade on the other hand nourishes and repairs dead skin. So many people include either soap and pomade as a regular part of their personal hygiene routine making it a product of high economic demand. This livelihood option will focus on three categories of the soap making process; Beauty, Bathing and Washing.

A lot of women within the communities in Daboase District showed much interest in this livelihood activity. Many shared experiences on how they used local ingredients such as cocoa husk, shea butter, palm kernel oil in the preparation of soap which are sold within their respective localities. The soap making approach takes several forms depending on the purpose of soap use such as for bathing, beauty and washing. This will require specific ingredients for specific purposes.

Vegetable Farming

Vegetable farming involves various approaches and techniques depending on variables such as climatic zones, available resources, market demand, and farmer preferences. Most farmers within the Daboase enclave plant vegetables for domestic use and not on a large-scale basis. These vegetables are usually intercropped with other perennial crops such as cocoa and oil palm. Also, farmers typically rely on natural rainfall for irrigation of vegetable farming.

The following techniques will be adopted in the vegetable farming project which will target the youth who selected this livelihood option. The use of organic matter like compost, manure, and organic pest control methods are practices that will be encouraged in the vegetable farming process. This will not only save cost but will add value to the vegetables produced as compared to the inorganic practices. The best practices to maintain soil fertility and pest management will be factored in the training as this will enhance productivity.

Training Approach:

- A demonstration farm will be established where practical agronomic training will be carried out for beneficiaries to replicate in their respective farms.
- Specific vegetables to be planted include; cabbage, tomato, garden eggs, okra, pepper and carrot on the demonstration farm.
- Local market centers will be scanned based on proximity. Other market sources will be profiled.

Advanced forms of vegetable farming will be recommended for scaling up. This includes;

- Irrigation farming to be adopted to enable farmers produce all year round irrespective of the weather pattern.

Bee Keeping

Beekeeping involves the management and care of bees to produce bee-related products such as honey and beeswax and involves the use of traditional wooden hives made from local materials. This project will use a modernized approach that employs improved hives and equipment to provide better management and higher productivity.

The beneficiaries of this project will be trained to collaborate with local markets and associations in the Daboase enclave. Value addition strategies towards beekeeping will be factored in the training to increase profitability and expand market opportunities. There would be specific approaches and techniques that may vary among beekeepers in different communities depending on available resources and local conditions. Also, effective training on hive management, value addition, financial literacy, record keeping, together with best management practices will be adopted.

Fish Farming

Fish farming plays a significant role in Ghana's agricultural sector, particularly for small-scale farmers. Thus, it is important to utilize the natural resources available for small-scale farmers within the communities in the Daboase District. Although there are several approaches in fish farming, this livelihood option will look at an integrated and recirculating system of fish farming.

The integrated system combines fish farming with other agricultural practices such as poultry, food crops or vegetable farming. For example, fish farming can be integrated with poultry and vegetable farming. This approach helps manage resources, reduce waste, and increase overall farm productivity.

The recirculating systems on the other hand involves the use of tanks, tarpaulin or ponds where water is continuously filtered and recirculated, reducing water consumption and environmental impact. This method requires technical knowledge and initial investment but can offer higher production potential. They are suitable for farmers with limited space or those who want to experiment with fish farming. These approaches will provide options for the small-scale farmers, especially the youth to engage in fish farming according to the available resources, land, and financial capacity.

Advanced forms of fish farming will be recommended for scaling up. These include;

- The hydroponics farming approach - involves the growing of vegetables without soil and using nutrient-rich water solutions to produce vegetables. This approach can be set up in greenhouses or in controlled environments.
- The aquaponics farming approach - involves growing vegetables in water that contains nutrients provided by fish waste. The fish waste acts as a natural fertilizer for the vegetables and the vegetables in turn helps filter the water for the fish.

Oil Palm Out-grower Scheme

The oil palm out-grower scheme in Ghana is designed to involve small-scale farmers in the production and processing of oil palm, thereby contributing to rural development and poverty alleviation. Most of the communities within the Daboase enclave are involved in oil palm farming. However, they are not under any scheme or regulation which promotes best management practices to enhance productivity. This project will support farmers with access to extension services, planting materials and best management practices as it will help the beneficiaries to improve yields and access an equitable market.

The beneficiaries of the out-grower scheme will be grouped and trained on VSLAs to provide access to credit facilities which will enable farmers to secure loans for farm inputs, equipment, and other related expenses. This will help farmers to overcome financial constraints and invest in their oil palm operations.

Grasscutter Farming

Grasscutter rearing is a popular small-scale livestock enterprise in Ghana. These animals are herbivorous rodents and are primarily raised for their meat, which is considered a delicacy in Ghana. This livelihood activity will take the following approaches to ensure beneficiaries appreciate the value addition it brings to them and the communities at large.

The construction of suitable housing and enclosures for raising the grasscutters using locally available materials such as wood and wire mesh is a common practice. They feed on a variety of plants and grasses which are accessible in Daboase enclave. Smallholder farmers under this livelihood option can rear grasscutters by providing them with fresh grasses, green leaves, agricultural by-products such as cassava peels and corn which are common products within their localities. Their reproductive potential is within every 3 months which is very high

and makes them suitable for small-scale farmers in the Daboase enclave. Farmers will be trained on the well-being of the grasscutters as regular observation and monitoring of the animals for signs of diseases or parasites are crucial.

Access to markets are key considerations for the smallholder farmers as they can explore various marketing channels such as their local markets, restaurants, and hotels, to sell grasscutter products to consumers. Value addition will be included in the training as grasscutter can be processed into various products such as smoked meat, sausages, or ground meat, which can potentially attract higher prices. Coaching and mentorship will be provided for beneficiaries on the various aspects of grasscutter farming, including management practices, feeding, reproduction, and marketing.

Smallholder farmers will be empowered to benefit from collaborating and networking with other grasscutter farmers within the Western region. Sharing of experiences, knowledge, and best practices would help overcome challenges and improve the overall success of grasscutter farming in the District.

Mushroom Farming

Mushroom farming is gaining popularity among small-scale farmers in Ghana due to its relatively low startup cost, high yield potential, and nutritional value. Small-scale mushroom farmers typically use locally available materials such as sawdust, agricultural waste (rice straw, corn cobs, banana leaves), and other organic materials for mushroom cultivation. The small-scale farmers to produce mushrooms will be grouped into two categories; the production of spawn into compost bags and the production of cropping for harvesting.

The spawn production serves as the "seed" for mushroom cultivation using different methods, such as grain spawn, sawdust and lime (calcium hydroxide). This group of entrepreneurs will nurse and produce these compost bags at a fee for the farmers who will go into the production of the mushroom. The second category of farmers will buy the compost bags and produce mushrooms for consumption. All the categories of farmers require local resources such as wood to construct environmentally friendly housing to support the production of mushrooms. The two categories of farmers will be trained on best management practices such as pest and disease management, harvest and post-harvest handling as well as capacity building to help farmers acquire the required knowledge and skills to increase their income through improved productivity.

Snail Farming

Snail farming offers opportunities for small-scale farmers to generate income and diversify their farming activities in most communities in Ghana. Daboase enclave is no exception in this livelihood activity. However, farmers venture into this for domestic purposes rather than for commercial ventures. Knowledge-based training on snail housing, feeding, best management practices, species selection, pest and disease management, breeding and reproduction and marketing would be offered to the beneficiaries to enhance the productivity of this livelihood programme.

The housing structures can be made using locally available materials such as wood, bamboo, or netting which are accessible within their respective localities. Because snails are herbivores and feed on a variety of plant materials, farmers will be advised to provide feed consisting of fruits, vegetables, and leaves such as banana, pawpaw, cassava, and cocoyam leaves that are readily available in their localities.

Community-based Interventions

In addition to the development of the individual sources of livelihood, community-based interventions will be implemented. They will be operated purely as community businesses and will exist as community investments. The interventions include (1) gari processing center, (2) soap making centers, (2) bakeries, (1) rural agricultural service center and (1) fish smoking enterprises.

The soap making center package will consist of (7) 100/150-liter mixing tank/big bowls, (5) size 40/50 aluminum pots, (5) soap cutters and (4) soap shapers. The bakery package will include (2) table rollers, (2) cylinders, (5) sets of baking sheets, (2) ovens and (1) bread mixture & roller machine (2in one). The fish smoking center package will comprise (2) double burner cookstoves and (1) smoke house structure. The rural service center will consist of (5) sets of protective clothing (overall, hand gloves, hat, face shield, nose mask, wellington boot), (5) pruners, (5) knapsack sprayers, (5) cutlasses, (1) measuring tape, (1) mist blower, (3) sickles, (5) watering cans, (2) wheelbarrows, (5) head pans, (3) shovels, (2) pick-axes and (5) garden forks.

The selected interventions are the priority areas selected by most of the communities. Each of these interventions will be developed in a selected community based on factors such as the community's access to electricity. These interventions will be developed in only eight of the beneficiary communities. This will allow for increased exposure, engagement and knowledge transfer among beneficiary communities.

Some of the community-based interventions that will be developed as GESI interventions to empower women in the communities are the fish smoking enterprise and the soap making center since they are female-dominated. Also, the youth showed more interest in the gari processing venture. As such, the development of a gari processing center will empower and improve the livelihoods of the youth in the beneficiary communities. By way of introducing an innovation into this project, the gari processing machinery will be built locally.

Special Interventions

The special interventions of this project are primarily geared towards improving gender and social inclusion in the beneficiary communities. The selected interventions cater to men, women and children. The intervention, at commencement is limited to (1) barbering salon for the deaf and dumb. The rationale behind these interventions is to provide some livelihood options for community members that have skills in areas outside of food and agriculture. They will also serve as a secondary livelihood venture for others who want to earn an additional income. The playgrounds will be a source of leisure and socialization for the children in these communities.

Improving access to market

To improve the access to markets of all beneficiaries that are running a livelihood venture, these activities will be conducted:

- Educating beneficiaries on how to improve their access to markets through branding, product differentiation, creating market linkages and negotiation.
- Establishing market linkages between beneficiaries and consumers. For instance, soap producers will be linked to hotels, restaurants and guest houses; fish farmers will be linked to fish smokers; and project beneficiaries will be linked to PSG workers.

Social Initiatives

The social initiatives of this project include sports competitions, music classes, dance classes, and quarterly market days. Community stakeholders will organize these activities for the beneficiaries. The combination of these project strategies will contribute to the attainment of the desired project outcomes and impact.

Governance

The livelihood of rural communities largely depends on the health of the forest, so an inclusive management programme of the forest resources should be implemented by local

communities. Natural ecosystems can be sustained when community members understand, have the requisite skills and incentive mechanisms to effectively manage their resources.

A community investment mechanism (Trust fund) will be set up to promote livelihood interventions. The Trust Fund will be the financial resource for the implementation of the project. With this financial resource, technical resources would be procured, technical assistance for beneficiaries would be provided and the community-based interventions and special interventions will be implemented.

The starter packs acquired from the Trust Fund for individual livelihood setups will be distributed to beneficiaries through their VSLAs. The successful implementation of both community-based and special interventions such as the medium-scale gari processing center, soap-making center and dressmaking center will result in a further supply of funds from the revenue accumulated from business operations for other project activities and support.

A PSG Communities' Trust will be formed to govern the project. PSG sits on the Trust as ex-officio and provides resources and advice to the Trust. The Communities' Trust is a committee that will consist of 2 representatives (male and female) from every community. The members of the Trust will meet periodically, usually every quarter, to approve grants and reports, among others. The trust will also be responsible for the formation of the VSLAs through which starter packs will be administered.

The Trust will have an administrative arm made up of a project officer, a trust administrator, and an accountant to manage day to day activities, roll out training, distribute livelihood packages, run and supervise community investments, and provide mentoring, coaching and technical assistance. Administration will also be responsible for receiving applications, shortlisting and registering the beneficiaries of the project.

Budget

The budget is available upon request.