Cocoa farming is viewed as a ‘male’ activity in most countries but in reality it’s the women who do a lot of the work that is critical to productivity and quality of final output. Investing in women’s leadership is therefore a strategic and important business investment for Mondelez International because without women’s leadership at all levels, the Cocoa Life program will not achieve transformative change across the five focus areas: farming, community, livelihoods, youth and environment.

Mondelez International commissioned CARE International to undertake a peer-to-peer learning project to review the current role of women in the cocoa value chain and support Mondelez International’s ambitions of mainstreaming women’s leadership in Cocoa Life to further enable the program to develop and adopt gender-sensitive and transformative approaches.

The assessment found that the Cocoa Life program has been successful at promoting women’s leadership through:

- Effective training for female farmers including Good Agricultural Practices training and Village Savings and Loan Associations training
- Increased women’s membership of Cooperative Societies
- Role modeling women’s leadership through Women Extension Volunteers
- Addressing land ownership for women through sensitization at community level in Ghana and through the Community Development Committees in Côte d’Ivoire
- Systematizing women’s participation and leadership into community-level decision-making bodies
- Driving change and women’s rights in the cocoa value chain through engagement with governments
- The promotion of gender equality through gender dialogues in Cocoa Life communities, gender champions and working with couples
- Enabling women to have greater control over their earnings through the successful implementation of the Village Savings and Loan Association model for financial literacy, financial inclusion and increased resilience of vulnerable groups
To achieve greater impact in strengthening women’s empowerment across the Cocoa Life focus areas, the recommendations proposed for Cocoa Life are:

**Farming**
- Leverage the Community Action Plan process and the Community Development Committees to include higher level advocacy to bring access to land for women onto the national political agenda
- Advocate for actions that will increase the presence of women in cooperative unions at the district level

**Community**
- Review the Women Extension Volunteer mandate and expand it beyond training and mobilization
- Develop a strategy and allocate resources, including advocacy and sensitization campaigns, for ending violence against women
- Identify ways to support women with childcare via government or NGO service providers
- Promote early childhood education
- Incorporate campaigns to promote shared responsibilities for caring work in the home to address women’s time poverty
- Ensure that women’s views of community needs are included through participation and voting/ranking of community priorities

**Livelihoods**
- Undertake further analysis to understand the impact of women’s financial savings and if women have actual and relevant control over household income and expenditure
- More engagement at couple and community level and with men and boys to improve women’s access to financial decisions at home
- Scale up curriculum training methodologies and include content on gender roles and responsibilities at household level
- An assessment examining the health and safety conditions of women workers and implement a plan to improve their working conditions where necessary
- An assessment examining the pay gap between women and men in the cocoa production sector

**Youth**
- Implementing Partners should explore a female mentorship or internship program for young women to promote professional role models and opportunities for professional advancement

Mondeléz International’s investment in mainstreaming women’s leadership in Cocoa Life is having a positive effect on women’s agency. The Cocoa Life program has enabled women to have greater access to and control over productive and financial resources, strengthened their ability to become community leaders and established women as role models in the community, resulting in positive returns to the women and their communities. Cocoa Life has provided structures and processes that enhance the voice and participation of women, providing them with a platform to exercise their agency.

Mondeléz International, Implementing Partners and communities need to continue to work together – fueled by these direct positive experiences and ample academic research on the value of women’s empowerment – to sustain and expand these impacts while continuing to address the ongoing challenges.

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Cocoa Life
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