Project News: Support to Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade in Papua New Guinea (EU-STREIT)

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In this issue:

- FAO supports PNG to adopts innovative survey methods of agricultural activities
- EU supports the UN system to promote sustainable agri-rural development in PNG
- FAO Gender Team engages with key local stakeholders on gender mainstreaming within the EUfunded STREIT Programme
- UN FAO partners with women and youth's Group in East Sepik to roll out cocoa work
- EU-STREIT joins leading women and youth's group to distribute cocoa seedlings to farmers
- EU-STREIT's Programme Steering Committee convened online to review Inception Phase of the Programme
- Mainstreaming gender perspectives into agri-food Value chains under EU-STREIT
- 100 farmers from 20 villages attend first formal 'vanilla cultivation, husbandry and processing training' under EU-STREIT

FAO Supports PNG in Adoption of Innovative Methods to Survey Rural Communities

The capacity building supports the PNG Government in its efforts aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The EU-funded STREIT Programme supported with technical expertise lent by FAO, assists and capacitates the PNG's National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) to designs and implements survey using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) in the greater Sepik Region.

During the recently conducted training for 30 enumerators in Wewak, Valentine Nchinda, FAO International Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist of the programme highlighted the benefits of CAPI, stressing that "it saves a lot of time and provides immediate access to the data for analysis and thereby substantially reduces survey costs."

As per Marjorie Andrew, NARI Program Director and the Survey Coordinator, "Compared to paper-based survey, the data accuracy is actually much improved as CAPI allows for validations during the interview. At the same time, almost real-time

monitoring of the survey progress is possible."

"One important innovation is that CAPI uses Global Positioning System to capture the location of the households and field plots. This means that we can link the data collected to a Geographical Information System as part of the programme's overall monitoring and evaluation system," said Thomas Muenzel, FAO Senior Investment Support Officer who contributed to the design of the survey.

The CAPI capacity developed in the course of the baseline survey by NARI and partners will be very useful, not only during the programme implementation, when more specific surveys will be conducted on agriculture and fisheries in East and West Sepik, but also will be useful for national institutions well beyond EU-STREIT, in support of Government's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

EU Supports the UN System to Promote Sustainable Agri-rural Development in PNG

By Dr. Sun Xuebing, FAO Programme Coordinator, EU-funded STREIT Programme

Thanks to the generous financial support provided by the EU, FAO as the lead UN agency in promoting sustainable agri-rural development across the world, steers the implementation of a major rural development programme in Papua New Guinea to support rural entrepreneurship, investment, and trade (EU-STREIT) in two East and West Sepik provinces.

Focused on increasing sustainable and inclusive economic development of rural areas in the northwestern part of the Country, this EU-funded programme aims to increase the economic returns and opportunities from three value chains of cocoa, vanilla and fishery in the region.

Developed under the umbrella of the 11th European Development Fund, this FAO-led programme works on strengthening and improving the efficiency of value chain enablers factors, including the business environment and supporting sustainable, climate-proof transport energy infrastructure development in the Sepik Region, with focuses on the following areas:

- Increasing sustainable production and inclusiveness of the cocoa value chain;
- Increasing sustainable production and inclusiveness of the vanilla value chain;
- Increasing sustainable production and inclusiveness of fishery value chain (coastal, riverine and aquaculture);
- Establishing conducive policy and regulatory environment for sustainable rural agripreneurs and MSMEs established;
- Strengthening value chain support services and resilient to climate change impacts;



Local farmers in the East Sepik Province participate in FAO EU-STREIT training on low-cost cocoa clone propagation and budding.

- Increasing production of, and access to renewable energy systems;
- Improving climate-proof rural transport infrastructure.

Despite the obstacles created by the COVID-19 pandemic, since commencement of this major venture in late 2019. FAO together with the partner UN agencies including the International Labour Organization, International Telecommunication Union. United **Nations** Capital Development Fund and United Nations Development Programme, successfully established programme in the provinces and the programme succeeded in delivery key activities and benefit to local beneficiaries in target areas directly.

As of 31 December 2020, 9 729 households (estimated 48 645 people) directly benefitted from Cocoa activities, including the distribution of 37 205 cocoa clone seedlings to establish cocoa budwood gardens.

Besides, 158 lead farmers (45 female) received Training of Trainers (ToT) on cocoa budding, and 1 022 farmers were trained on coco and vanilla technologies, and improved production, management and processing practices.

All these achievements delivered by FAO and the UN systemwide partnership in the Sepik Region was made possible thanks to the EU financial contribution that aimed at fostering agricultural production and rural development in the Country.

The support provided by the EU enables the UN to tirelessly directs its efforts to make sure that the farming-dependent rural populations benefit from shared prosperity and contribute to growth and development. It also supports the Country to improve its performance in managing environmental resources and risks emanating from climate change and disasters.

FAO Gender Team Engages with Key Local Stakeholders on Gender Mainstreaming within the EU-funded STREIT Programme

Gender and youth inclusion is a key part of the EU-funded STREIT Programme with women playing a key role in the targeted value chains.

Encouraging youth and recognizing the vital role of women in the development of the Cocoa, Vanilla and Fisheries value chains was the main focus of a meeting between Support to Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade in Papua New Guinea (EU-STREIT) and East Sepik provincial administration and government line agencies in Wewak on 26 January 2021.

The purpose of the meeting was to seek understanding and collaboration in the mainstreaming of gender and youth inclusion under the three value chains of cocoa, vanilla and fisheries being supported by the EU-funded STREIT Programme.

This collaboration will take place through a new Gender Mainstreaming Technical Working Group (GMTWG) that will mainly communicate, coordinate and ensure among stakeholders collaboration including NGO's, donors, community leaders and provincial administration from line ministries and other UN agencies such as UN women. This collaboration is important to help all implementers and stakeholders to understand the programme as well as where women and youth participate actively and assertively under the Cocoa, Vanilla and Fisheries value chains. The group will equally help to provide technical advice and support to key sectors as well as facilitate information sharing.

Also, this core group will be responsible for identifying trainers or coaches for Training of Trainers (ToT), who will be extension officers in the province and district and also at Local-level Government or village level to provide support to communities on the cocoa, vanilla and fisheries value chains.

"These trainers who will henceforth be called coaches, can be anyone that lives in the community such as, farmers, teachers, or just any actor within the value chain who will remain in the community to continue to provide them support after the programme ends," explained EU-STREIT International Gender and Youth Inclusion Specialist Ms. Patu Shang.

During the meeting, the FAO Gender and Youth Inclusion Strategy was reviewed and discussed by the participants.

EU-STREIT used the opportunity to also create a linkage with the provincial administration. The meeting was co-chaired by EU-STREIT and the provincial administration and was also attended by line ministries/ partners and NGOs like East Sepik Council of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) from Kalang. The same is being arranged for West Sepik Province.

"Gender and youth inclusion is a key part of the EU-funded STREIT programme with women playing a key role in the targeted value chains. EU-STREIT and the EU-funded SPOTLIGHT programme on Gender Based Violence will be coordinating closely in the Sepiks" advised Mr. Anthony Bennett, FAO Lead Technical Officer of the programme.

The local agent for EU-funded STREIT Programme, Dr. Deane Woruba, in his remarks explained that EU-STREIT aims to help rural people move away from subsistence to commercial farming agriculture, especially now that cash crops such as vanilla and cocoa are being targeted for improvement.

EU-STREIT's major activities on Gender and Youth Inclusion

- Constant trainings and workshops on raising of awareness among stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries on the important role played by women and youth in the three value chains.
- Conducting focus group discussions with women and men across all three value chains to identify gender-based constraints within value chains as well as possible approaches to remedy the constraints.
- Developing Programme's Gender and Youth Inclusion Strategy based on the consultative meetings with local stakeholders (provincial administration, line ministry officers, NGOs and UN agencies) as well as desk review of main documents on "Gender in Agriculture in Papua New Guinea."
- Establishing Gender Mainstreaming Technical Working Group for the coordination of gender and youth inclusion activities within the Programme as well as other actors in the province.
- Supporting the National Council of Women to select and train women and youth groups in leadership and financial management of micro, small and medium enterprises involved in the three value chains, as well as other income-generating activities.
- Increasing the participation of women at EU-STREIT's trainings by about 40%.

UN FAO Partners with Women and Youth's Group in East Sepik to Roll Out Cocoa Work

The collaboration will enable the development of knowledge and skills in the cocoa value chain that will remain and continue to service the community after the end of the programme.

he Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) leads the implementation of the "Support to Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade in Papua New Guinea (EU-STREIT) Programme. Funded by the European Union (EU), this rural agriculture development programme is engaging the service of a women and youth led group to help advance cocoa value chain in Wosera-Gawi District of East Sepik Province.

The signing of a Letter of Agreement (LoA) between FAO under EU-STREIT and Foundation for Women in Agriculture Development (FOWIAD) Cooperative Society Ltd in Hayfield, Maprik District, on Wednesday, 17 February 2021, paves a way forward for this collaboration for the benefit of smallholder cocoa growers.

Areas of cooperation and activities to be undertaken collaborative under this agreement will see FOWAID handles registration of young cocoa farmers into cluster groups, conducts low-cost clone budding training and GPS mapping of 1 000 cocoa blocks, distributes 100 000 clone seedlings to 2 000 youths (50 per youth) and clone cocoa expansion to one hectare per youth farmer (625 clone cocoa/ha).

This collaboration will enable the development of knowledge and skills in the cocoa value chain that will remain and continue to service the community after the end of the programme.

"FOWIAD unites people to work together. Thank you, EU, FAO and other UN partners, implementing EU-STREIT. When you leave us, your foot print will stay with us," said Mrs. Monica Otto, Executive Director of FOWIAD.

FOWIAD is a leading women in agriculture group in the Sepik giving hope to 2 000 plus members for 20 plus



Left to Right: Mr. Ken Shimizu, Head of FAO Country Office in PNG; Mr. Adrien Mourgues, Deputy Head of Cooperation of EU Delegation to PNG; and Ms. Monica Otto, Executive Director of FOWIAD.

years. The group's membership includes displaced youth, widows and persons with disabilities.

"To engage a NGO is a good strategy to make the project sustainable. 2021 is an implementation year for the programme and we all must work together with FOWIAD to change your lives," said Mr. Adrien Mourgues representing the EU Delegation in PNG at the ceremony.

Mr. Ken Shimizu, the Head of FAO Country Office further explained that 2020 was an inception year and the invasion of COVID-19 also delayed arrival of field experts, but despite these challenges offices were established in Wewak and Vanimo to run a good number of trainings and distribute Cocoa Pod Borer (CPB) tolerant seedlings to thousands of farmers including Women and Youth.

Mr. Ken Shimizu, also encouraged farmers to support EU-STREIT in order

to experience real changes in their lives. "This is your programme. The success of this programme depends on you. Wosera-Gawi people must change yourselves by supporting and taking part in this programme," said Mr. Shimizu

The Head of FAO Country Office also announced that the International Labour Organization, a UN sister organization, will rehabilitate over 300 kilometres of rural road in the Sepiks to improve market access to support smallholder farmers towards agripreneurship.

"In the development of cocoa, vanilla and fish, let us work hand in hand as a family, with the youth ready to take over from us tomorrow - if they are not learning along with their parents, there will be no guarantee for their future," said Ms. Patu Shang, the EU-STREIT International Gender and Youth Inclusion Specialist.

EU-STREIT Joins Leading Women and Youth's Group to Distribute Cocoa Seedlings to Farmers

FAO works hand in hand with local partners to supply quality cocoa seedlings to farmers.

The EU-funded STREIT Programme in collaboration with FOWIAD Cooperative Society Ltd. launched the first distribution of 6 150 cocoa pod borer (CPB) tolerant seedlings to 123 farmers in the hinterland of East Sepik Province.

This partnership follows a LoA signed between FAO under EU-funded STREIT Programme and FOWIAD, a leading women and youth non-government organization (NGO), on 17 February 2021.

FOWIAD for the last 20 plus years has been supporting over 2000 women and youth including widows, single parents and families, to venture into agriculture to support their livelihood.

The 29 female and 94 male recipients of the clonal seedlings are from Jambitangit and Lingu villages in North Wosera LLG.

"We want to say thank you to FOWIAD for bringing FAO under EU-STREIT to support us," said Ward Member and farmer, Smith Takura on behalf of cocoa families who gathered at the FOWIAD nursery site in Hayfield, Maprik to receive 18 varieties of clone seedlings.

Deputy Coordinator of the EU-funded STREIT Programme, Dr. Pavel Burian at the official launching urged the farmers to take part in cocoa work as a serious business for the programme to support them well through FOWIAD.

"The programme will help you to take active part in agriculture as a business and not as a leisure activity. Therefore, we will help people who are able to mobilize themselves so it is important that you put in your own effort to benefit from the programme," says Dr. Burian.

To ensure that no one is left behind, one recipient per household was selected after having benefited from cocoa propagation training. She/he, with the support of their family unit or



EU-STREIT distributes 6 150 cocoa seedlings to farmers in the hinterland of East Sepik Province.

hamlet is expected to propagate their own supply of clonal seedlings. In the process, they will continue to improve on their budding speed and at the same time train at least 10 other farmers, thereby passing on this important live skill for the communities even after the end of the programme.

"The minimum period for seedlings to start bearing fruits is 18 months as long as you (farmers) manage your cocoa blocks to ensure that the seedlings grow well. We also have a package of activities within the agreement signed with FOWIAD, to work closely with you. Implying sustainability in order to serve that we will not leave you behind," explained Dr. Rabi G. Rasaily, Senior Agricultural Officer of the Programme.

Women and Youth who are often ignored or left behind in many agriculture opportunities in the past are now showing keen interest in cocoa farming activities like CPB clone propagation and budding trainings that the programme is rolling out to rural communities in the Sepik.

Budding of cocoa seedlings is the latest innovation in the cocoa value chain to produce CPB tolerant varieties to replace old cocoa trees

which have been infested and destroyed by the CPB pest.

The aspiring women's leader behind FOWIAD is Mrs Monica Otto, who, with the support of her extension officers, were joined by the EU-STREIT team to launch their first supply of CPB tolerant seedlings under the partnership agreement.

"You fathers and husbands are the pillars, centre and soldiers of the family and I call on you to stand behind our mothers and girls, letting them to take the lead in the cocoa value chain development with the support of EU-STREIT PNG," said Mrs Otto.

Mrs. Otto's call was reverberated by the programme's International Gender and Youth Inclusion Specialist, Mrs. Patu Shang who invited the husbands to give their wives, daughters and the youth in general, the opportunity to take a front row in the development of the cocoa value chain so as to guarantee a sustainable future.

"We cannot leave our women and young population behind. We're either walking with them side by side or they are in front while the husbands give the necessary push, because FAO and the EU are conditioning this programme for everyone in the household to benefit," said Ms. Shang.

EU-STREIT's Programme Steering Committee Convened Online to Review Inception Phase of the Programme

The second PSC meeting marks the successful completion of the Inception Phase of the rural agriculture development programme supporting smallholder farmers in the Sepik Region.

The Programme Steering Committee (PSC) overseeing the European Union funded Support to Rural Entrepreneurship, Investment and Trade programme in Papua New Guinea (EU-STREIT), held a virtual zoom conference connecting PSC members and observers from Wewak, Vanimo and Port Moresby, on Monday, 19 April 2021.

This is the second PSC meeting, this time online, marking the successful completion of the Inception Phase of the rural agriculture development programme supporting smallholder farmers engaged in cocoa, vanilla and fisheries value chains in East and West Sepik Provinces. The meeting reviewed the results of the Inception Phase of the Programme (operations and financial) and the proposed Implementation plan and budget for 2021.

The second PSC was co-chaired by Koney Samuel, Secretary, Department of National Planning and Monitoring, and Head of Cooperation of European Union Delegation, Mr Rene Mally.

The Co-chairs acknowledged the success of the FAO and UN Partners in establishing the Programme in the provinces and encouraged the partners to speed up the implementation of outstanding activities to ensure a smooth transition into the Implementation Phase despite the challenged brought about by the COVID -19 Pandemic. The co-chairs requested the EU-STREIT to further promote collaboration effective with government agencies and as far as possible utilize the existing Government

of Papua New Guinea's systems and build their capacities. The Co-chairs encourage EU-STREIT to work closely with the Provincial Administrations so that they are able to engage with local stakeholders more effectively.

The UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Gianluca Rampolla, in his remarks said although year 2020 was marked by the global COVID-19 pandemic, the EU-STREIT team still managed to establish its presence in the Sepiks and set up offices in Wewak and Vanimo. In addition to conducting research and planning, he added, the team rolled out initial interventions, directly supporting first thousands of farmers which include a significant number of women and youth.

Of the activities that were successfully implemented during the inception year, which the PSC discussed, some achievements in terms of outcome and output, are as follows:

- A total of 9 729 households, covering 48 645 people, have directly benefitted from cocoa activities. It includes establishing 92 budwood gardens and distributing 37 205 cocoa clone seedlings.
- 158 lead farmers which includes 45 females have been trained as trainers (ToT) on cocoa budding, and 1 022 farmers, including 160 female and 228 youth, were trained on cocoa and vanilla technologies.
- A partnership agreement has been established with Department of Agriculture and PNG University of Technology on new vanilla disease

investigation, which is undergoing.

- Two Provincial Gender Mainstreaming Technical Working Groups has been respectively formed in East and West Sepik Provinces.
- An assessment has been made for the procurement of healthy vanilla vines to distribute to farmers, to replace disease -affected vines.
- Commencement of the Fisheries value chain study in December 2020 under a LoA between National Fisheries Authority and the STREIT Programme.
- Renovation of the Provincial Fisheries office in Wewak started in August 2020 to ensure quality work environment for fisheries officers and to decrease the fire/occupational hazard in the structure.
- Assessments of fishery resources, fish farming activities, riverine and coastal fishing, fish preservation were also conducted in six districts of East Sepik and two districts of West Sepik.
- To strengthen climate resilient and more efficient value chain enablers, FAO under EU-STREIT collaborated with several local manufacturing companies to explore financing options for a larger investment in West Sepik.
- Selection of some rural roads totaling 200 kms for maintenance was conducted and locals have been trained for initial maintenance activities for six roads totaling 50kms.
- In East Sepik, a renewable Energy scheme survey was completed by United Nations Development Programme contractor.

Mainstreaming Gender Perspectives into Agri-food Value Chains under EU-STREIT

FAO provides local farmers with learning opportunities on gender concepts, gender awareness, and mainstreaming gender perspectives into agri-food value chains.

ensuring that the EU-funded STREIT Programme aligns with family values, was the focus of a 3-day workshop organized by the gender and youth inclusion team.

The training for cocoa, vanilla and fish farming families in Wewak District, pulled together 32 participants (3 women, 12 girls, 14 boys and 3 elderly men) in a mind-boggling 3-day training workshop held from 20 to 22 April 2021, at the Sepik Centre of Hope in Wewak town.

The EU-STREIT being implemented under the leadership of FAO, with an emphasis on local agripreneurs, considers gender and youth inclusion as a critical factor affecting food security, nutrition and household incomes, and in its entirety, affects the sustainable development of agri-food value chains.

Moreover, the prevalence of gender based-violence (GBV) among cocoa/ vanilla/fisheries communities also negatively impacts on efforts to encouraging economic empowerment and gender balance when it comes to decision making by individuals in family settings at the LLG, district and provincial levels.

To address the above issues, topics



EU-STREIT Team conducts workshops on gender mainstreaming in agri-food value chains in the Sepiks.

such as gender concepts, gender awareness, mainstreaming gender perspectives into agri-food value chains, agribusiness group and agri-cooperative creation and group dynamics and issues of gender-based violence within the cocoa, vanilla and fisheries communities were some key training topics.

"We're here to talk about doing business as a family. This is to ensure that the interventions by the FAO and partners under this EU-funded STREIT Programme aligns with the family values which is the key to succeed in smallholder agriculture, agri-business and life in general," explained Ms. Patu Shang, International Gender and

Youth Inclusion Specialist for the programme.

During the training sessions, focus group discussions were held to bring out the gender-based constraints (GBC) in the fisheries and cocoa value chains as an example. The exercise helped both the female and male participants understand how gender roles in a male dominated society like in the Sepiks, imposed bν traditional norms. demarcate responsibilities starting in the household can lead undervaluation οf women's contribution to the value chain, thereby denying the economic value of women and girls to contribute effectively in agriculture work and household income.

The sessions on financial literacy, familiarized participants with basic financial and budgeting concepts like income, expenditure, investment and savings and the importance of maintaining a financial diary starting at the household and farm level. Participants were confident to share their challenges as well as what they learnt at the workshop.

The same trainings will be rolled out to other districts of East and West Sepik Provinces. ■



EU-STREIT provides learning opportunities to promote gender and youth inclusion along the Cocoa, Vanilla and Fisheries value chains in the Sepiks.

100 Farmers from 20 Villages Attend First Formal 'Vanilla Cultivation, Husbandry and Processing Training' under EU-STREIT

FAO trains local farmers, helping return the quality and high price of vanilla that was once enjoyed by thousands of rural families as an alternate source of income.

he EU-funded STREIT Programme continue to reach out to the remote communities in the Sepik for all to benefit equally from cocoa, vanilla and fisheries value chains activities. On 20-23 April 2021, EU-STREIT officers travelled to the Black Water Lake area of the Karawari LLG along the Sepik River, and conducted a successful 4-day 'Vanilla Cultivation, Husbandry and Processing Training' which attracted 100 rural farmers from 20 villages.

The training was held in two sessions, theoretical and practical, focusing on cultivation practices (site selection, space marking and planting) husbandry/management practices (shade control, looping, mulching, pollination) processing/curing practices (killing, drying and packaging). However, the STREIT Programme gives more time on the practical sessions of the training where farmers can actually see hands on demonstrations on all aspects of vanilla production from planting, management to processing/ curing.

During the training, women and youths were encouraged and empowered as well to take lead in the vanilla business.

"I see vanilla has a good value and it's easy to transport. My people can transport it from the village to the market with lesser [transport] cost unlike cocoa." said Tombe Pasu.

Director of Karawari Tropical Vanilla.

Karawari LLG has a population of about 15 000 people and their diet comprise of sago and fish mainly, while cocoa is their traditional source of income, but like other parts of the Sepik, the pod borer pest cut off this lifeline and many ventured into vanilla as an alternative source to support their livelihood. Additionally, the high cost and inconvenience transporting heavy cocoa bags make vanilla an ideal cash crop for these fishing communities. Vanilla cuttings can be distributed easily as well throughout the LLG.

The vanilla trainings conducted by EU-STREIT is pulling together a high interest among Sepik women and youth who are usually left behind in programmes of this nature.

So far a total of 919 farmers have attended six trainings which include demonstration sessions. The trainings were conducted in Wewak, Ambunti-Drekikier, Angoram (East Sepik) and Vanimo (West Sepik) and 375 were women and youth representing a high 41 percent of total participants. The training with introduction of proper tools and equipment to process quality beans for an improved income and livelihood are the first formal learning opportunities under EUfunded STREIT Programme. Trainings



EU-STREIT trains farmers in the Sepiks to improve their agri-business skills and practices.

are conducted in collaboration with Provincial Department of Agriculture and Livestock. Dr. Rabi Rasaily, Senior Agricultural Officer for the Programme says: "Vanilla is a lucrative industry in the Sepik, but unlike other cash crops, the lack or absence of quality control measures and established market linkages resulted in the drastic drop in street buying price per kilogram from K1000 and above in 2018 to between K65 and K100 today. Hence, intervention with these first formal trainings is to help return the quality and high price that was once enjoyed by thousands of rural families as an alternate source of income, apart from cocoa and fisheries, also supported under the programme. In addition, need of the hour is to support Spice Industry Board to provide national guidelines on quality certification systems for all the actors along the vanilla value chain that is accepted by import countries." ■

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