

Result 2 - Forest communities are benefitting from new, sustainable, alternative income-generating activities under CFMAs and contributing to forest protection.

Overview Result 2:

Recognising that the wellbeing of forest communities is essential to forest conservation, SCNL and RSPB significantly expanded the livelihoods component of the GolaMA Project from its original design, more than doubling the original budget allocation. SCNL received funding from CEPF to support this and a large part of the funds originally planned for the carbon feasibility study was reallocated to livelihoods activities with approval from the Steering Committee and the EC. Six livelihoods activities were supported by the GolaMA Project, most identified through consultation with the project communities but some introduced because of success elsewhere - small loans, rainforest-friendly cocoa production, lowland “swamp” rice production, intensive groundnut production, beekeeping, and adult literacy. The livelihoods activities reached a significant portion of the population with the EOP household survey showing that at least one person participated in a GolaMA livelihoods activity in 67% of all households. Participation was noticeably higher (74%) in the Normon Clan where most residents are indigenous to Gola and farmers compared to the Tonglay Clan (60%) where most residents are “strangers” who came to the area to mine or to hunt. Typically, about a third of all households participated in any specific activity. The Partners feel that the overall target of 80% did not fully take into account the high percentage of community members whose primary occupation was mining or other non-agricultural activities and future initiatives will incorporate more non-agricultural income-generating activities.

The small loan programme, managed by the CFOCs/CFMBs with SCNL support, reached 130 women (26 groups of 5 members each) by EOP. 100 of the women (20 groups) completed three rounds of loans, increasing the loan size in each round, with a very impressive 98% repayment rate. The remaining 30 women (6 groups) completed the first round of loans with a 100% repayment rate. Women reported a significant impact on their lives by being able to cover costs such as sending a child to school or paying for food when their husbands could not do so. The interest paid by the women is used by the CFMBs to cover costs for management of the Community Forests. The loan programme continues with the same capital and SCNL received a grant from the UKAID Darwin Initiative to scale up this loan programme and support the CFMBs to put in place “Citizen Conservation Teams” who will patrol and monitor the CFs and carry out environmental education activities. Importantly, they will work with a UK-based investment firm, Finance Earth, who will establish a 1.2 million GBP social/environmental impact fund that will capitalise 12 small loan schemes throughout the Gola Landscape.

320 farmers (261 M, 59 F) participated in 10 cocoa farmer field schools (FFS), with 194 (154 M, 40 F) achieving the minimum attendance required for graduation. 110 families established a lowland rice plot in 11 communal sites (10 families per site) and enjoyed harvests of 100-133 Kg per site, roughly 2-5 times typical harvests of upland rice and a 30% increase over lowland rice planted traditionally. 180 women participated in developing intensive groundnut plantations. This activity was less successful due to problems with rodents in some locations and some women later saying they preferred to plant beans. However, over half the women are continuing with this cash crop. Beekeeping was new to the area and took a few years to catch on but by EOP there were 260 beekeepers in the area, looking after a total of 532 hives.

Adult literacy was a late addition to the livelihoods “package”, included because of feedback from community members and the difficulty we found in supporting participants to develop businesses because of the very low literacy rates in the area. The GolaMA project supported 8 study circles, 6 at

Level 1 and 2 at Level 2. A total of 240 community members (91 M, 149 F) participated and 161 graduated (72 M, 89 F).

For all the agricultural activities (cocoa, rice, groundnuts, beekeeping), SCNL introduced the approach of training and working with ‘lead farmers’. For each activity, those participants with particular interest and aptitude were selected to receive intermediate level training with the idea that they could then help the others in their groups in the absence of project staff. This approach was well received by the participants and feedback from project staff about the impact of the approach was also very positive. The beekeeping lead farmers formed the Beekeeping Association of Gbarpolu County and continue to support other beekeepers and have now even expanded their operations outside of the original GolaMA area.

At the EOP, 56% of respondents said that their wellbeing was “better” or “very better” as compared to before the GolaMA Project. The top answers (all those > 20%) to the question of “how has GolaMA made your life better?” were:

How has GolaMA made your life better?	% of responses
More skills	61%
More knowledge	53%
I know how to grow cocoa	33%
More income	26%
I know how to read and write	24%
I have access to loans	23%
I know how to do beekeeping	22%

Indicators Result 2:

I2.1 By mid-Year 3, project and communities have agreed a suite of Income Generating Activities (IGAs) to develop.

Value: Over achieved. A wider than planned suite of income generating activities was agreed including cocoa production, lowland “swamp” rice production, intensive groundnut production, beekeeping, adult literacy, and small loans.

I2.2 By EOP 80% of target community consider their wellbeing to have increased as a result of project activities.

Value: Largely achieved. 56% of household respondents to the end-of-project household survey said that their household’s wellbeing was “better” or “very better” compared to before the start of the GolaMA project. Interestingly, the corresponding value for Camp Alpha alone, a community that was part of the GolaMA project for only the last 2 ½ years, was 76%. While it is not possible to know for sure, the results suggest that more recent improvements in wellbeing may come to mind more easily. Furthermore, when respondents were asked about specific aspects of their wellbeing, the percentages who reported improvements were much higher. The following table shows the percentages of respondents who reported improvement in specific aspects of their household’s wellbeing:

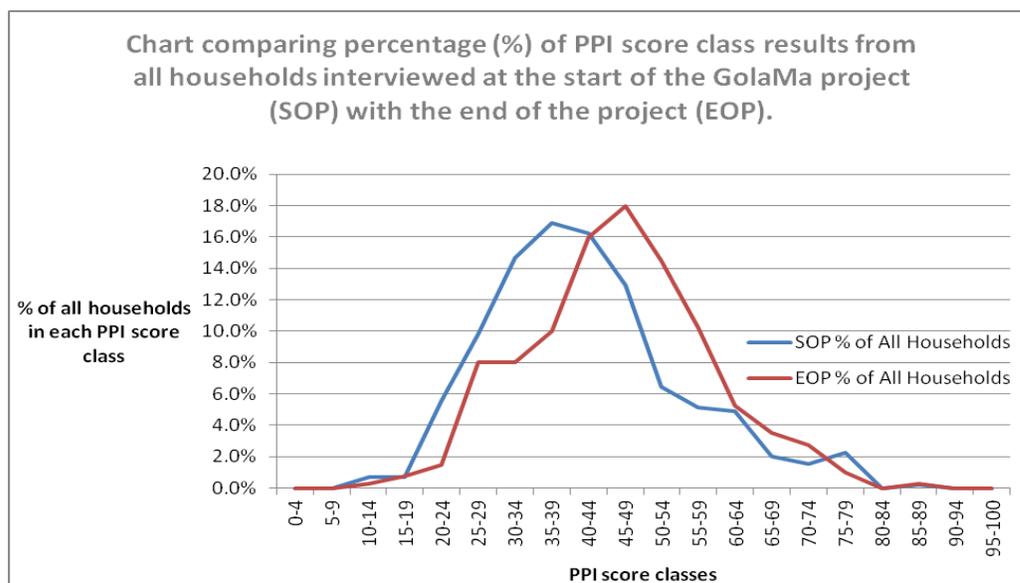
Question	% better small	% better	% very better	Total % who reported improvement
How would you describe the food your	24	52	4	80

household eats today?				
How would you describe the education of the children in your household?	16	30	2	48
How would you describe the house you live in today?	33	40	1	74
How would you describe the health of your household today?	28	45	1	74
How would you describe the income of your household today?	42	27	1	70

Of those who responded that their household’s wellbeing had improved, the following table shows the ways in which respondents said that their wellbeing had improved:

Response	% of total people who answered
Children now going to school	25%
Have more food	55%
Plenty of money	33%
New skills/knowledge	74%
Better health	15%
Access to small loan	1%
SSG activities	0.3%

As described above (see SO3), the Partners also assessed poverty levels in the GolaMA communities at the start of project (SOP) and end of project (EOP). We used the Progress out of Poverty Index (PPI), an index developed by the Grameen Foundation to track poverty levels. A comparison of the distribution of poverty levels at the start and end of project shows a clear decrease in poverty levels over the life of the project, as illustrated in the figure below:



Other than several Ministry of Health activities (e.g. vaccination campaigns), the Action was the only community development initiative in the GolaMA area over the life of the project. Therefore, unlike the common situation where it is difficult to attribute causality to a particular intervention, the results

here show clearly that the Action had a positive impact on the wellbeing of the households of the Tonglay and Normon Clans.