

# GENDER INTEGRATION IN YOUTH-FOCUSED PROGRAMMES



LESSONS FROM THE NEXT  
GENERATION COCOA  
YOUTH PROGRAMME

YOUTH  
POWERED  
**MASO**



# **GENDER INTEGRATION IN YOUTH-FOCUSED PROGRAMMES LESSONS FROM THE NEXT GENERATION COCOA YOUTH PROGRAMME (MASO)**



**Michael Kodom <sup>1</sup> | Nathaniel Amoh Boateng <sup>2</sup> | Emile Mawutor Tsekpo <sup>2</sup>  
Nafisatu Yussif <sup>2</sup> | Celestine Chime <sup>1</sup> | Stephanie Donu-Sarpong <sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> University of Ghana, Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research

<sup>2</sup> Solidaridad West Africa

**Editors: Bossman Owusu | Gloria Kyeremeh | Fanny Nana Ampon**

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## 1.0. Introduction

Gender inequality embedded in customary norms and practices, and unfavorable land tenure systems in many cocoa-growing communities limit the active participation of women in the sector. These pose a major threat to cocoa sustainability, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

The Next Generation Cocoa Youth Programme (MASO) funded by the Mastercard Foundation and implemented by Solidaridad and partners<sup>1</sup>, aims to equip the youth with skills to enable them to engage in cocoa farming and related businesses. It is expected that increasing youth involvement in the cocoa sector also contributes to the sustainability of Ghana's cocoa sector, which is currently driven largely by aging farmers. The programme also contributes to addressing land tenure issues by engaging landowners to streamline tenurial arrangements in favour of young people. MASO also focuses on gender in its programme delivery. The gender component seeks not only to encourage young women and men to venture into cocoa farming but also to educate them on reproductive health and rights.

Solidaridad commissioned a learning survey to understand the extent of gender integration in the programme and how it has affected the lives of young women. The key objectives of the survey were to assess the:

- Effect of MASO training on career growth and income for young women
- Effect of change in income on the economic independence of young women, household food consumption behaviour and capacities and skills of household members
- Change in household gender relations due to the economic engagement of women through MASO

## 2.0. Methodology

The study adopted a mixed-method approach to gather data across all the programme districts in six regions<sup>2</sup>. A structured questionnaire was used to randomly collect data from 2,757 MASO beneficiaries and their household members. These comprised 1,137 female and 676 male beneficiaries as well as 944 household members of the female beneficiaries. In-depth interviews were conducted with 28 females to collect qualitative information. Descriptive statistical tools such as tables, graphs, charts, thematic analysis and inferential statistical analysis (t-test) were used in analysing and presenting the survey results.

## 3.0. Key Findings

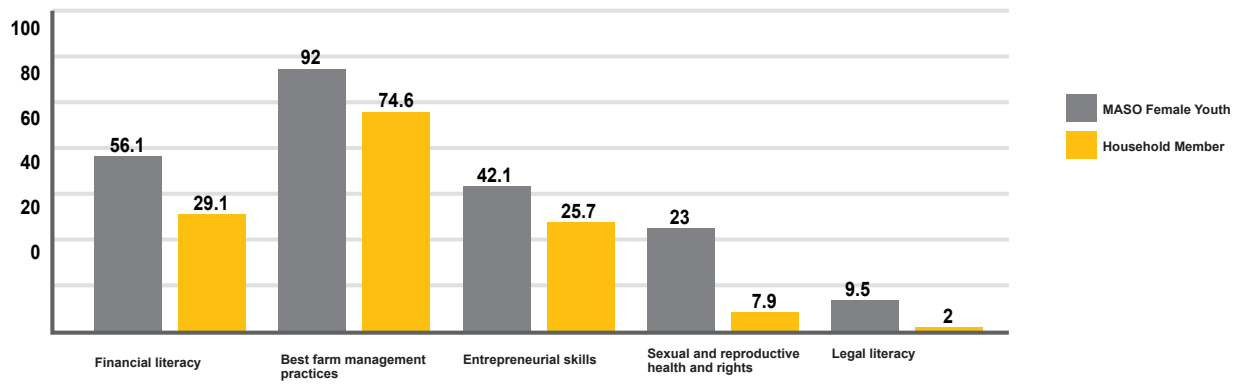
### 3.1. Effect of MASO training on career growth, income and savings of young women

The survey found that the MASO programme has supported many female youth to acquire knowledge and skills on best farm management practices, financial literacy, entrepreneurship and sexual reproductive health, as shown in Figure 1.

<sup>1</sup> Opportunity International Savings and Loans (OISL), Fidelity Bank, Aflatoun, Ashesi University and COCOBOD.

<sup>2</sup> The MASO programme is implemented in the Volta, Oti, Central, Ashanti, Ahafo and Western North regions of Ghana.

**Figure 1: New knowledge and skills acquired after joining MASO**



The following statements by two of our beneficiaries illustrates the above.

“

Before the MASO intervention, I used to burn the weeds on my farm during land preparation. But now I practise mulching to improve soil fertility as well as lining and pegging to optimise land use. Aside from this, I now keep records of activities in my one and half acre cocoa farm. Through this, I am able to track my gains and losses at the end of the year.

[Nana Ama Saahene, Sui, Sefwi Asawinso]

“

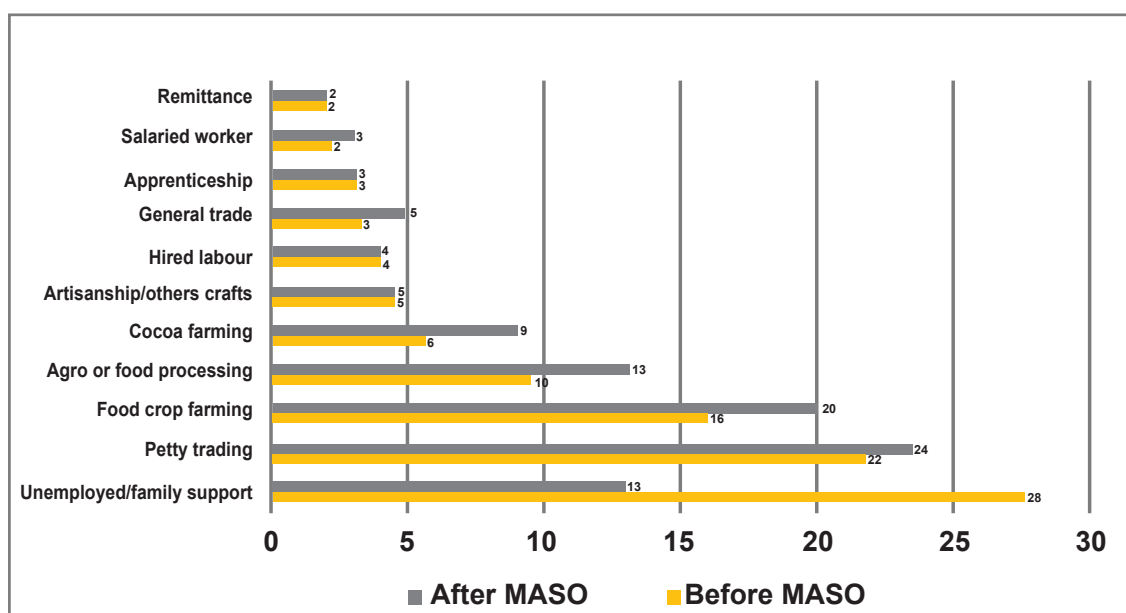
Before MASO, I was jobless and sitting idle at home. After joining MASO, I acquired the knowledge to start a business and earn a living. I started saving out of my earnings and reduced my expenses. I have seen massive improvement in my income.

(Anastasia Yeboah, Nyankomago, Kasapin, B/A)

The skills and knowledge given to the youth have helped to improve young women’s access to employment opportunities. Notable among these is the increase in women who are involved in petty trading, food crop farming, and cocoa farming as shown in Figure 2.

Unemployment rate in cocoa growing communities has also reduced drastically from 28% to 13% among female youth.

Figure 2: Major income sources before and after MASO



The improved employment situation has also contributed to an increase in the average annual income of the female youth by GH¢1,321.49 as shown in Table 1. The programme has also improved the savings habit of many young females.

**Table 1: Income and savings before and after MASO**

Variable	Income		Savings	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Err.
Income after MASO	4,546.64	9,904.57	1,048.96	2304.02
Income before MASO	3,225.15	7,887.57	615.17	1991.68
Difference	1,321.49	1,1656.2	433.79	2077.85
Pr(T < t)	0.0014		0.0000	

### 3.2. Effect of change in income on young women’s economic independence, household food consumption behaviour and capacities and skills of household members

#### 3.2.1. Financial independence before and after MASO

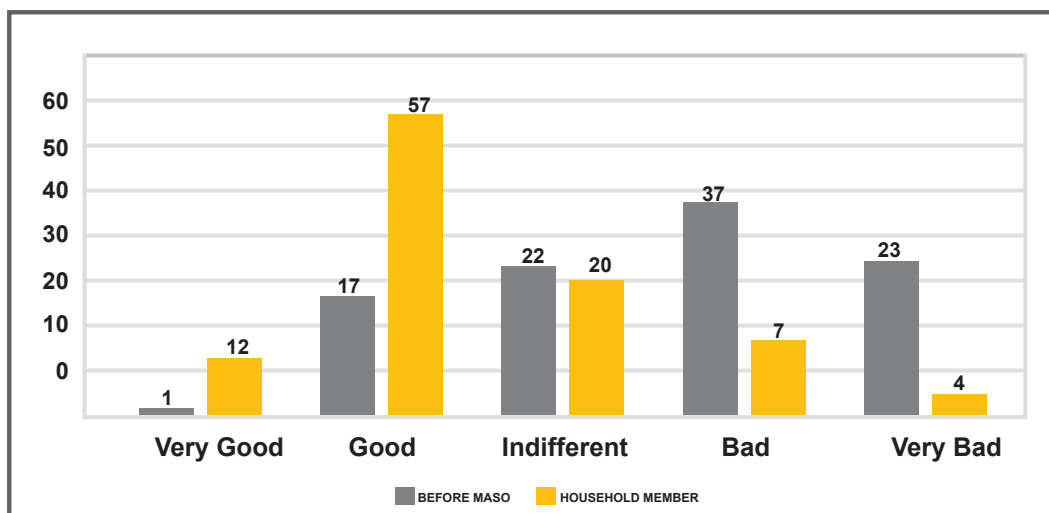
Before the MASO intervention, 60% of the female beneficiaries described their financial situation as dire (bad and very bad). Thus, they relied heavily on others for assistance. However, after four years of implementing MASO, this situation has improved by 49% as shown in Figure 3.

“

Previously, I struggled to pay my utility bills and child support. I depended on my mother for virtually everything. I now own a business with support from MASO and I can support my child’s education, pay my utility bills and provide healthy meals for myself and family without any assistance.

(Doris Boateng, Nkrankese, New Edubease).

**Figure 3: Financial independence**

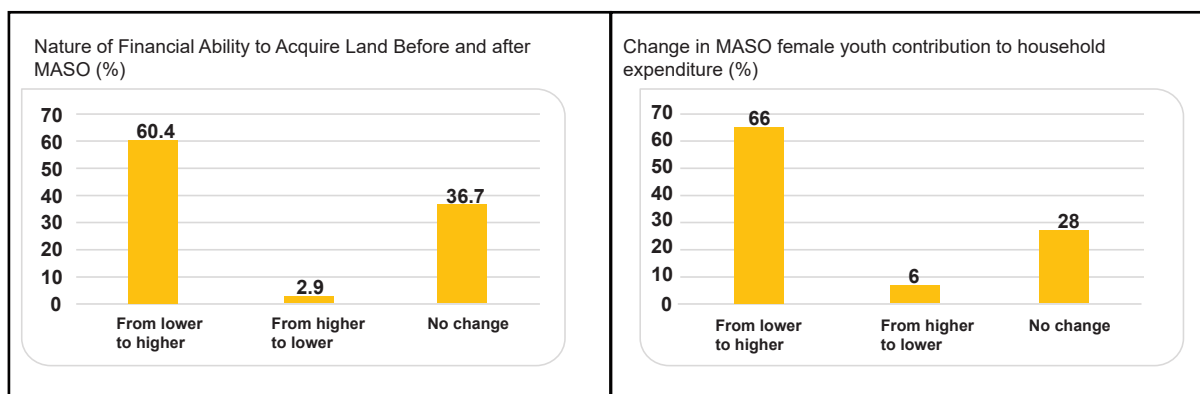


### 3.2.2. Effect of training on young women’s economic independence.

The employment opportunities coupled with the financial management skills the females acquired have made them more financially independent than they used to be (73%). As a result, they are now able to acquire land and contribute to household expenditure as depicted in Figure 4 below.

Many of them are increasingly contributing to the education of their children and other household members. Some have succeeded in transferring the knowledge and skills acquired from the MASO programme to some members of their communities.

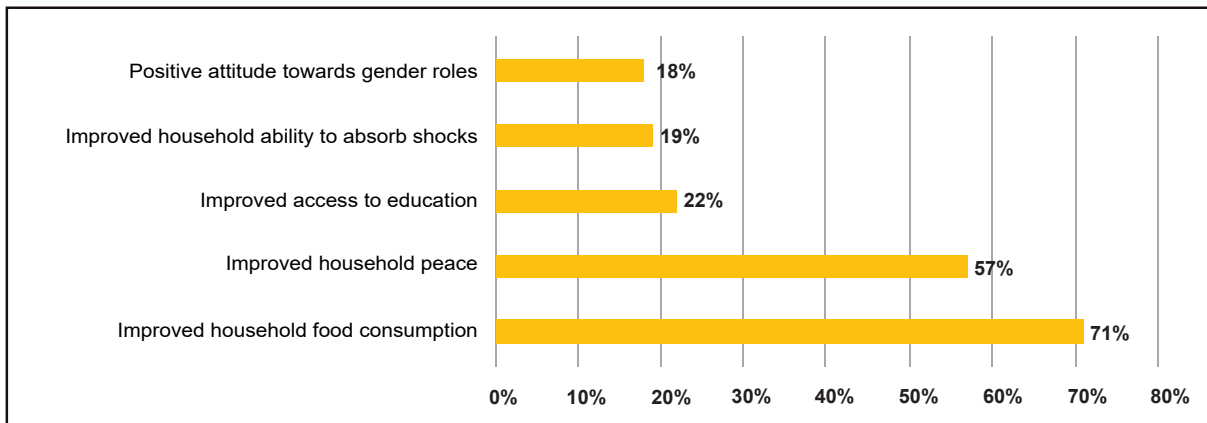
**Figure 4: Financial ability to acquire lands and contribution to household consumption**



The increase in MASO female economic activity has also improved household food consumption (as reported by 71% of the respondents) and household peace (as reported by 57% of the respondents), children’s access to school and household’s ability to absorb shocks (refer to figure 5 below).



**Figure 5: Effect of change in economic activities on households**

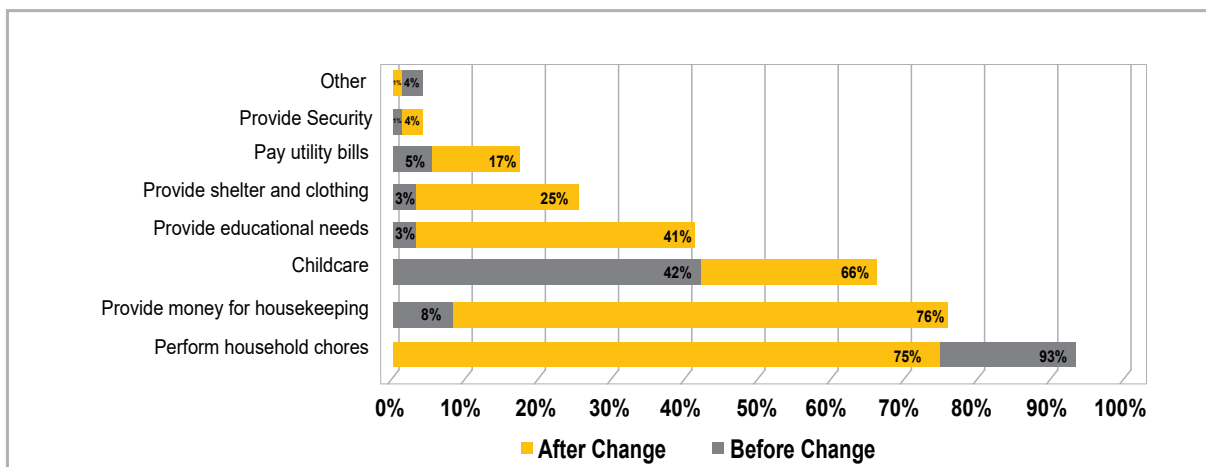


### 3.3. Change in household gender relations due to MASO women economic engagement

#### 3.3.1. Change in household gender relations

Before the intervention by MASO, young women were mainly involved in unpaid care work. However, this situation has improved with more females now involved in economic activities. This has enhanced the welfare of their households as shown in Figure 6.

**Figure 6: Household roles performed before and after the change in economic activity**



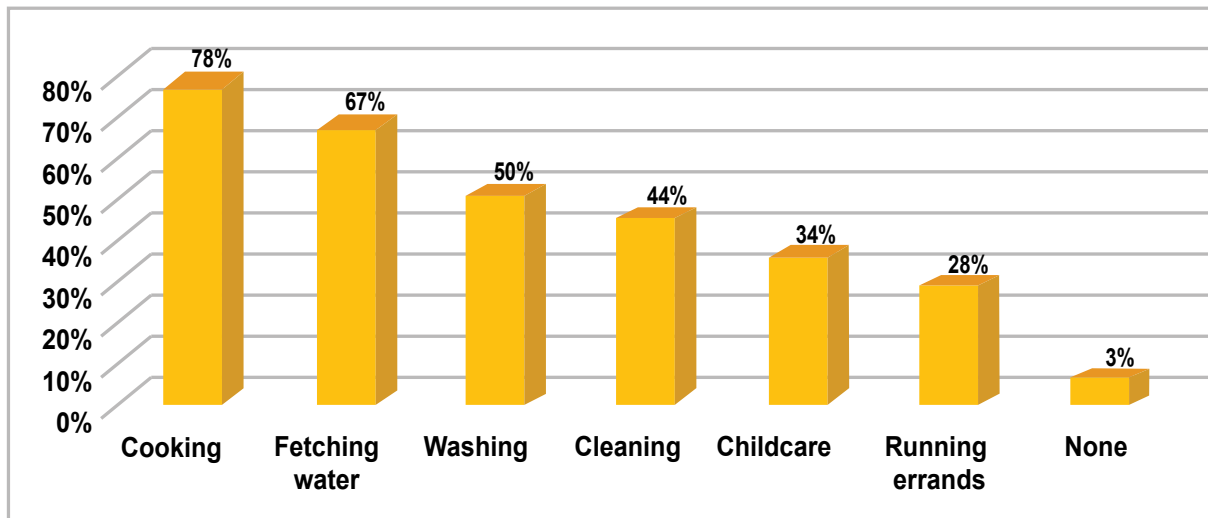




### 3.3.2 Household chores performed by MASO males

Not only is the MASO programme empowering women economically, it is also transforming the attitude of young male beneficiaries. Males are now involved in roles typically reserved for females such as cooking, fetching water for household use, washing, cleaning and childcare as indicated in Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Household chores performed by MASO males**



#### 4.0. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has revealed that the conscious integration of gender in the MASO programme has resulted in the empowerment of more young women in cocoa producing communities. This has happened largely through the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. It is also contributing to a transformation in entrenched gender relations in the communities.

Women are now actively pursuing career goals in cocoa and this has contributed to the reduction of unemployment, improved incomes as well as savings. Many young women are now able to contribute to their household nutrition and wellbeing.

Although gender relations are improving through the programme, much effort is still needed to make society appreciate the need to support and sustain women empowerment. Granted that this will involve more time and effort to achieve, the outcome would be worth the investment.

MASO is implemented by five consortium partners made up of Solidaridad, Aflatuon, Ashesi University, Fidelity Bank, Opportunity International Savings and Loans and the Ghana Cocoa Board.

## ABOUT MASO

The Next Generation Cocoa Youth Programme (MASO), managed by a consortium of partners made up of Aflatoun, Ashesi University, Fidelity Bank, Opportunity International Savings and Loans, COCOBOD and Solidaridad West Africa was launched in 2015. Its main aim is to train and mentor young people between the ages of 18-25 in cocoa-growing communities to take up profit-making ventures in order to promote sustainable production of cocoa, foster financial independence and improve their livelihoods.

The MASO programme encompasses three components:

- (1) The Agro Academy focuses on equipping and building the capacity of young cocoa farmers to produce under environmentally, socially and financially sustainable conditions.
- (2) The Business Academy provides training and mentoring to the youth to provide them with entrepreneurial skills and financial literacy to enable them establish and scale up cocoa-related ventures.
- (3) The MASO Youth Network, (also known as MASO Connect) - an alumni network of youth beneficiaries from both the MASO Agro Academy and MASO Business Academy. The network provides a platform for young people to connect, share ideas and best practices.

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Contact

Solidaridad West Africa

P. O. Box PMB KD 11

Tel. +233 (0) 302 733 125

Email: [ghana@solidaridadnetwork.org](mailto:ghana@solidaridadnetwork.org)

 Masoghana  @masoghana  [www.masogh.org](http://www.masogh.org)

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