

## Bawa Kurubie: Pioneering Change in Ghana's Cocoa Farming Community



*Bawa is not only an enthusiastic supporter of the Digital Green approach, but himself a progressive Cocoa farmer*

As the world's second largest producer of cocoa, Ghana's primarily agrarian economy depends largely on cocoa production. Cocoa is the country's highest source of revenue from the agricultural sector and is the main source of livelihood for the majority of its rural population, especially in the Ashanti region.

To educate cocoa farmers on best farming practices as well as assist them in overcoming diseases and other challenges, the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) has developed a cocoa extension system, which uses the services of specially trained community extension agents (CEAs), who reach

out to and educate communities on good agricultural practices (GAPs). The CEAs act primarily as communication agents, but their responsibilities also include supporting farmers in accessing agricultural inputs, as well as providing them with non-agricultural information such as immunization schedules. Their outreach efforts are accomplished primarily through the formation of farmer groups, who are mentored for a period of three years, at the end of which they are ready to manage their cocoa farms independently. Each group has a lead cocoa farmer (LCF), who serves as the team lead after the CEAs have moved on to other communities following the three-year training period.

Digital Green partnered with COCOBOD in 2012 to test the efficacy of its participatory community video-based approach. Prior to this collaboration, the CEAs relied on live demonstrations and paper drawings to educate farmers on good cocoa farming practices. Now, however, the CEAs have access to a repository of videos that can aid their extension work. One such CEA, Bawa Kurubie, echoes this assertion, saying, "I initially doubted the Digital Green approach for GAP training, [but] I can now say with confidence that the videos have really helped to make my work simpler. I now have to do less talking and explaining, and instead have increased practical field-based demonstrations. The videos have also facilitated effective discussions at training sessions, which was previously not the case."

Bawa, who has been a CEA for about two years, has been instrumental in implementing the Digital Green approach in Ghana, and has facilitated the production and dissemination of several videos. Being a cocoa farmer himself gives him a distinct edge over

other CEAs in communicating with other farmers, as does his natural ease in facilitation and communication. In addition, he holds a diploma in General Agriculture, which gives him a scientific knowledge base that aids his work. As a CEA in New Akruofuom, a community located in the New Edubiase District of the Ashanti region of Ghana, Bawa has been reaching out to farmers using visual diagrams, in-person demonstrations and verbal accounts. In late 2012, Bawa was selected to be part of a group that was trained on the Digital Green video production, facilitation and data entry processes. This training session not only gave him video production and leadership skills, but also boosted his self-confidence.

As a CEA, Bawa has first-hand experience of the approach and has witnessed the positive feedback and enthusiasm from the farmers in his groups. Based on the increased rate of adoption after the videos were introduced, Bawa has championed the approach in his district, even convincing senior leadership of COCOBOD of its potential.





Exposure to Digital Green's data management technology has given Bawa a sense of empowerment, as he can now track progress of his extension efforts and plan follow-ups. In addition, the use of this technology has given him confidence to go online in search of information. This has been of tremendous benefit to him, as previously he had shied away from the internet.

For Bawa, the use of local actors and languages, the brevity and succinctness of the videos, and the timeliness of the subject matter render this approach a success. He does feel that higher resolution projectors to screen the videos and a more streamlined data collection process will enhance the impact of the approach.

Bawa's immediate supervisor in COCOBOD, Madam Beatrice, endorses using community-sourced videos as a medium to disseminate information, stating, "earlier, we were using modules and numerous other methods for extension, but these didn't yield enough results. However, with the introduction of videos, farmers have live access to visual demonstrations of the practices. Since farmers here feel that seeing is believing, this has been far more effective."

For Bawa, the benefits of using videos to share information stretch far beyond his regular extension work with the COCOBOD. So much so that at his recent birthday celebrations, he utilized his newly acquired skills to produce a video of the celebrations and proudly screened it to his family and friends.



*Cocoa beans slowly ripen on the tree*