

Session Nine: Gender and Agricultural Value Chains

Case Study - Commercial Crops

The government of a rich, cacao-producing country wanted to increase its exports to boost the national economy. With the help of a major international donor, access roads were built through 80% of the rural areas so cacao farmers could easily transport their crops to the marketing centers. Access to roads stimulated cacao production, and the incomes of the farmers increased measurably.

In this region, women do most of the agricultural work, both on cash crops and on family foodstuffs. The men are responsible for decisions concerning what to plant where and for the marketing of the crops. The men belong to cash crop cooperatives that collect the cacao, sell it to international marketing boards and then distribute the revenue back to the men according to the amount brought in to market. Women work long, hard hours in the fields using hand tools. They are responsible for feeding the family, making sure children eligible for school are enrolled and participate, and for all family health care needs. Before the cacao boom, a few women had small stands to sell basic items, such as soap, salt and oil, to the community members. With the boom, everyone is involved with producing more and more cacao.