Success Stories

Sustainable Cocoa Farming: Changing Lives and Building Communities
You are about to read the latest collection of success stories from Swisscontact’s Sustainable Cocoa Production Program (SCPP). One of the best ways to continue down the path to sustainable livelihoods is by learning from the experience and wisdom of farmers, SCPP’s beneficiaries.

We have compiled this collection of valuable lessons from men and women in eight different areas in Indonesia. In these pages you will meet, among others, Mursalim, who believes cocoa deserves his full attention; inspiring Nurmiati from Aceh who has become an advocate for better nutrition and a community leader; and Alimin from Soppeng, South Sulawesi, who succeeded in expanding his cocoa farm from one hectare to seven hectares with five cocoa nurseries, producing 250,000 seedlings.

These stories show a glimpse of what can be achieved through committed partnerships and working together. By looking at the project through the eyes of our beneficiaries we learn, grow and are inspired to create greater opportunities in the future.

Happy reading!

Manfred Borer
Country Director Swisscontact Indonesia

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Nurmiati’s (41) husband is a cocoa farmer. In 1990, after marrying in Bireuen, she and her husband moved to Kuala Simpang to run his family’s fishpond business. Nine years later, they took his sons and went back to their hometown in Bireuen. Inspired by the success of their cocoa-growing neighbors, they bought land with savings from their previous business.

Today, Nurmiati is known as a role model for promoting a nutritious diet for better health. She improves her family’s diet and helps others in her village, and lives happily with her husband and their three teenaged children. Many families in her area now have their own vegetable gardens to have access to a variety of fresh nutrient-rich vegetables. Surplus vegetables are sold and have become a source of extra income.

Active in Improving Nutrition
After growing cocoa for four years, Nurmiati’s husband Mr. M. Yusuf Is, took part in a Farmer Field School (FFS) coordinated by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherland and Swisscontact. As a member of a family participating in the FFS, Nurmiati was invited to take part in training on good nutrition practice.

When Nurmiati first joined the training, she had no idea how it would benefit her. The group received education in essential nutrition and behavioral change. The cost-effective approach focused on establishing simple gardens to ensure better nutrition to reduce maternal and child malnutrition, mortality, and morbidity. The program promotes gardens which are sowed with nutrient rich vegetables, such as mustard, watercress, cucumber, spinach, eggplant, and long bean.

Nurmiati was unanimously chosen as the chairperson of a group of mothers called Wanita Tani Mandiri, due to her communication and leadership skills. Under her guidance, the group learned new ways to use vegetables to ensure a balanced diet for their families. Participants are also urged to prepare vegetables right before meals to preserve nutrients. At first it seemed troublesome to cook twice a day, for lunch and dinner. However, having the garden next to the house makes it not only easier to get the vegetables, but it also saves money by not having to purchase them. Now it is no longer seen as a difficult request and the mothers see that their children are healthier.

Better Eating Habits and Additional Income
Nurmiati’s vegetable garden yields fulfill a large proportion of her family’s daily food requirements and helped change her family’s eating habits. “Before we had our own vegetable garden, my family rarely ate vegetables. Now my family is used to eating them and they enjoy the taste of organic vegetables. My family looks healthier, especially my third teenage boy who is having a growth spurt,” said Nurmiati, a mother of three boys of Maulizar (26), Aris Munandar (23) and Sukrizal (14).

From April 2014 to June 2015, Wanita Tani Mandiri harvested the group’s vegetable garden more than twenty-five times and earned IDR 1.5 million from selling the surplus. They have regular traders who buy the produce from the garden and sell it in the local markets. “Many people in our village can also improve their health by eating organic vegetables. I encourage other families in my village to plant their own vegetable gardens by sharing my knowledge,” Nurmiati says with a proud smile.
Over the years, Alimin (42) succeeded in expanding his cocoa farm from only one hectare to seven hectares and five cocoa nurseries, which currently produce 250,000 seedlings. The green nursery gardens are beautiful and provide work for local villagers.

**Becoming a Successful ‘Cocoa-preneur’**

“I was raised in a poor farming family, but my parents had plans for their five children to finish school. I had to go to school ten kilometers on foot every day. After completing high school I left home for Kalimantan to seek my fortunes in the gold business” said Alimin who is married to Kasma (39). He returned after ten years away with three million rupiah in savings. “I spent my savings on one thousand cacao trees,” said Alimin.

Alimin started growing cocoa with no training or information. His first yield was extremely low but he didn’t lose hope. He built his capacity by attending every cocoa farming training available. “I learned about sustainable farming practices in a Farmer Field School (FFS). I realized the mistakes I was making. The following harvests were much larger,” said Alimin. FFS is part of SCPP’s initiative in cooperation with Cargill, Mondelez and Swisscontact.

His farm has now expanded to seven hectares with seven thousand trees. “I manage one hectare while the rest are maintained by five extra workers. I taught them what I learned in SCPP Farmer Field School and trust them like family,” said Alimin. He pays the workers based on revenue sharing 70%: 30%. “In 2015, with one ton of beans from one hectare, I could take care of my own family, with a net profit of IDR 24 million per year,” Alimin explained.

Keep investing

Originally, his cocoa nursery was meant to fulfill only his own needs, but now Alimin’s quality seedlings have become another source of income. His top-grafted seedlings have spread across the province boosting the seedling sale demands with promising profit of IDR 300 million per-year. In order to fulfill a government order of 250,000 certified top grafted seedlings, Alimin invested IDR 200 million to buy certified seeds from IC-CRI in Jember (East Java). He is one of the first farmers to supply high quality seedlings for the government’s cocoa rehabilitation program, announced by President Joko Widodo in November 2014 during his field visit to SCPP’s supported cocoa farm in West Sulawesi. Currently Alimin employs forty trained workers – recruited from his Mutiara Indah Farmer Group – to take care of various activities such poly bag filling, seed planting, watering, weeding and top-grafting. “A very skilled helper can earn up to IDR 4.5 million per-month, higher than some white collar officers’ incomes,” explained Alimin proudly.

Alimin also runs a specialized agricultural store for cocoa, banana, coconut and tobacco-related commodities serving not only Soppeng’s farmers but also those from surrounding districts. The store’s income is used for his daughter’s (Nurazizah Salwa, 9) education and supports the family’s daily needs. “It was a right decision to set up a cocoa business upon my return from Kalimantan years ago. I can say, I am the visible proof that cocoa and hard work can change a farmer’s life, while letting him help others,” said Alimin.

Over the years, Alimin (42) succeeded in expanding his cocoa farm from only one hectare to seven hectares and five cocoa nurseries, which currently produce 250,000 seedlings. The green nursery gardens are beautiful and provide work for local villagers.
Mursalim (40) is from Parigi. In 1997, he finished his vocational high school studies in Administration and Management. He planned to continue his study in Java, but destiny had other plans and he had to help his parents send his five other siblings to school. He made the choice to start growing cocoa, and became a successful farmer in the area where he lives with his wife Disan (35) and two sons Egi (11) and Eri (5).

Treatment Determines the Outcome
In 2010, Mursalim was inspired by the success of his cocoa-growing neighbors and bought two hectares of land with 1,500 ageing cacao trees. His productivity was low until he side-grafted four hundred ageing trees. Mursalim admits that growing cocoa is not an easy job.

“You have to treat your trees like they are your loved ones; they need your full attention and constant maintenance,” says Mursalim. The schedule in his farm is tight and the procedures are strict: he makes sure to apply treatments as taught in Ecom and Swisscontact’s Farmer Field School (FFS). For him, it is important to properly prune, fertilize and spray his trees for better production. “I do most of the work by myself because each treatment has its own effect and determines the result,” says Mursalim.

His hard work has paid off. During the peak season, he harvested around 1.5 ton/400 trees within four months, resulting in IDR 40 million. He can’t wait to have all of his trees side-grafted for bigger profits. Mursalim also sells his healthy cocoa pods for seeds for IDR 3,000 per pod to his neighbors and has collected IDR 2 million from cocoa by product sales up to the end of 2015. Mursalim’s success is spread among farmers in his area and he is often asked to be a motivational speaker to push other farmers to follow his proven path.

Proud to be a Cocoa Farmer
Mursalim still has a 0.8 hectare paddy field, but he hands the work to his neighbor so that he can focus on cocoa. According to him, input costs for raising paddy crop (IDR 7 million for one cycle) are much higher than planting cocoa (IDR 2 million – per year), and the revenue is lower. Mursalim’s rice yields are enough for his family’s rice supply and a little additional income. Mursalim usually saves a large part of his cocoa income to be used for the education of his sons and building a house. He plans to buy land to grow chili, an easy-to-grow commodity. “I am proud to be a cocoa farmer because the income is high relative to other professions if I maintain my farm properly,” he says. Mursalim’s salary is equal to his other higher educated siblings who work as teachers, a government officer and entrepreneur.

“Cocoa farmers, especially small-scale ones, play a significant role in the world’s food security. With cocoa I am able to best provide for my family’s welfare,” added Mursalim.
Suheri Adam (53) is a cocoa farmer with a bachelor’s degree in Biology. After graduating from a national university in Padang, like most Padangnese, he set out for the wandering tradition of ‘merantau’ to gain life experience outside of his home island of Sumatera.

He spent several years in Bandung (West Java), Taiwan and Malaysia. After attempting to run an unsuccessful clothing business in Malaysia, he decided to return home to Tanah Datar, West Sumatera. Suheri began growing limes and sapodilla on his 1.5-hectare farm in 1998. Ten years later, he started to grow cocoa, and experienced a turning point in his life that now promises a stable future for his wife Yanti (45) and their three children Elsan (18), Resta (15) and M. Iqbal (6).

Seize the Opportunity
In 2009, Suheri received five hundred polybags of cacao seedlings for free from a good friend. Not squandering the chance, he immediately exchanged his ageing lime trees for cocoa crops and left about 100 sapodilla trees as shades trees. Despite his efforts, his first cocoa yield was only 400 kg/0.5ha/year.

Suheri attended a Farmer Field School (FFS) coordinated by Barry Callebaut and Swisscontact. By applying the sustainable agricultural practices he learned, his yield increased to 1,100 kg/0.5 ha/year. Suheri learned that cocoa is a more profitable and long-lasting commodity when compared to other crops. He planted another five hundred cacao trees and has now about one thousand cacao trees in total. From his currently productive trees, he earns up to IDR 30 million per year.

He usually sells fermented beans directly to the warehouse located in Batusangkar (about fifteen kilometers away) as the price per kg is IDR 500 higher. After the last peak harvest season he sold five hundred kilograms and brought home IDR 16.5 million, which he used to buy a new motorbike.

Not Resting but Expanding
In addition to cocoa, Suheri has earnings from running a small grocery store and selling sapodillas. During the peak season, he can collect 400kg sapodillas, resulting in a profit of IDR 1.2 million per week.

The revenue from the grocery and sapodillas business is used to meet the family’s daily needs and to buy organic fertilizer for his cacao trees. Combining revenue from cocoa, grocery and sapodillas, Suheri has around IDR 44 million in the bank.

He feels secure knowing that he has put money aside for unforeseen events. He also encourages his children to save. He proudly reports that his two teenage children have around IDR 1 million each in their bank accounts for higher education. “I am happy that I am growing cocoa. I realize that the right commodity with the right treatment and perseverance will bring great results,” Suheri concludes.
Tanda (54) moved at the age of eleven with his parents and his five siblings from Polewali Mandar District to Mamuju in West Sulawesi. His family settled on land deserted by its former inhabitants who relocated to other provinces. His determined parents worked hard to prepare their land for cocoa. After years of hard-work and preparation, his family started to enjoy income from the cacao trees.

Tanda says that family is the most important thing for him, and the cocoa business has been the main source of income for his wife and their six children.

Fertilization is the Key
Focusing on cocoa is one of Tanda’s keys to success, and he couldn’t imagine doing another job. Tanda has considerable experience with cocoa, but through the Farmer Field School (FFS) coordinated by Nestlé and Swisscontact, he learned new techniques to improve his farm’s productivity, such as pruning, sanitizing, fertilizing and side-grafting. “I was happy to learn valuable techniques about fertilization at the field school, as I believe they play an important role in having good yields,” said Tanda.

Tanda uses fertilizers made up of Urea and NPK three to four times a year which costs him around IDR 1-2 million for one hectare. Currently, he owns 2.5 hectares (1 hectare = 1,000 trees), of which two hectares are maintained by his son Muhajir. While he works on the other 0.5 hectare with five hundred trees on his own. His cocoa productivity is one of the highest among farmers in the area, increasing almost three times from only 996 kg/ha/year to 2,640 kg/ha/year.

Witnessing Tanda’s business success, many of his fellow farmers have replicated his farming approach. In his role as a farmer group leader, he assures his members to apply the new techniques while he shares his own long-term experience. “I gladly share my knowledge with my fellow friends so that all small-scale farmers can have wealthy families,” says Tanda who supervises thirty members.

From the revenue of his recent peak harvest, Tanda bought his son, Anwar, a new motorbike. The rest of the income was used to meet daily needs, buy inputs and finance his children’s education. He remodeled his wooden house into a large concrete permanent house and has still manage to put money in the bank. “The bank is located seven kilometers from my house. It is safer and more practical to save the money in my bank account. I use it as a measure of self-control that prevents me from spending easily or lending money to others,” explained Tanda. He now has more than IDR 10 million available to be used for the education of his two children and making the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca with his beloved wife. He strongly believes that he can fulfill his dreams if he keeps growing cocoa.
Ali Akbar (43) dreamed of a career in the army, but circumstances found him helping his parents cultivate three hectares of farmland with a total of four thousand cacao trees. After four years, his parents gave him a one-hectare farm of his own, which he managed whole-heartedly.

From the income he earned in cocoa he started a business and was able to send his two children to higher education. His eldest son Nurkhlis Akbar (22) has become a police officer, while his daughter Wandasfitri (19) is pursuing a bachelor’s degree.

From Modest Beginnings to Role Model
Whenever Ali’s yield was strong, he saved as much money as possible to expand his farm. Starting with just one hectare, he now owns now four hectares of farmland with a total of four thousand cacao trees. After participating in the Farmer Field School (FFS), coordinated by ADM Cocoa and Swisscontact in 2012, he increased his productivity from 800 kg/ha to 965 kg/ha, resulting in an income of IDR 29 million.

Ali applies intensive maintenance with proper techniques that he learned during FFS. All his hard work paid off when ADM Cocoa rewarded him with the largest premium given to a farmer of IDR 3,250,366 for selling 2098.9 kg of UTZ Certified beans to the ADM Cocoa buying station.

“I was so happy to be given the reward. It’s about waiting for the right time to sell. Since I don’t normally need cash right away, I was able to wait until the price increased and I sold an additional 1.2 tons of my beans from the last yield to the ADM cocoa buying station.”

Ali hopes to again sell the most beans to get the highest premium from ADM Cocoa. He was able to hire two skillful village workers to help him with pruning, sanitizing and fertilizing.

A Second Business a Win-win Opportunity
In between tending his farms, Ali takes care of his hen-breeding business. With income from cocoa, Ali started with one thousand hens and now has 3,500. With the help of his wife Hasnawati (43) and three workers he can collect 2,800 eggs per day, which equals to about IDR 2.5 million. In order to reduce agri-input costs, he uses the chicken manures to fertilize the cacao trees. Using a natural non-pesticide fertilizer he spends IDR 3,000 per tree, compared to IDR 3,500 per tree annually with chemical fertilizer.

From cocoa farming and his chicken breeding business, Ali Akbar has been able to generate significant savings. He realized that adding to his savings account and leading a simple life will help fulfill his dreams. His biggest goals are to pay the tuition fees for his daughter, to buy more land to grow cocoa, to buy a car and to make the Haj pilgrimage with his entire family. “It was the right decision to go into cocoa. Cocoa is a profitable business for those who are patient and eager to work hard. For me, cocoa was a source of capital to start another business,” said Ali while inspecting his healthy cocoa pods in his farm.
Hasriadi Hasan (37) is a Bireuen cocoa farmer. In 2008, he had almost completed his university studies in Banda Aceh, but due to his family’s situation, he had to leave for his wife’s hometown in the Pidie Jaya District. He tried his hand at cocoa growing on a 1-hectare farm owned by his parent-in-laws. Today he has an additional 1.5 hectares and lives comfortably with his wife Herawati (30) and his four and a half year-old son Amir Syakieb.

The Power of Proper Treatment
When Hasriadi started growing cocoa, he could not depend on the yield. He grew rice to meet his daily needs, and Hasriadi realized that his cocoa yield was so low because his soil was depleted of nutrients and his shade trees were incorrectly positioned. To learn how to change his farm, Hasriadi joined the Farmer Field School organized by SECO and Swisscontact in 2012, where he was appointed a key farmer tasked with training his fellow farmers.

He enthusiastically learned about treating his trees properly and gained knowledge about soil management and side and top grafting techniques. He fertilized his trees with compost and side-grafted his young but unproductive trees with free budwood from the government. His production increased and allowed him to buy another 1.5 hectares of land, also suffering from dry and depleted soil. He used the same methods he learned in FFS to rehabilitate this additional 1.5 hectares.

His productivity has grown to 800 kg/ha/year, up from previously 266 kg/ha/year. “My cocoa yield is the reflection of the proper treatments I apply to my farm,” Hasriadi says. He now has a total of 2.5 hectares with 2,000 cocoa trees.

A Fair Approach
Cocoa is Hasriadi’s main source of income. In a year, his revenue from cocoa amounts to IDR 50 million. Using the training and knowledge he gained through FFS he is motivated to save all he can. After renovating his house and helping to finance his brother’s education, he still has IDR 10 million in the bank.

His biggest goals are to finish renovating his house and to save money for going to Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage and sightseeing. In his area, Hasriadi is also active in the Koka Jaya cooperative and is a respected board member. His previous study in religious science plays an important role in the coop management. He keeps all bookkeeping transparent and on with mutual consent pays out a fair share of net income to the coop members. “Any business that is built upon an honest and fair approach will bring great results for its stakeholder,” he concludes.
Young cocoa farmer Musriyadi (33) moved to Butong in Southeast Sulawesi province after his high school graduation to pursue his dream to be a policeman. Unfortunately, he wasn’t able to enroll in the police academy and had to return to his hometown in East Luwu to focus on new goals at his family’s cocoa farm. He began as a cocoa bean trader which led him to start his own cocoa farm. Musriyadi is married to Semiatun (33) and is the proud father Akmal (10) and Musdalisa (5).

### CHALLENGES AND REWARDS FOR A “COCOA DOCTOR”

**Name**: Musriyadi (33)
**Farmer ID**: 732502001
**Village**: Argomulyo
**Subdistrict**: Kalaena
**District**: East Luwu
**Province**: South Sulawesi

**Success Story**

From 0.56 ton (April 2014) to 1 ton (Nov 2015) = IDR 20 Million

Musriyadi then join the Mars and Swisscontact’s Farmer Field School (FFS) in December 2014 in the village of Argomulyo. With thirty other farmers under the Tunas Baru Farmer Group, Musriyadi learned sustainable cocoa practices such as pruning, fertilizing, nursery establishment, proper side-grafting technique and pest and diseases control. He applied the techniques taught during FFS. “Now I enjoy a production increase from 560 kg (April 2014) to 1 ton (Nov 2015) from seven hundred healthy trees, making a total profit of IDR 20 million. Coupled with my five hundred other replanted trees, I believe my income will improve as I can yield up to 1.8 ton in the next 2 – 3 years. From my two thousand seedling capacity nursery business, I have sold one thousand seedlings for IDR 4,500 adding IDR 4.5 million to my savings. Some say that I have a green thumb that I can be proud of,” adds Musriyadi.

Through his participation in FFS, Musriyadi was included in the Mars Cocoa Development Center (MCDC) in Tarengge, twenty-five kilometers from his home. The objective is for MCDC to train a subset of smallholder farmers to develop commercial enterprises for distributing knowledge, inputs, and services to the small-holders. Through this participation he has expanded his business income beyond profits from selling cocoa pods alone.

**Challenge and Reward as a Cocoa Doctor**

After two months of intensive training in agronomy and agribusiness in the MCDC, Musriyadi became a Cocoa Doctor holder. “I realize the title will mean nothing if I am the only one to succeed in improving my cocoa farm. I want to motivate my fellow farmers to tend their cocoa farms with sustainable practices for sustainable production. In addition, I was supported to establish a for-profit business providing services and inputs called the Cocoa Village Center (CVC) for peers in my village and the surrounding area,” utters Musriyadi.

Some of the activities include nurseries, bud-wood gardens (for top-and side-grafting), on-farm side-grafting, sales of fertilizer and pesticide, training and facilitation of access to credit. “November 19th, 2015, is the launch of my CVC. I am excited but ready for challenges and greater reward,” says Musriyadi happily. “I can’t thank Mars and Swisscontact enough for their valuable program that has changed my life. My farm’s productivity has improved, leading to greater income. I am optimistic that with my current cocoa business, the future of my children will be brighter and I can help other farmers in need with my farming skills. I hope that the program can be sustained and reach more smallholder farmers,” end Musriyadi.
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