

Ghanaian EDP partners demand: “Make a difference to the life of the farmers! Step-up EDP’s power of advocacy for improved livelihoods!”

By Jörg Hilgers

‘What is the added value of EDP for the enterprises, institutions or organizations involved in the Ghanaian cocoa sector?’

Deliberating on this question, seventeen (17) representatives of EDP host organizations, exposure facilitators and dialogue partners met on 15 November 2019 in Accra. Having been invited to



evaluate the outcomes of the three EDP Leadership Training Programmes conducted in the Ghanaian cocoa sector in 2017, 2018 and 2019 they dived once again into the ‘Cocoa EDP Lessons’ that had been reported on by the visiting EDP participants.

The partners looked at the EDP approach: What did cocoa immersions of European (and also Ghanaian) stakeholders mean to their work? They revisited the content matters: To what extent did EDP participants’ lessons learnt comply with the objectives of their institution, organization or enterprise? Being asked to assess the ratio of input and outcomes; thus, on one hand, the challenges and the work load of hosting and organizing immersion programmes versus the benefit to the organization, on the other, the partners gave a straight answer to a critical question: *Is EDP worth the effort?*

Yes, it is! Exposure and Dialogue Programmes (EDPs) give representatives of European value chain stakeholders and consumer groups as well as planners, both from Ghana and from Europe, the opportunity to understand much better the living conditions of the farmers and their way of life. This did even apply to the local EDP participants, e.g. living in the capital and working in Accra-based institutions. Getting hands-on experiences from the farmers and sharing on this with other stakeholders in the cocoa value chain is what Ghanaian stakeholders having been involved in EDP want(ed) to see happen – even more intensively so in the future!

The host farmers felt appreciated for their farming efforts and their hard work. The Exposure visitors contributed to the self-esteem of farmers and local communities. Interestingly, some young people got motivated to stay (or go back) into farming. Due to the interest the visitors showed and the questions they posed, the farmers and other community members became more aware of the issues in the supply chain and of their rights as farmers.

As Europeans stayed overnight for several days it did build trust among the farmers to open-up on issues which responsible Ghanaian sector agents appreciate a lot. Other farmers who witnessed the visitors joining in farm work showed interest to improve their agric performance. Moreover, EDP helped bridging the gap between the different cultures from Europe and West Africa as the learning went two-ways among hosts and guests, indeed, so the partners explained.

To the representatives of the Ghana Cocoa Board (managers responsible for extension) who had participated as full-time EDP participants together with their European exposure peers, EDP became a way of getting feedback on policy implementation rolled out by the institution. The concluding dialogue sessions (at the end of respective programme) gave an opportunity for all participants to

improve upon decision making and policy formulation. It changed everybody's' perspectives and helps implement projects better or helps develop better policies. Over and above this, the EDP approach also appreciated the work the individual organizations did and do on the ground.

Hence, *“EDP is good for our institutions and our work in the cocoa value chain in Ghana”* as one local representative put it; *“but there is the need to find solutions to the issues raised and follow-up on the ‘EDP lessons learnt’ more thoroughly”*. In as much as preparing and hosting EDP provides opportunities to do need assessments relevant to local development agencies, *“EDP Association should also help to find solutions to the issues that had been identified during the EDP learning process”*; as it was re-phrased several times during the workshop.



The workshop participants pledged strongly to link-up the content and the thematic areas dealt with to the appropriate institutions that *“could solve the problems learnt about on the ground”*. For that to happen; there is a *“strong need to communicate outcomes more widely and more profoundly.”*

While EDP provides a great learning platform, the participating stakeholders asked to also become informed better about what the visiting participants did so far with the information gathered and whether these lessons learnt are being used to address other relevant stakeholders to the extent



that it would make a difference to the life of the farmers.

However, being directed the other way; the question was also raised whether the local stakeholders did enough in order to improve their cooperation among themselves in the context of EDP implementation and whether they fully utilized the opportunity of hosting EDP. Hence, *“beyond all this learning during EDP”*, one representative asked: *“What next? What can we do, both, the Ghanaian and European stakeholders interested to make use of the EDP potential fully?”*

Recommendations for Follow-up

In other words: What can the stakeholders in Ghana and Europe/Germany interested in immersions (Exposure and Dialogue) do together to step-up EDPs power of advocacy? In unison, the partner representatives said: *“We need to get stronger and more players to advocate for immersions,”* e.g. members of World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) interested in social returns to investments. Instead of trying to set-up a new *‘Cocoa Exposure Alliance’* – in the sense of another multi-stakeholder forum beside *COCOA PLATFORM* or *COCOA ACTION (WCF)* –existing structures should be tapped-into. More actors need to be convinced to make use of EDP as part of their deliberations on project interventions; for instance as a tool of research and development and human resource development for policy makers and extension staff alike. CHED (COCOBOD) may contact its partners for incorporating immersion pilot projects as well as the local EDP partners should find out, to what extent and how they could make use of immersion visits for their own advocacy purposes.

The partners made clear that advocacy is meaningful to the extent to which it leads to concrete action dealing with the burning cocoa sector issues adequately which in turn requires involvement of



relevant funding partners, too. Hence, the partners proposed that *“we should elaborate EDP towards something beyond mere immersions and learning”* and convince donors to fund for infrastructure or trainings projects on the ground that entail immersions. While the visiting Exposure participants are around, so the rationale, *“we would conduct short term infrastructure projects in which we would involve also local experts, e.g. road constructors or sanitation experts being*

genuine part of the EDP participants’ group during immersion”. This would mean that the process of winning exposure participants must go hand in hand with identifying adequate areas of interventions in the communities where the exposure visits are supposed to take place.

“Power of communication”

In conjunction with this idea, the group saw a need to *“connect to the ‘right’ people, organizations and enterprises.”* In Ghana, the EDP partners would need to connect with local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for campaigning more strongly towards improving farmers’ livelihoods, while in Germany or Europe, the cocoa sector issues (EDP outcomes) should be communicated better. The partners advised that also in Europe CSOs should step-in and report on EDP outcomes at all relevant levels. There should be *“two-ways-communication, since it has to also come back to us and the farmers what EDP Association and the EDP participants do in Europe with the lessons learnt from Ghanaian cocoa communities.”*

It would be good, if host farmers could become involved in the respective programme’s concluding dialogue workshops, too, in the future. Since the farmers need to see an impact on the ground, the current, rather narrow operational modus and mandate of EDP was questioned: *“The burning issues*



need to be addressed directly with companies and organizations that could potentially work on them, e.g. the major chocolate manufacturers.” This, however, requires a process at the end of which individual investors must see a benefit for doing business in a respective geographical and topical area.

“Hence, we, too, must help form a broader base of dialogue partners, inclusive of the Chief Managers of COCOBOD to join EDP,” another representative asserted. The workshop moderator who happened to be also the coordinator of the three *Exposure and Dialogue Programmes* said that WCF and COCOBOD / CHED have always been addressed when planning a programme. CHED managers and field staff took part in two programmes, in February 2018 and in February/March 2019. In two

programmes either COCOBOD CEO J.B. Aidoo (February 2017) or the by-then CHED Director Dr. E. Opoku (February 2018) were actively involved in the dialogue workshop; so were respective WCF country directors!

Next steps

In cooperation with Rainforest Alliance in Europe, the multi stakeholder platforms *German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (GISCO)*¹, *Swiss Cocoa Platform*², *DISCO (Netherlands)*³ and *Beyond Chocolate (Belgium)*⁴ should be addressed jointly so as to find out whether they are interested to join the base of “EDP stakeholders”. Another attempt should be made to win the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) office in Ghana.

¹ <https://www.kakaoforum.de/en/about-us/german-initiative-on-sustainable-cocoa/>

² <https://www.kakaoplattform.ch/en/>

³ <https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/news/progress-aligning-european-national-cocoa-sustainability-platforms/>

⁴ <https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/uploaded/2019/07/BC-Program-Documents-English-.pdf>