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COCOA PRODUCTION AND WOMEN'S AUTONOMY IN ASIKUMA IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own and is intended for the award of an MPhil in African Studies. To the best of my knowledge, this study does not contain any materials that have been previously published by other individuals or works that have been accepted for the award of any other degree from the University, except where appropriate acknowledgement has been given.

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the complex roles and experiences of women in cocoa farming in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District of Ghana, situating their participation within the broader contexts of matrilineal kinship, household structures, and the political economy of agriculture. Drawing on feminist political economy, kinship theory, and economic anthropology, the study employs qualitative methods—including in-depth interviews, life histories, and focus group discussions—to examine how women access land, labour, and capital as independent farmers, sharecroppers, and labourers. The findings reveal a paradox: while matrilineal systems provide women with opportunities to inherit or access land, male-dominated lineage authority and commodification of land often constrain their autonomy and decision-making power. Women's agency emerges in diverse forms—through negotiation, sharecropping, or purchasing land—but remains uneven across age, marital status, and socio-economic position. The study highlights how migration, resource scarcity, and commercialization have intensified gendered inequalities, leaving many women dependent on kinship negotiations or precarious labour arrangements. By documenting women's life stories and strategies of resilience, the research underscores the importance of recognizing both women's contributions and the structural barriers they face in cocoa production. The study concludes that policies promoting gender-equitable land rights, financial access, and cooperative support are essential for strengthening women's autonomy and enhancing inclusive rural development in Ghana's cocoa sector.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Prof. Delali Kwasi Dake, and my son, Dziedzorm Kekeli Dake, as well as my mother, siblings, and loved ones. I am particularly grateful to all of the

instructors and lecturers who have taught, guided, and supported me throughout my academic career.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AOBDA	Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District Assembly

AKI	Local financial entity (savings and Loans)
CARG	Cargill
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CMB	Cocoa Marketing Board
CSIR	Council of Scientific and Industrial Research
DPCU	District Planning Co-ordinating Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHC	Ghanaian Cedi
GNAFF	Ghana National Association of Farmers and Fishermen
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
JHS	Junior High School
KIT	Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (Royal Tropical Institute)
L.I.	Legislative Instrument
MoGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Childern and Social Protection
MMDAs	Metropolitan Municipal and District Assemblies
MLNR	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources
MTN	Mobile Telecommunication Network

MoFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PHC	Population and Housing Census
SHS	Senior High School
SIC	State Insurance Company
SSNIT	Social Security and National Insurance Trust
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WCF	World Cocoa Foundation

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Cocoa is an important cash crop that contributes substantially to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of several economies in Africa (World Cocoa Foundation & KIT, 2017) by improving their foreign exchange reserves (Danso-Abbeam et al., 2020). More than four million metric tonnes of cocoa beans are produced annually for the chocolate industry, worth an estimated \$110 billion a year (Torre & Jones, 2014). An estimated 62.3% of these beans are produced in West Africa, the driving force of cocoa production, with Côte d'Ivoire alone producing about 2 million metric tonnes and Ghana 900 thousand metric tonnes.

In Ghana, agriculture employs around 45 percent of the labour force (more than any other sector) and contributes 15 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Opec Fund, 2022). According to Skalidou (2020) women make up 25% of the estimated two million cocoa farmers in West Africa. Taking into account women who farm cocoa alongside their husbands or other partners, without owning the land they cultivate, it is likely that women's involvement in cocoa production is much higher. The Fairtrade Labour Association estimates that women comprise 58% of the workforce in the cocoa farming industry in Côte d'Ivoire. However, Skalidou (2020) estimates that women only receive 21% of the total income in cocoa in West Africa. The fact that women own only 25% of the cocoa farming land suggests that the majority of women in both countries are farming on farms they do not own under unclear remuneration systems (Skalidou, 2020).

Cocoa employs approximately 800,000 farm families spread over six of Ghana's sixteen regions According to Bessa et al. (2023), Family-run, medium-sized plantations, spanning an average of 2-3 hectares, predominantly produce cocoa throughout the country, particularly in the west of Ghana. From 1910 until the late 1920s, the cocoa industry experienced growth. The international market saw a gradual and continuous rise in cocoa prices, but the socio-economic transformations initiated during Phase I of the cocoa industry significantly impacted rural females, since the major investments in cocoa farms in the 1920s were carried out by wealthy males acquiring large tracts of land, which created scarcity of land for women, but a demand for their labour in cocoa plantations in family farms, as part of their husband's labour force or as matrilineal labour. Except for the more eastern and coastal areas, hiring labour on cocoa farms was still a relatively new phenomenon (Hill, 1963).

Studies that provide gender-segregated data tend to confirm that male-headed households predominantly grow cocoa (Skalidou, 2020). Nevertheless, since the inception of the cocoa-growing industry in West Africa, women have systematically provided labour for tasks related to cocoa farming, either independently or through family or hired labour. Barrientos and Bobbie (2016) provide a detailed list of cocoa farming-related tasks undertaken by women in Ghana. Their list includes weeding and preparing the land for planting; purchasing seeds and seedlings; planting cocoa seedlings; caring for young trees and intercropping food crops while the trees are young; harvesting and plucking; pod breaking; carrying the beans to the homestead or depot; fermenting and drying; and bagging the dried beans.

The combination of falling cocoa prices, decreasing real incomes, and increased indebtedness among male farmers in the 1930s temporarily led to reduced investment by these men in cocoa farming. Okali & Oppong (1986) indicated that, during the 1930s, men were more likely to combine cocoa farming with locally paid jobs or to move in search of urban jobs, which guaranteed them support for their families. The result was that as men migrated from rural areas, the responsibility for cocoa farms fell on women's shoulders. Concomitant with this increase in female responsibility was a growing awareness by women of their importance to cocoa production. During the 1940s, a new type of case began to appear in the District Administrative Courts; women who had helped husbands establish cocoa farms began to seek compensation for their labor and that of their children when the divorce occurred or their husbands died (Duncan 2010).

While gender equality has become increasing important in development studies, there are still data gaps that inhibit the measurement and analysis of gender-related issues (Hillesland et al., 2020). According to the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Gender and Land Rights Database, women make up about 13 percent of agricultural holders globally, with the highest share in Europe (27.8 percent) and the lowest in the Middle East and North Africa (4.9 percent) (de la O Campos et al. 2015). Nonetheless, many agricultural surveys assume that the household head is the holder (Hillesland et al., 2020). In countries where the agricultural sector is characterised primarily by agricultural households, these statistics likely reflect the household structure (i.e., whether it is female-headed or not) rather than women's overall engagement in operational decision-making in the household's agricultural activities. Even when the household head is not automatically assumed to be the holder, a male household member is typically identified as the holder because of his rights over the agricultural land or because of cultural norms that assume men take on the role of primary decision-maker (Doss 2014; Twyman et al. 2015).

The past decade has seen increased attention to measuring women's empowerment and autonomy, motivated by the goal of identifying promising programs and policies for reducing gender inequalities. One of the most common quantitative indicators of women's empowerment is the self-reported ability to participate in household decision-making over important matters (Seymour & Peterman 2017).

The research seeks to identify the factors that account for and constrain women’s participation in cocoa farming and the main characteristics of women’s participation in cocoa production and households involved in cocoa production. It examines the extent to which women are involved in cocoa production, whether as independent producers, sharecroppers, or labourers. However, there is also significant social differentiation among men, who also participate within these three categories, and women's experiences are placed within wider patterns of social differentiation. These patterns of social differentiation are explored through the life histories of women, which document their changing fortunes in the context of economic upturns and downturns, marriage, divorce, widowhood, inheritance, and health. It shows a long history of commodification in agriculture and the migration of farmers to urban areas, small towns, and other rural areas in search of economic prosperity. The study examines women's access to land, labour, and financial resources to engage in cocoa production, as well as the provision of support services for women working in the industry.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Existing literature on women in cocoa production shows that women have long participated in the sector, either cultivating cocoa on lineage land, receiving land from husbands, or engaging in sharecropping arrangements (Hill, 1963; Okali, 1983; Duncan, 2004). While matriliny in Akan societies provides women with some access to land through maternal inheritance, its practical operation often mediates women's autonomy. Land is typically administered by male lineage heads, meaning women's control over inherited parcels is constrained, and decisions regarding use or transfer are rarely theirs alone.

This study argues that women can no longer depend upon their husbands or families to provide them with lands. While a few women in Asikuma are independent land owners with inherited or purchased land, a significant number work on sharecropped lands or as labourers. This shows that women access to land is increasingly socially differentiated. Thus, women's agency operates within a broader system that remains structurally restrictive. For many women, especially the young and economically vulnerable, access to land and other productive resources is conditional—granted through husbands, maternal uncles, or mediated contracts. Even where women own land, their ability to exercise full decision-making power over it is limited by customary norms, lineage authority, and gendered expectations of reciprocity. While some women overcome barriers through inheritance, purchase, or sharecropping, many others remain dependent on kinship negotiations and male mediation, limiting their autonomy. The study thus examines how women navigate these structural constraints, how access is differentiated among women, and how broader processes of commodification and scarcity intensify the challenges of sustaining independent cocoa production.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in multiple theoretical perspectives that together help explain the pat This study draws on multiple theoretical perspectives to explain the gendered dynamics of women's participation in cocoa farming. The overarching frameworks are feminist political economy, gender relations, kinship theory, and economic anthropology. Together, these perspectives provide a lens for understanding how women's access to land, labour, and capital is both enabled and constrained within matrilineal systems and shifting economic contexts.

Feminist Political Economy

Feminist political economy theory is central to this study, as it offers a critical perspective on how gender influences economic relations, resource distribution, and labour practices. This theory argues that women's economic roles, particularly in agricultural settings, are often shaped by patriarchal structures that limit their access to resources and economic autonomy (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003). The commodification of land and labour in Ghana, exacerbated by capitalist pressures, disproportionately affects women, as they are often excluded from the formal economy and land ownership. Feminist political economy allows for the analysis of how these economic systems reinforce gender inequalities, particularly in rural agricultural settings where women's labour is undervalued despite being crucial for household and community survival. Feminist political economy emphasises how gender influences access to resources and shapes economic roles within agricultural production (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003). In the context of cocoa farming, women provide crucial labour and often manage plots, yet their control over land and revenues is frequently limited by customary authority structures. This framework highlights structural inequalities that undervalue women's labour and restrict their bargaining power. Importantly, "autonomy" in this study refers not to separation from men or rejection of household complementarity, but to women's ability to make independent decisions over land and resources they cultivate. This interpretation recognises household cooperation while also pointing out that decision-making power is unequally distributed.

Gender Relations Theory

At At the core of this framework is the theory of gender relations, which examines the roles, responsibilities, and power dynamics between men and women within both the household and the agricultural economy. This theory is critical for understanding how women's access to resources—such as land, labour, and capital—is often mediated by their gender and their relationships with male relatives. According to gender relations theory, societal norms position men as primary landholders and decision-makers, while women, despite contributing significantly to agricultural labour, often lack equivalent access to ownership and autonomy (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003; Duncan, 2004; 2004;2004).

The framework also draws on feminist perspectives that challenge these traditional gender roles, highlighting the economic autonomy women can gain through their involvement in cocoa farming, as noted by Allman (1996). However, the persistence of gender-based conflicts within the household and the wider kinship system counterbalances this empowerment (Mikell, 1986; Okali, 1983).

Kinship Systems and Matriliny

The third theoretical lens is rooted in kinship theory, particularly matrilineal and patrilineal systems, which govern inheritance, land ownership, and family obligations. In Ghana, both matrilineal and patrilineal systems coexist, and these systems have profound implications for women's access to land and other resources. In matrilineal societies, such as the Akan, descent and inheritance are traced through the female line, granting women more secure access to land. However, even within matrilineal systems, men often retain authority over land allocation, with the bulk of lineage land passing from a woman's brothers to her sons, rather than her daughters (Okali, 1983; Duncan, 2004; Richards, 1950).

The concept of reciprocity within kinship systems is also central to this framework. Within these communities, economic and labour transactions are often reciprocal, with women contributing labour to their husband's or kin's farms in exchange for land, financial support, or assistance in household duties (Duncan, 2010). However, these exchanges often reinforce gender inequalities, as women typically receive a smaller share of land and resources than men, even when they provide significant labour. Kinship theory is particularly relevant in Ghana, where matrilineal inheritance patterns shape land tenure. While matriliny allows women to inherit land, lineage authority is typically exercised by male elders (abusua panyin). Thus, women's access is real but conditional. Some women in this study were independent landowners or purchasers of land, illustrating agency and variation. Others, however, relied on sharecropping, leasing, or gifts, which reinforced dependency. This study therefore treats matriliny as a flexible system that both enables and constrains women's autonomy, depending on age, marital status, and economic capacity (Amanor, 2001; Hillesland et al., 2020).

Economic Anthropology and Commodification

Finally, the framework incorporates perspectives from economic anthropology, particularly theories of commodification and resource scarcity. These theories explain how the increasing commercialisation of agriculture, particularly cocoa farming, has transformed traditional labour and land tenure systems in Ghana. The commodification of land has shifted it from a communal or family resource to a marketable commodity, marginalising women who lack the financial resources or social power to secure land independently (Amanor, 2001).

The rise of sharecropping, migration, and other economic adaptations further illustrate how economic pressures exacerbate gender and generational inequalities in access to land and labour. These dynamics are evident in the increasing reliance on household labour, particularly from women and children, as men migrate for better employment opportunities or as labour becomes more commodified (Duncan, 2004; Amanor, 2001). Finally, the framework incorporates perspectives from economic anthropology, particularly theories of commodification and resource scarcity. These theories explain how the increasing commercialisation of agriculture, particularly cocoa farming, has transformed traditional labour and land tenure systems in Ghana. The commodification of land has shifted it from a communal or family resource to a marketable commodity, marginalising women who lack the financial resources or social power to secure it independently (Amanor, 2001).

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Intersection of Gender, Kinship, and Economic Forces

By combining these theoretical perspectives, this framework provides a holistic understanding of how women navigate the intersection of gendered social structures and economic systems in cocoa farming. It highlights the ways in which kinship ties, household responsibilities, and economic pressures shape women's roles and access to resources. It also underscores the tensions between traditional reciprocal obligations and the commodification of land and labour, particularly as women's contributions remain undervalued in both economic and familial contexts.

This theoretical framework integrates feminist political economy, gender relations, kinship theory, and economic anthropology to explore the socio-economic position of women in Ghana's cocoa farming sector. It emphasises how gender inequalities are embedded in both kinship structures and economic systems, shaping women's access to land, labour, and wealth.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research examines recent developments in women's participation in cocoa farming in a case study based in the Central Region. It traces women's participation in the context of access to land, labour, inputs and capital and movements into other livelihoods. It also examines discourses about promoting women's participation in the cocoa sector in government policy, international cocoa corporations, and NGO projects.

The study contributes to the literature on gender relations in agriculture and patterns of transformation of social relations within smallholder agriculture, including the rise of farm labour and shifts to other livelihoods and labour migration. The study provides detailed case studies of the personal life experiences and perceptions of women cocoa farmers, including processes of social differentiation and their changing access to natural assets, capital and wealth. It builds upon a framework of studies on social and gender relations in cocoa, including works by Hill (1963), Okali (1983), Mikell (1985), Amanor (2001), Duncan (2004), and Whitehead & Tsikata (2003).

1.5 Research Objectives

The research seeks to examine the extent to which the adoption of cocoa and the increasing commercialisation of agricultural production have transformed gender relations and resulted in increasing social differentiation in which large numbers of women are dependent upon sharecropping and labouring or moving out of agriculture to gain their livelihoods.

1.6 Research Questions

1. Examine how matrilineal kinship defines the role of women in cocoa production and their access to assets including land, labour and capital.
2. Examine the tensions that emerge between lineage and households as cocoa production dominates agriculture and agriculture becomes increasingly commodified.
3. Examine changes in social relations, gender relations, kinship reciprocity and access to resources as a result of economic transformation and the increasing scarcity and expense of land and labour.
4. Examine the impact of increasing social differentiation on gender relations and the emergence of households without direct access to family land.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

The following chapter reviews existing literature related to women's participation in cocoa farming and the broader themes of land relations, gender dynamics, and kinship systems. The chapter introduction outlines key themes guiding the literature review, focusing on women's involvement in cocoa farming and their access to resources. Two main perspectives in the literature are highlighted: one that emphasises women's economic autonomy through cocoa farming and another that discusses the conflicts arising from gender relations within agricultural households.

The chapter reviews the literature on gender roles in the cocoa sector, emphasising women's access to land, capital, and labour. Studies examining women's empowerment and economic autonomy through cocoa farming are discussed, alongside the tensions that arise from male-dominated land ownership and household dynamics.

It explores the role of kinship, particularly matrilineal and patrilineal systems, in shaping women's access to land and resources. It delves into how kinship structures influence household labour organisation and the transmission of property. It analyses how the commodification of land and labour, alongside increasing resource scarcity, has reshaped social and economic relations in cocoa farming communities. This includes how these shifts exacerbate gender inequalities, marginalising women further in their access to land and capital, and the increasing burden on household labour, especially for women. The rise of sharecropping as a response to labour shortages and the commodification of land are also explored, with a focus on how these arrangements create new economic relationships and challenges for women in accessing land and resources.

The outlines of the research methodology used to explore the participation of women in cocoa farming in the Asikuma District of the Central Region of Ghana, which focuses on a qualitative case study approach adopted for the study, using life histories, interviews, and focus group discussions. The choice of qualitative methods emphasises the exploration of women's experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding their role in cocoa farming. The research targeted female cocoa farmers, with additional interviews conducted with a small number of male farmers for comparative purposes.

Two focus group discussions were conducted at the Adandan community centre, focusing on women's participation in cocoa farming and their access to resources. The selection of participants for these discussions is discussed, including the inclusion of different age groups, social roles, and occupational categories (farm labourers, sharecroppers, and landowners).

The fourth chapter provides the background to the case study in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District, focusing on its geographical features, population, settlement patterns, economic activities, and government services. It highlights the dispersed nature of rural settlements within the district, the availability of services and infrastructure; and the pivotal role of cocoa and agriculture in the economy.

The fifth chapter provides detailed case studies of women farmers within the settlements of Adandan and Nsuekyir, highlighting their journeys through land acquisition, labour involvement, and household responsibilities. Stories of migration, marriage, divorce, and widowhood shape women's roles in cocoa farming and reveal their economic positions and the characteristics of social differentiation among women farmers, sharecroppers, and labourers.

The concluding chapter discusses how the study makes a significant contribution to the literature by offering a nuanced analysis of women's roles in cocoa farming, highlighting their participation as independent farmers, sharecroppers, and labourers. It fills a gap by focusing on women's socioeconomic experiences in agriculture, particularly in a male-dominated field. Additionally, it delves into the complexities of kinship systems and how they mediate women's access to land, labour, and capital.

The recommendations include formalising land access for sharecroppers, promoting gender-inclusive land transfer, improving access to financial resources, formalising labour contracts, and supporting women's economic empowerment through cooperatives and training programmes.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The study focuses on the nature of women's participation in cocoa farming. It draws upon studies within the cocoa sector, the nature of peasant incorporation into food systems, and gender, but also on studies on land relations, labour, kinship and household studies.

It specifically focuses on women's access to resources and wealth creation. It focuses on two themes within the literature on cocoa in Ghana: firstly, that the involvement of women in cocoa farming has enabled women to gain economic autonomy (Allman 1996); and secondly, that the introduction of cocoa has resulted in conflicts within families and gender-based conflicts between men and women (Mikell 1986, Okali 1983). Allman (1996) argues that women's involvement in cocoa farming enabled them to achieve a measure of economic autonomy. While this is an important intervention, it risks presenting autonomy as a uniform outcome. My field data complicates this view: in Nsuekyir, younger women and widows without stable capital reported high levels of dependence on sharecropping or labouring, which undermined their ability to control income. Thus, while Allman's perspective highlights empowerment potential, autonomy in practice was differentiated by age, marital status, and financial capacity, suggesting uneven benefits rather than universal outcomes.

Moreover, Mikell (1986) and Okali (1983) contend that cocoa production intensified intra-family and gender conflicts. While this perspective captures tensions arising from land and labour allocation, my research suggests a more complex reality. In Nsuekyir, some households operated cooperatively, with husbands and wives sharing roles in cocoa cultivation. This indicates that cocoa production generated both conflict and collaboration, shaped by household dynamics and local negotiations rather than a single outcome of conflict.

The study explores the complex interplay between kinship ties, gender dynamics and economic activities in agricultural households (Okali and Oppong, 1989, Duncan, 2010). The study focuses on access to agricultural resources and alternative livelihoods, reciprocal transactions and obligations within lineage households, and conjugal relationships. Reciprocal transactions and obligations within lineage households may maintain social cohesion within the agricultural sector, where the expectation for household members to contribute to farming tasks, such as planting, harvesting, and processing cocoa beans, and provisioning the house with food leads to the understanding that assistance will be reciprocated when needed. Duncan (2010) suggests that reciprocal labour within lineages sustains household cohesion. While this is true in principle, my interviews revealed contradictions: several women in Nsuekyir reported contributing long hours of unpaid labour on kin farms but receiving little or no reciprocal support. This gap highlights how reciprocity in theory differs from practice, often leaving women overburdened without proportional returns. Conjugal relationships within the agricultural cocoa sector may involve a division of labour between spouses, where one partner may focus on farm work while the other manages household tasks or engages in off-farm employment to supplement income (Duncan 2010; Bessa 2021). While these can be based on reciprocity, changes in the factors of production may result in tensions and conflicts.

Agrarian studies often overlook the central role of women in smallholder agricultural production (Okali 1983; Amanor-Wilks 1996; Amanor 2003; Tsikata 2016). Gender roles and women's involvement in agriculture and cash crop production have been the focus of recent literature. Studies on gender relations examine women's access to resources, land ownership, alternative livelihoods, and empowerment. Other studies examine gender relations within the intricacies of the impact of agricultural commodification on household and kinship relations and tensions within households (Okali 1983, Mikell 1985, Amanor 2003, Guyer 1981).

2.2 Kinship Study

Kinship studies are the relationships and ties among people sharing a common family history. According to Mikell (1989), kinship is the culturally defined relationship between people who are generally acknowledged as having family ties. Every society makes use of kinship to create social groups and classify people (Mikell 1989). Still, kinship rules and practices vary greatly over the world (Okali, 1985).

In their earlier anthropological studies, Mikell and Okali sought to investigate the idea of kinship in Africa—that is, the close relationship between members of a house and a clan or an African lineage group. Previous research suggests that lineage groups can trace their origin to a single progenitor, believed to be the common ancestor of all descendants within the lineage.

Early studies of matrilineal kinship, however, were written from the structural-functionalist perspective, when descent and lineage were fundamental elements of kinship studies and accepted as the main organising ideas. These investigations comprise a 1950 article by Audrey Richards (1950), an edited volume by Schneider and Gough (1961) on matrilineal kinship, and a later addition by Mary Douglas (1969), by which point structural-functionalist ideas were under criticism. Interest in matriliny was rekindled in the 1970s and 1980s when feminist anthropologists started to probe gender construction, women's roles, and family arrangements in other countries (Holy 1986; Lancaster 1974, 1976, 1981; Poewe 1981). Since then, regional literature has occasionally focused on matriliny (Atkinson & Errington 1990; Davison 1997; Flinn 1986). Indeed, almost every continent has examples of matrilineal kinship: in parts of Asia (Agarwal 1994; Kelkar, Nathan & Walter 2003; Tanner & Thomas 1985) Melanesia (Battaglia 1990; Bolyanatz 2000; Weiner 1976, 1992); West Africa (Fortes 1969; Goody 1959; Oppong 1974); the Americas (Brown 1975; Lévi-Strauss 1963; MacLeitch 2011; Maybury-Lewis 1979).

2.3 Matriliny

Matriliny, as defined in the anthropological literature, is a unilineal kinship system where descent, inheritance, and belonging are tracked through the mother's line. David Schneider (1961; pp. 2) notes that in a patrilineal kinship system you are "related to females but not through females"; he captures unilineal kinship rather effectively. In matrilineal kinship, the opposite occurs: one is related to kin through women. Fathers thus belong to different lineages from their children. Therefore, the link between the brother of a mother and the children of her sister is especially important (Schneider 1961). However, societies that are classified as matrilineal differ in many respects from one another. Therefore, Peters (1997; pg. 189) contends that rather than seeing matriliny as a totality or "system", it is more useful to consider it as a set of characteristics."

For example, in matrilineal societies, inheritance practices vary widely. For example, in certain regions of South-Central Africa, particularly within the "matrilineal belt" that stretches across Malawi, Zambia, and northern Mozambique, women often hold agricultural land and pass it down to their daughters, while in other cases, men hold property and pass it on to their sisters' sons (i.e., their maternal nephews). These norms illustrate how matrilineal inheritance is structured through mother lines and highlight the importance of maternal kinship in property transfer. Elsewhere, both men and women may hold land and property, in which case male and female children could inherit from both their mothers and their mothers' brothers (Peters 1997; Duncan 2004). In matrilineal societies, property and titles are often inherited through different kinship lines, not directly from the mother as the chieftain or landholder. Instead, a young woman might inherit land from her mother or maternal lineage, while her brother could inherit a chieftaincy from their maternal uncle, not their mother.

Fortes (1971) notes that a key distinction between patrilineal and matrilineal family systems globally lies in the social and legal standing of women in roles as sisters, daughters, wives, and mothers. In societies that practice matrilineal inheritance and descent, women have traditionally enjoyed a degree of economic, political, and legal equality with men, as well as a dignified status that is not typically afforded to women within classical patrilineal family systems.

In Asante society in Ghana, land inheritance and control are structured around a matrilineal framework, but with specific nuances that shape the transmission of land rights and authority. Contrary to common assumptions, land does not transfer directly from mother to daughter. Instead, inheritance follows the "mother's line," which encompasses both sons and daughters. Practically, this structure means that land typically passes from a maternal uncle (the mother's brother) to his sister's sons, rather than exclusively to daughters or primarily to women. This reflects a societal preference for male control over land, even within a matrilineal system of inheritance.

The senior male in the lineage, known as the "abusua panyin" (or "asaasewura" in certain regions), wields substantial authority over family land. His role is critical; he manages and controls land resources, allocates parcels to lineage members, and makes decisions regarding land use. This position underscores how men predominantly hold control, even in a system where inheritance technically flows through the maternal line. As a result, men, rather than women, are often the ultimate decision-makers regarding land use and distribution within the lineage.

Historically, this structure has roots in social organisation and economic change. For example, Okali (1983) and Amanor (2001) observed that as men began accumulating wealth and land through cocoa farming, women experienced diminished access to land. The broad transfer from maternal uncles to nephews is thus a long-standing mechanism, reinforcing male authority over land and resources within Asante matrilineal society, particularly as the system adapted to economic pressures like cocoa cultivation.

Matrilineal societies demonstrate considerable variation in residential patterns, particularly in terms of where married couples reside. In a matrilocal arrangement, husbands join their wife's family upon marriage, an arrangement commonly associated with matrilineal kinship systems (Richards, 1950). This pattern ensures that children are raised within the mother's household, thereby facilitating the continuation of matrilineal lineage (Duncan, 2004). In contrast, when a wife moves to live with her husband's family, the arrangement is referred to as patrilocality, or virilocality (Schneider, 1961).

Amanor (2001) examined inheritance within matrilineal systems, noting that lineage property and responsibilities are often transferred from a mother's brother to his sister's sons. However, this transfer of roles can create tensions; if a maternal uncle lives with his wife, his wife's children may become disconnected from their matrilineal house and heritage. Conversely, if he remains in his matrilineal household to perform his duties, he will be absent from his wife's household. Amanor (2001) suggested that this framework often portrays people as adhering to inflexible ideological principles that lead to unsolvable conflicts, rather than understanding matriliny as a flexible social structure shaped by relationships based on age, gender, economic independence, and mechanisms for labour and property control.

In Akyem and Ashanti societies, a distinctive matrilocal residence pattern is observed, in which both husbands and wives typically reside within their respective matrilineages. This arrangement results in wives visiting their husbands at night but returning to their family homes during the day, a practice that has been noted by scholars like Fortes (1950). This setup reflects a strong adherence to matrilineal customs, emphasising the maintenance of familial bonds and obligations within the maternal lineage. It also demonstrates the value of lineage support systems, where a man's primary obligations often lie with his maternal kin, including his sister's children, rather than his own offspring. This residential arrangement sustains matrilineal continuity and reinforces the authority of the "abusua panyin", or lineage head, over family land and resources.

However, variations exist. For instance, in some Akan communities, men may maintain a dual-residence pattern (Okali 1983). While they live near their wives after marriage, they remain connected to their maternal kin's village, returning periodically for key events like funerals or lineage meetings. This flexibility preserves their ties to the maternal family, which is crucial for inheritance of roles and property (Okali 1983).

In contrast, patrilocality—where a wife relocates to live with her husband's family—is uncommon in matrilineal societies. However, it may occur under circumstances where economic shifts or migration disrupt traditional practices, as seen in the context of in-migrant cocoa farming (Okali, 1983). These arrangements can undermine matrilineal continuity, as children grow up outside their mother's lineage, complicating traditional inheritance patterns.

Matrifocality, on the other hand, denotes a family structure in which the mother or a female figure dominates the household both socially and economically (Smith 1973). Though this does not always mean that males are absent, women often bear the main burden of caring and decision-making in matrifocal communities. For instance, matrifocality is frequently seen in societies where women run families, usually in response to significant male migration or other circumstances lowering men's participation in the home.

In comparison, while matriliny emphasises descent and inheritance through the mother line, matrifocality centres on the organisation and leadership of the family around women, typically mothers. Matriliny and matrifocality operate in different social dimensions, and they are specifically linked together in discussing how both function in a particular society.

The theoretical importance of literature on matrifocality lies in its ability to distinguish between idealised models of kinship systems and the actual statistical norms observed in practice (Amanor 2001). The concept of matrifocal family structures is vividly presented by Smith (1973) through the lens of three generations of women who work together, often encountering unstable marriages and limited support from men. It is a case study based on Guyana, such as the West Indies, where marriage ties are less emphasised compared to mother-child bonds.

For example, the relationship between mothers and daughters often forms a central pillar of familial structures, even when marriage is present. Smith (1973) argues that these women maintain household continuity and provide mutual support, even as marital unions tend to dissolve. These family structures prioritise the mother-child bond over the conjugal bond. Women, especially mothers, become the backbone of the domestic sphere, creating stable households despite the instability of marriages.

This situation results from several socio-economic factors. In some contexts, such as lower-class communities in the Caribbean, men may fail to consistently provide for their families due to economic instability (Smith 1973). Consequently, women are left to manage their households, with the emphasis placed on maintaining ties with their children and female relatives, rather than husbands or male partners. Over time, these women-centred networks often include grandmothers, daughters, and their children, forming a collective support system that endures even after the dissolution of marriages (Smith 1973).

Additionally, these women's relationships are not restricted to the domestic sphere; they often extend into economic realms where women play crucial roles. In societies with matrifocal structures, women not only raise children but also engage in trading, farming, and other productive activities. This further solidifies their position as the stabilising force within their families. Even as men remain marginal to these domestic arrangements, women take on roles traditionally associated with male authority, thus shaping a unique kinship system that revolves around female-centred relationships across generations (Smith 1973).

Despite the challenges posed by unstable marriages, this intergenerational structure of female kin continues to function effectively, albeit without the structural continuity seen in patriarchal societies (Smith 1973). These groups may dissolve when a grandmother passes away, but the system of mutual support persists as long as the women stay connected (Smith 1973). The emphasis on the mother-child relationship, rather than on conjugal ties, explains why these familial units endure despite the often-transient nature of marriage.

This pattern of matrifocality reflects the larger societal conditions where women, particularly in the working class or impoverished communities, become the primary providers and carers in a world where male employment and authority are often unreliable (Smith 1973). In cocoa farming communities in Ghana, similar patterns of female-led households and women's significant roles in both the domestic and agricultural spheres have emerged. Due to economic pressures, migration, and the scarcity of reliable male labour, women often become the primary labour force in cocoa farming, assuming responsibilities that go beyond their traditional domestic roles. This shift aligns with Smith's observations of how broader societal and economic conditions force women to take on leadership roles in their families and communities.

In his study, Amanor (2001) builds on Smith's framework of matrifocality and applies Smith's approach to the cocoa sector in Ghana using the term "matrifocal alliances" to describe the proactive steps taken by female members of the lineage in Akyem Abuakwa matrilineal communities to preserve women's access to land. This strategy emerges in response to concerns about male relatives redirecting land outside the matrilineage, often to benefit their wives and children who are not part of the maternal lineage. To counter this, mothers and grandmothers deliberately prioritise daughters and granddaughters in land inheritance, thereby securing property within the maternal line and countering any male-driven shifts of resources beyond the matrilineal framework (Amanor 2001).

Amanor (2001) emphasises that this matrifocal strategy aims to consolidate female access to land resources and reduce the risk of alienation. By prioritising daughters, mothers ensure that they provide future security for female descendants. This approach is embedded in a larger gender-based alliance that draws on the social and labour contributions of daughters to their mothers and grandmothers, reinforcing an intergenerational bond among women within the matrilineal system.

Amanor's (2001) study indicates that many women in Akyem Abuakwa communities do not rely on security through their husbands' property rights but instead focus on securing their land rights and retaining control over it. They aim to transfer their farm property directly to their daughters. This approach is rooted in the household's gendered division of labour: sons typically work alongside their fathers, while daughters collaborate with their mothers and grandmothers. Unlike the often-intense conflicts observed among men over farm labour organisation, intergenerational disputes between mothers and daughters are generally mild (Amanor 2001). This difference is partially due to the fact that women's farming activities are less commercially driven than men's (Okali 1983; Amanor 2001). Daughters frequently continue farming on their mothers' land until marriage, as they often lack the resources and physical strength to manage large-scale labour independently (Amanor, 2001). Women's agricultural activities tend to be smaller in scale and concentrate more on food crops, in contrast to the orchard crops prioritised by male farmers (Okali 1983; Amanor 2001).

Thus, Smith and Amanor's framework provides a critical lens through which to understand the gendered dynamics of labour and household organisations in the study of cocoa farming in Ghana, particularly in relation to women's evolving roles as economic providers and leaders within their families.

'Matriarchy' refers to a societal structure in which women possess official political, social, or economic authority, contrasting with 'patriarchy', where men exert dominance (Duncan 2004). Nonetheless, authentic matriarchies, in which women exert dominance throughout all facets of life, are exceptionally uncommon, and the term is frequently misused (Richards 1950; Schneider 1961). In many matrilineal communities, while females trace the lineage, males often hold the majority of authority, as demonstrated by maternal uncles or brothers. Scholarly discourse has frequently contested and misconstrued the notion of matriarchy, occasionally mistakenly conflating it with matriliny (Richards 1950; Peters 1981).

Scholars such as David Schneider (1961) contended that matriliny is a system in which descent is traced down the female line. However, he highlighted that, while women are counted, kinship authority is frequently held by men.This places women at the centre of kinship structures because they are key to maintaining lineage continuity. However, as Schneider emphasises, the actual authority in decision-making, particularly in political, legal, or economic matters, tends to rest with men, even though the kinship is traced through women.

This apparent contradiction between kinship and authority is a common feature in many matrilineal societies. For example, in many African matrilineal groups such as the Ashanti, although property and titles may be passed down through the mother line, the male relatives—often the mother's brother or maternal uncle—exercise significant authority over these assets. This reflects the broader principle that while women are central to the structure of kinship and lineage, men are often the ones who manage and control resources and power.

Thus, Schneider's argument underscores the duality in matrilineal kinship systems: women are pivotal in sustaining the lineage, but the authority to make crucial decisions tends to be concentrated among men, revealing a gendered division of roles within these societies. Schneider (1961) contended that men, particularly brothers and uncles, retain the highest positions of power within matrilineal groups, which he believed frequently serves to promote another type of male control. Schneider argued that matriliny did not confer upon women significant authority; rather, it is a reconfiguration of male rule, albeit through female kinship lines.

In Akan society and other matrilineal systems, the relationship between a mother's brother (*Wofa*) and his sister's children is as significant as a relationship between mothers and their children or between siblings. These latter relationships are vital for emotional, social, and even economic reasons, providing critical support and continuity in the family structure.

However, the maternal uncle's authority in matrilineal societies does not necessarily represent a shift from a father-son dynamic, as seen in patrilineal systems. Rather, it reflects a different mode of exercising male authority within the family. The uncle's authority over his sister's children and the father's authority over his biological children coexist as two distinct mechanisms for organising male power and control in the family.

Levi-Strauss's (1963) study addresses this point by discussing the different structures of authority and kinship across societies. He does not argue that one system replaced another but instead highlights that these systems reflect different ways of structuring male authority, depending on the kinship system in place. The matrilineal system allows men to exercise power as uncles over their sisters' children, while in patrilineal societies, male authority is more commonly exercised by fathers over their biological children. Thus, both forms of male authority—through uncles in matrilineal systems and fathers in patrilineal ones—represent parallel systems rather than one evolving into the other.

Significant property and titles in Akan matriliny are inherited matrilineally, often bypassing male sons and instead being given down to maternal nephews, ensuring the matrilineal lineage's survival. The control is exercised by uncles over sisters' children, not by women. This style of succession also establishes a social and political organisation where men control matrilineal property and serve as administrators and guardians of family assets.

Alternative key areas for kinship studies, such as ties between same- and opposite-sex siblings, received little attention. Thus, it might be claimed that structural-functionalist anthropology's emphasis on descent underestimates the importance of siblingship in understanding and valuing matrilineal kinship relationships.

The preceding discussion highlights the importance of the assumptions used in studies of matrilineal cultures. Early studies of matrilineal societies often struggled to understand gender and kinship relations, primarily because Western anthropologists were unfamiliar with matrilineal kinship structures. Influenced by patrilineal or cognatic norms, researchers such as Colson (1958), Mitchell (1956), and Rowley (1867) initially viewed matriliny as problematic or confusing. Peters (1997), after reviewing early anthropological accounts, argued that the so-called "matrilineal puzzle" was not rooted in kinship structure but rather in the gender dynamics that granted women more social and political authority than was typical in patrilineal contexts.

These early analyses generally predicted a gradual decline of matriliny, assuming it would be replaced by patrilineal structures as societies modernised and centred around nuclear family ideals. Scholars such as Murdock (1949), Colson (1958), and Levi-Strauss (1963) hypothesised that the growth of market economies and individual property ownership would inevitably lead to a weakening of matrilineal systems. This expectation was based on observed shifts in income distribution, the rise of personal property, and the assumption that economic changes would lead to patrilineal dominance as men prioritised inheritance to their own descendants.

Richards (1950) and later Gough (1961) expanded on the "matrilineal puzzle", highlighting the inherent tension between matrilineal kinship roles and economic individualism. Richards emphasised how modernisation shifted men's focus from maternal kin to their own children, undermining the collective responsibilities of matriliny. Gough (1961) also noted that in matrilineal societies, men's dual roles as fathers and maternal uncles were increasingly conflicted, as wage labour opportunities redirected economic benefits toward their nuclear families, weakening traditional kinship ties. Fortes (1953) concluded that this economic individualisation often led to the gradual erosion of traditional matrilineal obligations.

Further exploration of matrilineal systems revealed greater complexity. For example, Colson's (1958) study of the Plateau Tonga in Zambia highlighted how men navigated the "matrilineal puzzle" by avoiding matrilocal marriage, and favouring bride wealth payments instead, which allowed men to retain some authority over their children while avoiding obligations to their wives' families. This focus on kinship tensions underscored the adaptive strategies men developed within matrilineal structures to balance conflicting social roles.

Some scholars also investigated how external pressures, including colonialism and capitalist economies, influenced matriliny. Gough (1961) argued that Western economic expansion and property privatisation would inevitably disrupt communal land ownership in matrilineal societies, pushing them toward patrilineal or bilateral inheritance structures. Gough (1961) found that colonial policies, particularly in West Africa, disrupted matrilineal inheritance by imposing legal frameworks that favoured male ownership. Douglas (1971) and Goody (1973) noted that income disparity and the emphasis on individual property in capitalist societies weakened the principle of matrilineal descent. Similarly, Douglas (1971) argued that while matriliny might struggle under capitalist values, it could thrive where labour demands outweighed material resource competition.

As more case studies emerged, it became evident that matriliny was not universally disintegrating. For instance, Okali's (1983) study of cocoa-farming communities in Ghana refuted the notion that matrilineal practices were vanishing. She observed that wives, rather than husbands, often insisted on reciprocity for their contributions to farm labour, with a lack of reciprocation leading to divorce in some cases. Okali's study illustrated how matriliny persisted and adapted within the context of cash economies, challenging earlier theories that economic individualism would entirely erode matrilineal structures. Okali (1983) explores matriliny within the cocoa economy by examining specific investments made in farms, such as labour and services, as well as the interests and expectations of various relatives involved, including the farm owners' wives, sons, and nephews.

The Okali 1983 study, again, for example, demonstrates that, despite these adaptations, matrilineal systems may still exclude wives and children from land inheritance. Okali argues that in some matrilineal contexts, lineage-based inheritance practices prioritise kinship ties over nuclear family allocations, meaning that land remains within the matrilineal lineage rather than being distributed to spouses or descendants, preserving matrilineal continuity despite broader social and economic changes.

Amanor (2001) further examined matrilineal resilience, arguing that economic instability and globalisation could reshape matrilineal kinship without fully eradicating it. He posited that while matriliny could evolve into matrifocal units, where men's roles as husbands or brothers diminished, this transformation did not necessarily mean a shift to patrilineal authority. Instead, matrilineal systems might pivot toward women-centred networks, focusing on shared economic responsibilities and kinship. He posited that matrilineal systems might shift towards women-centered networks, emphasising shared economic responsibilities and kinship.

Despite these challenges, some studies revealed that matrilineal authority persisted in certain contexts. For instance, Okali (1983) documented how matrilineal kin groups in Ghana maintained control over land even as economic pressures and family dynamics shifted. She illustrated that while matrilineal authority over land ownership might be redefined, it was not entirely displaced. Instead, matrilineal kinship continued to exercise influence by adapting to new social and economic structures, underscoring the resilience of matrilineal practices amid modernisation pressures.

In summary, early predictions anticipated the inevitable decline of matrilineal systems under modernisation, but recent studies reveal a more nuanced picture. Matrilineal societies exhibit significant adaptability, balancing traditional kinship values with the demands of global economic integration. Although pressures from capitalist economies and colonial policies have challenged matrilineal authority, these systems have shown resilience by evolving into structures that meet the needs of contemporary society, preserving core aspects of matriliny even as they adapt to external influences.

To conclude, the literature presents several key challenges that require closer scrutiny. A recurring issue is the tension between women's central roles in agricultural labour and household management versus their limited authority within kinship and land inheritance structures. This contradiction is especially evident in matrilineal systems, where despite women's pivotal position in maintaining lineage continuity, men—particularly maternal uncles—often control property and decision-making. This duality reveals a structural imbalance that perpetuates male dominance despite the apparent focus on matrilineal descent (Richards 1950; Okali 1983; Amanor 2001).

The examination of kinship theories, particularly matriliny and matrifocality, adds further depth to the discourse. Matriliny, as seen in the Asante and Akyem communities, emphasises the lineage's continuity through female descent but often relies on male authority to govern resource allocation. Matrifocality, on the other hand, reflects households where women assume leadership due to socioeconomic pressures, a trend mirrored in certain cocoa-farming communities in Ghana where women take on primary agricultural roles amidst labour shortages or male migration. This adaptation within matrilineal communities highlights the evolving nature of kinship systems in response to economic and social shifts.

Another significant issue is the impact of modernisation and economic pressures on traditional matrilineal systems. As capitalist economies expand and migration patterns shift, the traditional kinship systems, which once ensured communal land ownership and supported women's land access, are gradually weakening. The literature highlights how economic changes, such as the commercialisation of agriculture, have led to a preference for privatised land ownership, which disproportionately benefits men and erodes women's access to land.

The study frameworks of kinship, matriliny, and matrifocality guide the analysis of women's access to resources, authority in lineage-based communities, and economic autonomy in Ghanaian cocoa farming households. The study uses these frameworks to measure the intersections of gender, economic roles, and familial support systems within matrilineal societies, focusing on how these dynamics affect women’s positions in the agricultural economy.

2.4 Gender relations within the lineage

Gender systems, either patrilineal (tracing descent through the father's line) or matrilineal (through the mother's line), significantly shape gender roles in African societies. These systems determine the distribution of land, inheritance, and labour, which directly influences women's and men's roles in marriage and farming.

In matrilineal systems, women traditionally have more secure access to land, as inheritance and land transfer often pass through the maternal line, but they pass from men to men through the matrilineage, not from women. For instance, in parts of Ghana, specifically among the Akan, women in matrilineal communities sometimes receive land from their brothers or uncles, and there is a conscious effort by female lineage members to pass land on to their daughters, forming what some researchers call "matrifocal alliances" (Amanor 2001; Duncan 2010). In the context of matrilineal societies, Amanor 2001 argued that particularly in parts of Ghana, a matrifocal alliance might emerge when women choose to bypass male relatives, such as brothers and uncles, and pass land directly to their daughters and granddaughters. This strategy is seen as an effort to consolidate female access to lineage property, ensuring that the land remains within the maternal family, thereby reinforcing the economic power and independence of women in the family.

However, even in these systems, men's roles in land allocation remain significant, and power dynamics within the family often favour male relatives. This is exacerbated by shifting economic circumstances, such as the commercialisation of agriculture and land scarcity. In these contexts, gender relations around land become more complex, with women sometimes having to negotiate access through marriage or other familial connections (Okali 1983; Amanor 2001; Whitehead & Tsikata 2003; Duncan 2004, 2010).

The commercialisation of agriculture, especially in cash crops like cocoa, has further complicated gender relations around land. As agriculture shifts from subsistence farming to commercial production, the value of land increases, and control over it becomes more competitive. This shift often favours men, who traditionally hold power in land allocation, which further reduces women’s access to land in matrilineal societies. For instance, the rise of cocoa farming in Ghana has brought about exacerbated gender inequalities in land access because men tend to control the high-value land used for these commercial crops. Example: In cocoa-producing regions, women contribute significantly to farm labour, often working alongside their husbands or male relatives (Okali, 1989). However, the profits and ownership of the land and crops are typically controlled by men. Despite their contributions to farm labour, women often receive smaller plots for subsistence farming, but their access to larger, commercially productive lands remains limited.

As land becomes scarcer due to factors like population growth and environmental degradation, its access becomes even more competitive. This intensifies gender disparities in land rights. In regions experiencing land scarcity, competition for available land increases. Since men typically have greater control over land allocation, women often locate themselves at a disadvantage. In matrilineal societies, while women inherit land, the rising scarcity and value of land often lead male relatives to exert tighter control, limiting women's ability to use or manage land independently. As a result, women may find themselves negotiating with male relatives or depending on male kin for access to valuable land.

Land scarcity can exacerbate tensions within matrilineal families, as inheritance traditionally follows the maternal line, passing land to nephews and nieces rather than solely to daughters. When fathers choose to pass land to their sons instead of their sisters' children, women are disadvantaged because they are excluded on both patrilineal and matrilineal fronts: their daughters and nieces miss out on inheritance. While sons still receive land from their fathers, nephews lose their matrilineal access. This shift disrupts the traditional inheritance structure and further diminishes women's access to land. In response, some women negotiate land access through marriage or their connections with male relatives, adding complexity to their land rights and weakening their traditional claims.

Okali (1983) addresses the complexities of property rights within matrilineal family structures, specifically in the context of farm acquisition, development, revenue distribution, and intergenerational transfer. Her study highlights the tensions that arise among family members, particularly between husbands and wives, fathers and sons, and maternal uncles and their sisters' sons, as they navigate these issues.

Okali (1983) argues that successful cocoa farmers often supplement hired labour with the labour of relatives, including wives, children, and matrilineal kin, who work with the expectation of future rewards, such as gifts from cocoa plantations. These kin contribute to the enterprise with the understanding that, as the farm becomes profitable, they will receive compensation for their role in establishing and supervising the plantation over time. However, cocoa plantations require years to become profitable, and farmers frequently pass away before their investments fully mature. This delay in the maturation of assets often leads to contentious disputes among family members—wives, children, and matrilineal kin—over the inheritance of these plantations. Often, those who have invested substantial effort into the farms are disappointed when matrilineal heirs, such as junior brothers who may not have contributed to the enterprise, claim the plantations (Okali 1983).

Given the complexities of gender and land in these systems, marriage and familial ties become crucial ways for women to gain access to land. In both matrilineal and patrilineal systems, marriage serves as a critical point for women to negotiate access to land. However, the terms of access vary. In patrilineal societies, women may gain access to land through their husbands, but this access is often temporary and contingent on the stability of the marriage. In matrilineal societies, while a woman's lineage might technically grant her land, her control over it can still be limited by the influence of male relatives. Often, women depend on their relationships with male kin or husbands to secure the necessary land for farming or other economic activities.

Even in matrilineal systems where inheritance flows through the mother line, women may still have to negotiate with male kin, such as brothers or uncles, who hold traditional authority over the land. These negotiations can be complicated by economic factors, such as land scarcity or the commercialisation of agriculture, which often prompts men to retain control over high-value land.

Matriliny both enables and constrains access. While some women inherit land through maternal kinship, the authority of male lineage heads (abusua panyin) continues to mediate such transfers. For instance, cases of inheritance are often accompanied by restrictions on sale or reallocation, leaving women with use rights rather than absolute control. By emphasising this duality, the study avoids overstating exclusion while still demonstrating how women's autonomy is conditional and frequently contested within matrilineal systems (Okali 1983; Duncan 2004).

Thus, multiple factors shape the dynamics of gender relations around land in African contexts. Whether patrilineal or matrilineal, kinship systems set the framework for inheritance, but men typically retain control over land allocation and decision-making. This male dominance is further exacerbated by economic pressures, like the commercialisation of agriculture and land scarcity, which make access to land more competitive and often favour men. Women, in turn, must navigate these systems by negotiating access through marriage or familial connections, which often leaves them in a vulnerable position when it comes to land rights. These dynamics illustrate how gender relations within lineages are deeply intertwined with economic systems, particularly land ownership, and are shaped by both customary norms and evolving economic conditions since the customary norms also change and embody commodified relations.

2.5 Household Study

Understanding gender relations within lineages requires an exploration of household dynamics, as households serve as fundamental units of both social structure and economic activity. The interplay between land ownership and customary norms within these households reveals how gender roles are not static but instead evolve alongside changing economic conditions. By examining household studies, there will be deeper insights into how these economic systems shape and are shaped by the relationships between genders, illustrating the commodified nature of social ties in contemporary contexts.

A household is a social unit typically composed of individuals who live together and share economic, social, and reproductive responsibilities (Peter's 1981). It can include family members – such as parents, children, and extended kin – or non-relatives who live together and cooperate to maintain the household's needs (Okali 1983). The household is central to organising daily life, providing a structure for production, reproduction, and consumption.

According to Jane Guyer (1981), the concept of a household is not a straightforward or rigidly defined entity, especially in African contexts. Guyer critiques the traditional use of the household as a singular, cohesive unit for analysis, arguing that it often does not reflect the realities of African social and economic life. Instead, households are better understood as fluid and dynamic, composed of individuals who may not always live together but are tied through shared responsibilities, resources, and obligations (Guyer 1981).

Guyer points out that the composition of households can be highly variable due to factors such as mobility, marriage, and economic relationships. For example, individuals within a household may engage in semi-autonomous decision-making, where some decisions are made independently while others are collective. This is in contrast to the Western idea of a nuclear family-based household where all members' resources and efforts are pooled for the common good (Guyer 1981).

Furthermore, households in African contexts are often linked to larger kinship networks and lineage systems. This means that members of a household may hold economic interests and obligations in other households, complicating the notion of a household as a self-contained economic unit (Guyer 1981).

In many African societies, households are also shaped by lineage systems – matrilineal or patrilineal – which influence inheritance, land ownership, and gender roles in production and reproduction (Duncan 2004; Okali 1983; Whitehead & Tsikata 2003).

2.6 Gender Relations Between the Households

Gender relations between households in relation to production, reproduction, and consumption reflect the complex dynamics of African households, particularly within agricultural communities. In many societies, production roles are divided by gender, often shaped by both cultural norms and the economic needs of the household.

Gender roles within agricultural production are often divided by the physical nature of tasks. For example, in cocoa farming, men typically handle physically demanding tasks such as tree felling, chopping, and land clearance, while women are responsible for tasks like weeding, planting food crops, and carrying produce (Duncan 2010). This division of labour reflects broader patterns in agrarian societies where men dominate in more physically intensive activities, granting them greater control over land access (Whitehead & Tsikata 2003; Duncan 2004).

In the Ghanaian context, household labour is best understood as having a complementary and communal character, rather than being framed as merely compensatory. Women's contributions are embedded within systems of reciprocity and collective reproduction that sustain the household as a unit. Although women often carry disproportionately heavy responsibilities, farming households depend on interdependent exchanges of labour, where both men and women contribute—albeit in unequal measure—to household survival. This interpretation aligns with Guyer (1981) and Whitehead & Tsikata (2003), who emphasise that household reproduction should not be conceived as a zero-sum calculation of individual inputs, but as a relational process shaped by cooperation, negotiation, and structural inequalities.

In addition to production, men may use wage labour or hired labour, when necessary, particularly in tasks where their physical capacity or financial resources allow them an advantage. Women's economic activities may extend beyond direct agricultural production, including market trading or other forms of income generation, depending on local conditions and rights to labour and land (Whitehead & Tsikata 2003).

The concept of reproduction encompasses both biological reproduction and the reproduction of labour. Women's roles in the household and agricultural labour often intersect with their reproductive duties. In patrilineal societies, women's labour is critical for maintaining household sustenance and ensuring the continuity of the lineage through childbearing (Okali 1983; Duncan 2004). However, women's reproductive responsibilities can limit their involvement in more profitable or capital-intensive agricultural activities, reinforcing economic dependence on men (Whitehead & Tsikata 2003).

Childcare and domestic responsibilities tend to fall heavily on women, reinforcing their roles in ensuring the reproductive success of the household. Reproductive labour, though unpaid, is critical to the sustainability of the family and, by extension, the wider economic system, as it supports the ongoing production of labour.

Consumption patterns within households often reflect gendered divisions in income and expenditure. In many African households, women's income generated from cocoa production is kept separate from that of their husbands, and there is no common household budget (Whitehead & Tsikata 2003; Bessa et al. 2023). This separation means that men and women are often responsible for distinct areas of household expenditure. For instance, women may contribute more to everyday household needs, such as food, while men might invest in larger assets or agricultural inputs (Whitehead & Tsikata 2003).

Overall, the relationship between production, reproduction, and consumption in households highlights significant gender disparities in resource control, labour allocation, and economic independence. These disparities are shaped by both cultural norms and economic factors that perpetuate male dominance in certain spheres while limiting women's access to resources and decision-making power.

2.6.1 The Organisation of Labour Within the Household in Ghana

Labour organisation within the household in agrarian societies, particularly in Akan, is shaped by gender roles and responsibilities, particularly within the context of farming. In southern Ghana, women play a pivotal role in agricultural production, often taking responsibility for food crop farming while men focus on cash crop production, especially cocoa (Boserup 1970).

Marriage often serves as a framework for mutual support in cocoa production, though the extent and nature of this support may vary between spouses (Duncan, 2010). Research suggests that women are generally more reliant on male spousal support, largely due to disparities in physical and financial capacities. Physical strength, a crucial factor for success in cocoa farming, affords men a distinct advantage in initiating and expanding cocoa operations, particularly when spousal support is limited.

This dynamic aligns with the broader literature on the gendered division of labour in agrarian communities. Historically, men's role in land clearance has provided them with greater access to and control over land, reinforcing gender-based disparities in agricultural ownership and opportunities (Boserup, 1970; Duncan, 2004; Kotey & Tsikata, 1998).

Moreover, Okali (1983) argued that while matrilineal kin (matrikin) played a significant role in the lives of even migrant farmers, the nuclear family remained the primary source of labour for men. A gendered division of labour persisted, reflecting an ideal of separate property development for spouses and sons. In Okali's study in Akokoaso, women predominantly engaged in food production rather than cocoa farming, a pattern that limited their contributions to their husbands' farms to temporary roles. This finding aligns with Boserup's view that women are often relegated to subsistence farming, while men focus on cash crop production (Boserup 1970).

In a separate study in Dominase, Okali (1983) observed that both nuclear family members and the husband's matrilineal kin contributed to farm development, though property rights were understood to belong to men. This arrangement placed family members in economically precarious positions, creating tensions with traditional norms that separate marriage, parenthood, and descent ties, as well as with the customary roles of women in matrilineal societies.

Research indicates that marriage serves as a key institution in structuring labour organisation within households (Duncan 2010). In the cocoa sector, labour is typically divided along gender lines, with men performing tasks such as land clearing, felling trees, and planting cocoa, while women are more involved in weeding, planting food crops, and household-related tasks such as cooking for farm workers. This division of labour reflects both physical strength and traditional gender roles.

As farm owners grow older, labour patterns shift. Men tend to continue farming or hire labour, while women rely more on family members, particularly their children, to maintain their farms. In contrast, Okali (1983) argued in her study that elderly women often own farms, particularly those focused on food crops and cocoa, though their farm sizes are generally smaller. This is because of the availability of their elderly children to provide labour for their farms compared to women in their Middle Ages.

Overall, labour organisation within households is deeply intertwined with gender, age, and marital status. These factors influence not only who works on the land but also how land and resources are distributed within the household.

2.6.2 Reciprocity in Household Labour Organization

Numerous scholars have documented the exchange of land between husbands and wives as compensation for services provided within the context of cocoa farming (Okali 1983; Duncan 2001; Mikell 1975; Takane 2002).

In Ghana, reciprocity within the household is deeply intertwined with marriage and economic activities, especially in agrarian communities. Duncan (2010) argued that the concept of reciprocity often manifests through mutual labour exchange between spouses, particularly in cocoa farming communities. While women contribute significantly to their husbands' farms by performing tasks such as weeding and planting, men are expected to reciprocate by assisting with physically demanding tasks like land clearing and providing resources, such as land or financial support (Okali, Gyakye & Mabey 1975; Duncan 2010).

Okali (1983) argued that land gifting extends beyond family members, as land may also be allocated to relatives or close friends for cultivation or "to eat from". Men commonly allocate land on this basis to their children, sisters' children, and wives, while women may do so for their children, grandchildren, and, occasionally, their spouses. Okali (1983) observed that this arrangement was prevalent in Akokoaso, where citizen women frequently provided their migrant husbands with land under these terms.

This reciprocal relationship is not always equal. In many cases, men are more likely to provide land to their wives as a form of reward for their labour support on farms. In the Western Region, for example, Duncan's (2010) study indicated that wives may receive up to one-third of the land for which they provided labour, while men who assist their wives might receive half of the land. This division reflects the gendered nature of labour roles, where men typically engage in tasks that are deemed more physically taxing, giving them a larger share of land in return.

Furthermore, reciprocity is not limited to land distribution. In some cases, women are compensated in other forms, such as support for their children's education (Okali, Gyakye & Mabey 1975). This highlights the flexibility of the reciprocal arrangements within marriage, where labour provided by one partner is expected to be met with some form of reward, whether land, money, or education.

However, in patrilineal communities, reciprocity may take different forms. Women assisting their husbands do not always expect land in return, especially when the land is tied to lineage and cannot be transferred to outsiders. In these cases, other forms of compensation, such as household maintenance or the care of children, are seen as acceptable substitutes (Okali, Gyakye & Mabey 1975; Duncan 2004).

2.6.3 Labour Obligations within the Household

Labour obligations within Ghanaian households, particularly in agrarian settings, are intricately linked to gender roles, marriage, and the expectations surrounding property and economic contributions (Whitehead & Tsikata 2003; Okali, Gyakye & Mabey 1975; Okali 1983; Duncan 2010).

Customary marriage norms place significant obligations on women to assist their husbands in farm-related activities, while husbands are expected to provide financial and land support in return. In cocoa farming households, men often rely on their wives for labour, particularly for weeding, planting, and food crop management, while men engage in more physically demanding tasks such as felling trees and maintaining cocoa farms. These obligations are reinforced by the institution of marriage, where women's contributions are often viewed as extensions of their domestic duties rather than distinct labour contributions deserving of separate rewards (Okali 1983; Duncan 2004).

As part of their obligations, women may receive compensation in the form of land or other rewards, such as the education of their children, but these are not always guaranteed. In some regions, the reciprocal exchange of land for labour is formalised, with women entitled to a portion of the land they help cultivate. However, these arrangements often favour men, who are typically assigned more land due to their perceived higher physical contribution (Duncan 2004).

Ultimately, the distribution of labour obligations within the household is heavily influenced by gender and social expectations, with women shouldering a significant share of both farm work and domestic responsibilities, often without equivalent recognition or compensation.

Women's Obligations and Claims on Labour: Effects on Access and the Drain on Labour

Women's obligations within households, especially in agrarian societies, often place heavy demands on their labour. These obligations, particularly in marriage, involve supporting their husbands' farming activities while maintaining their own food production responsibilities (Okali, Gyakye & Mabey 1975). In Southern Ghana, women typically assist in tasks such as weeding and planting food crops, which are integral to both family subsistence and the wider agricultural economy.

These obligations also extend to claims on the labour of others, particularly family members. As women grow older, they increasingly rely on their children to assist with farm work (Okali, Gyakye & Mabey 1975). This reciprocal family labour system alleviates some of the strain on women's labour but still leaves them vulnerable to high labour demands, particularly when male family members prioritise their own land.

The claims that women make on labour are often mediated by their social obligations. Their ability to call on help from extended family, particularly in communities where land is communally owned, is often based on the social and economic contributions they have made to their lineage (Okali 1983). However, this system can lead to a drain on women's labour, as they must balance supporting their own farms with assisting others in their family, often without direct compensation.

In some cases, women are compensated for their labour contributions through acc ess to land, but these arrangements are inconsistent. Women may receive land or financial rewards for their labour in certain cocoa-farming regions, though this is not always guaranteed. These labour claims and obligations create a situation where women's access to additional labour is limited, further increasing the demand on their own physical contributions.

2.7 Women's Access to Land within the Household and Lineage

Access to land for women in both patrilineal and matrilineal communities in Ghana is highly contingent on their relationships within the household and extended family. In patrilineal systems, women often obtain land through their husbands or their husband's lineage, but these arrangements tend to offer limited security (Duncan 2004). The land is typically controlled by male relatives, and the assumption is that women will gain land through marriage, thereby relying on their husbands for access. This system can result in vulnerability, particularly if the marriage dissolves or the woman is widowed, as she may lose rights to the land (Whitehead & Tsikata 2003; Duncan 2010).

In matrilineal systems, where land inheritance is passed down through the maternal line, women have relatively more access to land from their own kin (Okali 1983). However, even in these societies, women's land rights can be constrained by male kin who still control the majority of land distribution decisions. Despite this, matrilineal inheritance offers women greater security in passing on land to their daughters and granddaughters, creating a form of "matrifocal alliances" aimed at counteracting the dominance of male control (Amanor 2001; Okali 1983; Duncan 2004).

2.7.1 Gifts as a Means of Accessing Women's and Children's Labour

The exchange of gifts plays a significant role in securing access to both women's and children's labour. Husbands and family members frequently provide gifts of land or money to women in appreciation for their labour on their farms, especially in cocoa farming communities. This serves both as a reward and as an incentive to continue working on the farm (Okali 1983; Duncan 2010).

Similarly, these gifts extend beyond spouses (Okali, Gyakye & Mabey 1975; Duncan 2004). In some cases, women assist their extended family members, and in return, they may receive financial or material gifts. This reciprocal relationship is not limited to spouses but is prevalent in broader kinship systems where women may help in farming activities and receive gifts in compensation. These forms of reciprocity and gift exchanges also apply to children's labour. Older women, especially as they age, rely on their children for farm labour, and the expectation of receiving gifts such as land or other rewards is often a motivating factor for children's participation in household labour (Okali, Gyakye & Mabey 1975; Duncan 2004).

The exchange of gifts serves as a formalised method for gaining access to labour within households, and these exchanges reinforce gender and family dynamics in Ghanaian agricultural societies. In Ghanaian societies, gift-giving is deeply embedded in cultural practices and serves as a critical social tool. Gifts can symbolise respect, gratitude, and reciprocity, establishing and reinforcing social bonds among family members and community members. This cultural norm extends into agricultural labour, where gifts can facilitate labour exchanges and collaborations.

Okali 1983 argued that gift exchanges can take various forms, such as food, textiles, or monetary gifts. In agricultural contexts, these exchanges often occur during planting and harvesting seasons, when families may offer gifts to relatives or community members in exchange for their labour. This practice not only secures the necessary workforce for intensive agricultural tasks but also strengthens familial and community ties.

The dynamics of gift-giving are closely tied to gender roles within households. Men and women may engage in different types of labour and, consequently, participate in distinct gift exchanges. For example, women may provide food gifts to relatives as a means of requesting assistance in the fields, while men might offer tools or monetary gifts to incentivise labour participation (Okali and Mabey 1975). This exchange mechanism reinforces traditional gender roles, as women's contributions are often linked to nurturing and sustaining the household, while men's contributions are tied to economic transactions.

Gift exchanges are not merely transactional; they play a crucial role in shaping family dynamics. By formalising labour access through gifts, families reinforce their interdependence and communal relationships. This system of mutual support ensures that members contribute to the well-being of the household, creating a cycle of reciprocity that is vital for agricultural success (Duncan 2004).

As economic conditions evolve—due in part to globalisation, market integration, and shifting agricultural practices—the nature of gift exchanges and their implications for labour access also change (Okali & Mabey 1975). For instance, as cash economies grow, monetary gifts may replace traditional food or resource-based gifts, altering the fabric of these exchanges and potentially disrupting established gender roles.

The ability to give gifts can also reflect social capital and status within the community. Those with greater resources can offer more substantial gifts, thus wielding greater influence over labour dynamics and community relationships. This can further entrench inequalities based on wealth, gender, and social status, impacting how labour is accessed and valued (Oppong 1974). Bessa *et al.* (2020) argue that, while gift exchanges may reinforce traditional roles, they can also provide women with a degree of agency. By engaging in these exchanges, women can negotiate their needs and access labour resources, thereby carving out spaces for influence within the household and community.

The exchange of gifts serves as a formalised method for gaining access to labour within households, reinforcing gender and family dynamics in Ghanaian agricultural societies. These practices are especially significant in the context of cocoa farming, where labour relations reflect broader social structures and economic realities. As traditional family-based labour systems face challenges, such as labour shortages and shifts in kinship structures, sharecropping arrangements emerge as vital mechanisms for sustaining agricultural productivity. Research by Okali (1983), Amanor (2001), and Duncan (2004) highlights how sharecropping not only addresses these labour shortages but also embodies the commodification of labour, revealing intergenerational tensions and the evolving nature of kinship ties. Understanding the role of gift exchanges provides crucial insights into how these labour relations operate within the cocoa farming sector in Southern Ghana, illuminating the interplay between social customs and agricultural practices.

2.8 Labour Relations and Sharecropping in Cocoa Farming: Insights from Southern Ghana

In cocoa farming, elders commanded land and labour from younger family members, reinforcing a kinship-based labour system that relied on mutual obligations and familial loyalty. However, the increasing commodification of land and labour, coupled with generational conflicts over land access, has led to the breakdown of these traditional structures (Amanor 2001). As land becomes more commodified, the collective ownership model traditionally practised within families is giving way to individualised ownership. Younger family members may seek to secure their own land rights, leading to disputes and tensions with elders who may wish to maintain control over family land (Okali 1983; Amanor 2001).

The reliance on familial labour is declining, as younger generations often prefer wage labour over traditional familial obligations. This shift creates a gap in labour availability for cocoa farming, as younger members may migrate to urban areas for better economic opportunities, reducing their participation in family-run farms (Okali, Gyakye and Mabey 1975).

As traditional kinship ties weaken, sharecropping arrangements are becoming more common. These agreements can create more transactional relationships rather than the familial bonds that once characterised labour exchanges, leading to a commodified view of labour where individuals are compensated strictly based on output rather than kinship ties. Conflicts between generations arise as younger family members challenge the authority of elders regarding land use and labour expectations (Okali and Kotey 1971). These tensions can result in open disputes or the disintegration of family unity, as younger individuals seek to redefine their roles within the agricultural system.

The breakdown of traditional structures often leaves younger farmers vulnerable, as they lack the support networks that were once provided by extended family. Without the safety net of kin-based labour systems, younger farmers may struggle to manage the costs and risks associated with cocoa farming, leading to decreased productivity and financial instability (Okali and Kotey 1971).

The erosion of traditional labour structures can also lead to a decline in cultural practices that were previously integral to cocoa farming, such as communal workdays and collective harvesting. This cultural shift further alienates younger generations from their agricultural heritage, diminishing their investment in traditional farming practices.

Sharecropping emerged as a key mechanism to replace these faltering systems, allowing landowners, particularly elders, to secure labour through formal agreements. Elders dissatisfied with younger family members' unwillingness to work on family farms often engage in sharecropping arrangements. These contracts typically split harvests, with the landowner taking one-third or half, while the tenant, responsible for labour, keeps the rest (Okali 1983; Amanor 2001; Duncan 2004).

Younger generations, facing difficulties in obtaining land from elders, increasingly turn to sharecropping as a means to access farming land (Amanor 2001). Rather than rely on family inheritance or traditional labour exchanges[1] they pursue contracts with unrelated landowners. This

[1] Traditional labour exchanges in the context of Ghanaian agricultural societies refer to mutually beneficial arrangements within families or communities where individuals assist each other with agricultural tasks. See Okali 1983; Amanor 2001; Duncan 2004; Bene 2006.

Examples of Traditional Labor Exchanges

Reciprocal Labor: A family might help a neighbour during the cocoa harvest, and in return, that neighbour will assist them with their own harvest later. This mutual aid ensures that labour-intensive tasks can be completed efficiently.

Social Gatherings: During significant agricultural events, such as planting or harvest festivals, community members come together to work on each other's farms. These gatherings are both productive and social, reinforcing community bonds.

option becomes particularly appealing when family land becomes scarce, and inheritance processes grow contentious. These contracts grant them access to land while avoiding disputes with elders over land allocation and usage.

Economic shifts, including declining cocoa prices and rising labour costs, have exacerbated these trends (Amanor 2001; Duncan 2004). As families face financial strain, wealthier elders often manage multiple farms through sharecropping, using it as a strategy to maintain their holdings without relying on family labour. Conversely, poorer farmers, unable to afford hired labour, lease their lands to sharecroppers as a survival strategy (Duncan 2004).

The rise of sharecropping thus represents not only an economic adjustment but also a cultural shift in rural Ghana. Farming partnerships based on kinship, are being replaced by contractual relationships. Amanor (2001) provides a detailed account of the complex dynamics surrounding land inheritance, labor, and familial responsibilities in cocoa-farming communities. He observes that fathers are reluctant to release land to their sons and nephews without receiving labor or service in return. This trend has created a system where sons and nephews, unable to secure land from male family elders, often turn to their mothers or grandparents for access. Many young men experience a lack of land security and thus engage in alternative means of labour, such as working as sharecroppers or laborers, to escape family elders' demands for service.

In this context, the roles of family relations and kin-based service have gradually shifted. Sons and nephews, who historically expected to inherit land through family ties, now confront conditions where their rights are contingent upon meeting service expectations from fathers and uncles. This

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Elder Involvement: Elders often play a crucial role in coordinating these exchanges, utilizing their social capital and authority within the family or community to mobilize labour for communal tasks.

reliance on dependent labour has led to familial conflicts, particularly as sisters of these young men may also need land access for themselves. Consequently, this system not only reshapes traditional matrilineal inheritance but also reinforces economic dependencies within family hierarchies.

2.9 Changing Relations Brought About Through Commodification and Resource Scarcity

The commodification of resources such as land and labour, alongside the increasing scarcity of these resources, has significantly altered socio-economic relations, particularly in agricultural communities. This review explores how commodification—where resources are increasingly treated as marketable commodities—coupled with resource scarcity, reshapes relations within families and between different social groups. It also investigates the impact of these changes on labour practices, gender dynamics, and access to resources.

One of the primary outcomes of commodification in agriculture is the shifting nature of land ownership (Quisumbing et al., 2001). Historically, land was viewed as a communal resource or family inheritance, but increasing demand for agricultural products, especially cash crops like cocoa, has led to land being treated as a commodity. This shift has marginalised many smallholder farmers, particularly women, who traditionally had less access to land.

In southern Ghana, where cocoa farming dominates, men generally control larger tracts of land used for cash crops, while women are more involved in food crop production, which requires smaller plots. According to Okali, Gyekye, and Mabey (1975), in regions like *Konongo*, men dominate cocoa farm ownership, while women primarily manage smaller food farms. The commodification of land has made it increasingly difficult for women to secure their own farms, further exacerbating gender inequality in access to resources. Women's reliance on subsistence farming, rather than the more lucrative cocoa farming, limits their economic independence and positions them as secondary actors in agricultural production.

As land becomes commodified, labour has similarly been impacted. Migration—particularly male migration to urban areas or other regions in search of better wages—has created labour shortages in rural agricultural communities (Okali, Gyekye, and Mabey, 1975). This has led to an increasing reliance on household labour, particularly women and children. In many cases, women have become the primary labourers on family farms, especially when men migrate for employment. Okali, Gyekye, and Mabey (1975) observed that women in cocoa-producing regions are often relied upon to manage farms in the absence of male family members. This shift has placed additional burdens on women, who must balance agricultural labour with household responsibilities.

However, migration of women due to marriage and other sources of livelihood has an impact on their resource access (Amanor 2001; Duncan 2004). Marriage-driven migration is a common phenomenon in many cocoa-producing regions. Traditionally, women move to their husband's community, and their access to resources like land depends on the family into which they marry.

Women in cocoa farming areas, such as southern Ghana, frequently rely on their husbands or in-laws for access to land. This dependency on marriage ties often limits women's autonomy in managing land or crops, as they are less likely to inherit land independently compared to men. Women from the rural agricultural communities where land and labour are distributed are often cut off from essential access to resources due to migration. The Okali, Gyekye, and Mabey (1975) study underscores how migration, particularly rural-urban migration, results in women losing access to land that is often inherited or managed through close familial ties. Once women migrate, they are less likely to retain control over any land they may have had access to before leaving.

This women's migration trend has also led to increased reliance on male labourers and a greater concentration of land ownership among men, further marginalising women in cocoa production. As Okali (1983) notes, the migration of women out of agricultural areas results in an increased dependence on household labour, which is typically fulfilled by remaining female relatives (often older women or children). Thus, women who migrate for alternative livelihoods may experience a permanent reduction in their access to land, even if they wish to return to farming later in life.

Furthermore, Amanor (2001) states that the reliance on unpaid household labour, particularly women, arises as a significant issue amidst growing external labour costs and migration trends. As migration increases and labour demands rise, smallholder farmers struggle to afford hired workers, which compels them to depend more heavily on family labour. This dynamic creates a situation where women, despite their pivotal roles in agricultural production, are often left economically marginalised. Women's labour is typically not remunerated, either in formal wages or in increased access to economic resources like land or capital. This reinforces gender inequities within the household and farm structure, making women's contributions undervalued and unrecognised in formal economic terms (Amanor, 2001).

Amanor and Duncan highlight that this exploitation of household labour perpetuates a cycle of economic dependency and marginalisation for women, as they are consistently relegated to informal, unpaid roles that limit their financial independence. The commodification of land and labour further complicates this issue by creating barriers to access and formal employment, especially for women who lack land ownership or decision-making power. Consequently, the structural dependence on unpaid family labour in Ghana's cocoa sector exacerbates the economic vulnerability of women farmers, even though they are crucial to the industry's sustainability.

<u>The scarcity of capital and the strain on resource access.</u>

The scarcity of capital exacerbates the challenges associated with commodification. Farmers often lack the financial resources to invest in hired labour or new land acquisitions, limiting their ability to expand agricultural production. This scarcity creates a cycle where smallholder farmers, especially women, are unable to improve their economic situation because they cannot afford to purchase additional resources or hire labour.

Okali, Gyakye & Mabey (1975) also highlight that while men may eventually acquire cocoa farms through inheritance or capital accumulation, women are often dependent on their husbands or family members for access to land and capital. This further entrenches gender disparities in agricultural communities. The lack of capital also discourages investment in land improvement or technological innovations, which could enhance productivity and reduce labour demands.

The commodification of land and labour has also reshaped family dynamics, particularly in terms of gender relations. As men migrate in search of better opportunities, women are left to manage family farms and household responsibilities, leading to an increased burden on them. However, despite their growing role in agricultural production, women's contributions are often undervalued.

The patriarchal structure in many rural communities means that men still control the majority of land and resources. Even when women manage farms, they often do so in the name of male family members, and any profits generated are typically reinvested in the family rather than providing women with individual financial autonomy (Bessa 2020). As Okali & Oppong (1975) observed, women are more likely to assist their husbands and other male relatives on their farms, while men are less likely to provide similar support to women in their agricultural endeavours.

As land and labour become scarce, social tensions often arise, particularly within families. The competition for limited land can lead to disputes over inheritance, land tenure, and resource allocation. Amanor (2001) notes that in southern Ghana, the increasing commodification of land has led to conflicts between family members, particularly as younger generations seek access to land that is often controlled by older male relatives. The scarcity of labour, exacerbated by migration, has similarly strained family relationships, as the burden of agricultural work falls disproportionately on those who remain in the rural areas—primarily women and the elderly.

The commodification of resources and their increasing scarcity have profoundly impacted agricultural communities, particularly in regions like southern Ghana, where land and labour are key components of economic activity. These shifts have intensified gender inequalities, with women disproportionately affected by the changes in land ownership and labour demands. The scarcity of capital further limits opportunities for economic mobility, trapping many smallholder farmers, particularly women, in cycles of poverty. To address these issues, there is a need for policies that promote equitable access to resources and provide support for the most vulnerable members of agricultural communities (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003).

2.10 Conclusion

The reviewed literature on gender roles, kinship structures, and economic participation within Ghanaian cocoa farming communities provides a crucial framework for examining the intersection of gender, access to resources, and agricultural labour. Key themes highlight the structural duality in matrilineal societies, where lineage is traced through the maternal line but control over land and resources often remains in male hands. These dynamics underscore an inherent imbalance that frames the economic and social realities for women involved in cocoa farming.

Furthermore, kinship studies reveal how matrilineal frameworks, such as those observed among the Akan communities, shape access to land and labour obligations, though they remain influenced by male authority figures, like maternal uncles, in decision-making. The concept of "matrifocal alliances" is critical in understanding how women have adapted kinship structures to safeguard their land rights, highlighting an ongoing negotiation for economic autonomy within a traditionally male-dominated inheritance system.

Economic pressures, particularly those arising from agricultural commercialisation, exacerbate gender disparities, as men increasingly secure control over valuable agricultural land used for cash crops. As women's access to land and resources diminishes under these commercial dynamics, the literature emphasises the adaptive strategies women employ, such as reciprocal labour exchanges and the establishment of matrifocal networks, to maintain a measure of economic security and kinship cohesion. These findings reveal the adaptive yet constrained agency of women within Ghana's cocoa farming economy, providing a comprehensive backdrop against which to analyse the structural and relational influences on gender-based economic participation in the agricultural sector.

This literature thus frames the research problem by contributing to literature on the central issues of gendered resource allocation, the persistence of matrilineal inheritance systems in an increasingly market-driven context, and the implications of these dynamics for the economic roles of women in rural Ghanaian households.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The study examines the nature of women's participation in cocoa farming. It examines the extent to which women are able to participate in cocoa farming in their own right as independent farmers or as family labourers for spouses. Conversely, the study examines women's access to resources, including land and capital, and the extent to which they are able to own their farms or work independently as casual farm labourers or sharecrop tenants.

These issues are examined through a case study approach based on two settlements in the Asikuma District of the Central Region of Ghana, Adandan and Nsuekyir. These two communities were selected because they represent important cocoa-growing areas in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District and reflect variations in settlement systems, kinship structures, and women's participation in cocoa farming. They also provided accessibility and willingness of participants for in-depth life histories and focus group discussions. This makes them particularly suitable for exploring how matriliny and social differentiation shape women's access to land and autonomy in cocoa farming. The study seeks to gain insights into women's involvement in cocoa through qualitative survey methods based on collecting detailed life histories of a select number of women engaged in cocoa cultivation within these settlements. In addition, focus group discussions and interviews with officials from the Ghana Cocoa Board and Cargill Ghana were incorporated into the research.

3.2 Research Methodology

The research was based on semi-structured open-ended questionnaires. The main emphasis was on the open-endedness of the questionnaire, and most of the questions were directed towards building up a life history of the women participants, their experiences of farming, their access to resources, their movement into alternative livelihoods, their experience of kinship support or its negative impact on their life, their experience of inheritance, their experience of marriage, migration, and the ebbs and flows of wealth, precarious livelihoods and crises in their lives, and their perceptions of the challenges they faced. The women were encouraged to analyse their experience in their own words, and the analysis draws upon their reflections, perceptions and articulations. The semi-structured open-ended questionnaires enable some basic statistical data to be collected from these interviews, enabling the range of experiences of the women to be compared along thematic lines and statistically expressed, where appropriate.

3.3 Sampling

The target of the research was female farmers. However, five men cocoa farmers were also interviewed to provide some comparative experience and contrast between men and women. These were deliberately selected to include both poor men without access to land, including labourers, but also some of the wealthiest men farmers within the settlements, enabling a wider process of social differentiation to be grasped. The women farmers were also purposively selected on the basis of age to include young farmers recently entering farming, middle-aged farmers, and elderly farmers. They also involved a range of farmers, from the comparatively wealthy and well established to those without access to land.

A sample of 30 respondents was used for the open-ended questionnaires. The focus group involved ten farmers, including two men. The study was conducted in two neighbouring communities with similar characteristics. Both communities were deeply rural, in which cocoa farming predominated. Other cocoa farming communities in Asikuma, in which there are significant trading and marketing sectors, such as Kokuda and Jamra, where large women participate in the trading sector, were avoided so that research could focus more directly on women and cocoa.The study also included interviews with two cocoa officials. The group of women also included leaders from women's groups who are involved in policy interventions in the area. This process enables policy interventions in the area to be understood and the extent to which they represented grassroots or elite perspectives. The study also examines the discourses surrounding the promotion of women's participation in the cocoa sector, specifically within government policy, international cocoa corporations, and NGO projects. In addition to formal interviews, information was also gathered through field observations and informal discussions.

3.3.1 Focus Group Discussions

Two focus group discussions were held. The discussions were held at the Adandan community Centre. This phenomenon is due to the fact that the two neighbouring communities share many facilities, such as schools and hospitals, with the Adandan community centre being no exception. The discussions took place on a Thursday morning, which was a taboo day for farmers in Adandan and Nsuekyir to visit their farms. The meeting took place right after the cocoa farmers had finished their group meetings at the community centre. The researcher recorded and later transcribed the discussions. The interaction used mostly the Fanti language as a means of communication. The first discussion focused on the participation of women in cocoa production. The second discussion focused on how farmers get access to resources, such as land, labour, capital, and input.

Among the 10 participants are one girl, four middle-aged women, two elderly women and three men, respectively. Since most women participate extensively in cocoa production in their elderly ages, few young girls were available to be selected, and also because of a recent policy that rules against the engagement of younger children in cocoa farming activity, hence their low participation.

The one young female who participated in the discussion is a labourer who works on people's farms for income, with both parents working as sharecroppers. She was selected to help investigate female participation in cocoa production and some of the challenges young farmers face in the process. Among the four middle-aged women are one group leader of one of the units within the cocoa groups and a landowner who owns large acres of land for cocoa production, whilst the remaining three include one farm labourer, one sharecropper and one farm owner. These categories of women were selected to help the researcher achieve the objective of examining the extent of women's participation in cocoa production.

The focus group again comprised two elderly women, one sharecropper and one landowner. These elderly women were selected to assist with the investigation of women's access to resources, especially land for cocoa production, and also investigate the discussion surrounding the wealth accumulation of cocoa farmers within these ages.

Among the focus group discussion were three men. One of them works as a labourer, while the other two are sharecroppers. These categories of men were selected to assist in the investigation of the gender division of labour within the cocoa community and, moreover, to provide insight on the participation of women in cocoa production from a male perspective, as well as the division of labour within the household setting.

3.3.2 In-depth Interviews

Twenty-eight farmers were interviewed, including 14 women and 2 men cocoa farmers from Adandan and 9 women and 3 men farmers from Nsuekyir. Two cocoa officials from Asikuma district were also interviewed, including one from the Cocoa Marketing Board and the other from Cargill Ghana. These gave insights into policy frameworks and the integration of cocoa farmers into commercial markets and gender policies within the cocoa sector. The women were deliberately selected to include women of different ages and marital statuses since there is also a distinct developmental stage related to age in cocoa farming. In Ghana and Akan society, an individual's age significantly influences their decision-making capacity in various important domains within societal contexts. The principle of seniority within the family or lineage members determines the allocation of resources through inheritance in Ghanaian rural communities. In the context of this study, age emerged as a crucial factor influencing the involvement of women in cocoa production, as well as the ways in which their personal developmental cycles have influenced their engagement and access to resources within the cocoa sector. However, since women usually start farming independently at a quite mature age, only two women under twenty-five years of age were interviewed. Eleven elderly women and ten middle-aged women in their childbearing years were interviewed.

3.4 Ethical Issues

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the privacy, dignity, and autonomy of all participants. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to their involvement in the study, with full disclosure about the nature of the research, its aims, and the potential use of their names in the final report. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences, including the removal of their names from the research data.

While the use of participants' names was deemed necessary to accurately reflect their contributions, confidentiality of other personal information was maintained. Any sensitive or identifying details beyond names were anonymised to protect participants' privacy. The decision to include names was made with participants' explicit consent and their understanding of any associated risks, such as possible identification in published results.

This study was reviewed and approved by the University of Ghana Ethical Committee, ensuring compliance with all relevant ethical standards. Also, participants were told their names would only be used for research. Efforts were made to minimise any potential risks to participants' reputations or well-being through regular communication and the option to review excerpts from the final report.

3.5 Conclusion

The major focus of the research is on developing detailed case studies of women cocoa farmers' life experiences, documenting their access to land, labour and capital, and their participation in cocoa as farmers with control over land in their own right, as independent sharecroppers, as labourers and as wives of landowners, sharecroppers and labourers. The life histories approach also enables the development of women's assets to be analysed over the changes that occur over life, including the impacts of maturity, but also of adversity and misfortune that emerge through the precariousness of women's livelihoods and social status. A limited number of interviews were conducted to enable a detailed investigation of individual women's circumstances. However, the selection of women with diverse attributes, assets, and social status, along with their diverse life experiences, perceptions, and reflections on their mixed fortunes, should offer valuable insights and frameworks for investigating the nature of women's participation in the cocoa sector.

CHAPTER 4: PROFILE OF ASIKUMA ODOBEN BRAKWA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive profile of Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa, focusing on its geographical position, settlement patterns, economic activity, and government agencies and organisations present in the community. The Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District is one of the twenty-two administrative Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in the Central Region. In 1978, the Ajumako Enyan District was established as a separate administrative unit. The purpose of this decision was to enhance governance, foster comprehensive development, and bring development opportunities closer to the local residents (PHC 2010). The

Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District Assembly (AOBDA) was officially created on November 22, 1988, through a Legislative Instrument (L.I. 1378). Its administrative capital is Breman Asikuma.Breman Asikuma serves as both the administrative and traditional capital of the Bremans. It is one of the district's three traditional councils. According to the Population and Housing Census (PHC 2010), the additional customary assemblies mentioned are Odoben and Brakwa.

4.2 Location and Size

Asikuma is situated in the central region between latitudes 50° 51" and 50° 52" North and longitudes 10° 50" and 10° 5" West. The district is next to the Birim South District of the Eastern Region to the north, the Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam District to the south, the Assin South District to the west, and the Agona East District to the east (PHC 2010).

According to the 2010 population census, the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District covers an area of 884.84 square kilometres, which accounts for approximately 9 per cent of the total land area of the Central Region. The district is predominantly characterised by its low elevation, with an average range of 15–100 meters above sea level. It does, however, exhibit rolling or wavy terrain with scattered areas of elevated ground. Specific parts of the low-lying areas can contain swampy regions.

From a geological perspective, granite rocks and river sediments primarily form the soil formations in the Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa District. The district is located in the semi-equatorial climate zone. The monthly temperature fluctuates between 34°C in the warmest month (March) and approximately 26°C in August. The mean annual rainfall varies from 120 centimetres in the southeast to 200 centimetres in the northwest (PHC 2014).

The district experiences two instances of exceptionally high rainfall, characterised by two distinct peaks occurring in the months of May–June and September–October (PHC 2010). During the rainy season, the relative humidity is typically elevated, reaching approximately 80 per cent. However, in the dry and hot seasons, the relative humidity decreases to a range of 50 to 60 per cent (PHC 2010).

The area contains forest and savannah soils that are well-suited for growing a diverse range of commercial crops like cocoa, citrus, and oil palm, as well as staple food crops like cassava, yam, cocoyam, maize, rice, and vegetables. The vegetation consists mainly of semi-deciduous forest, which includes commercially valuable trees such as Odum, Mahogany, Wawa, and other hardwood species.

Over 50% of the population in the district relies on agriculture as their primary source of income. Furthermore, the district's Agricultural Extension Department describes the soil as exceptionally rich, containing a substantial amount of humus. This soil can sustain tree crops like cocoa, oil palm, and cola nuts, as well as basic crops such as cassava, plantains, and various vegetables (PHC 2014). Breman Asikuma, the administrative capital, is also the traditional capital of the Bremans and is one of the three traditional councils of the district. The other traditional councils are Odoben and Brakwa.

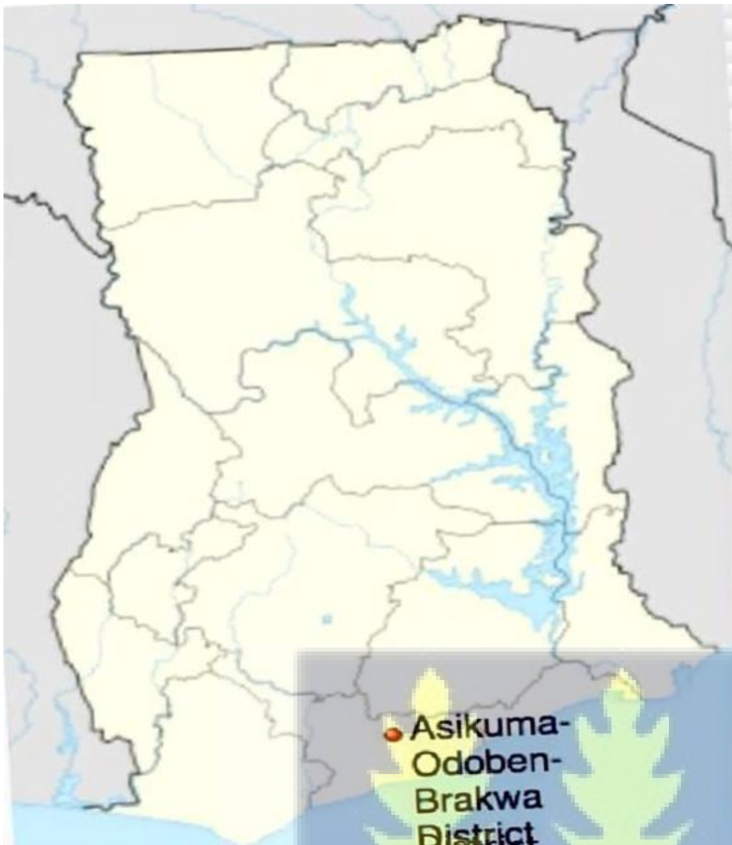

Figure 4.1: Map and Regions of Ghana

Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e7/NEW_GHANA_REGIONS.jpg.

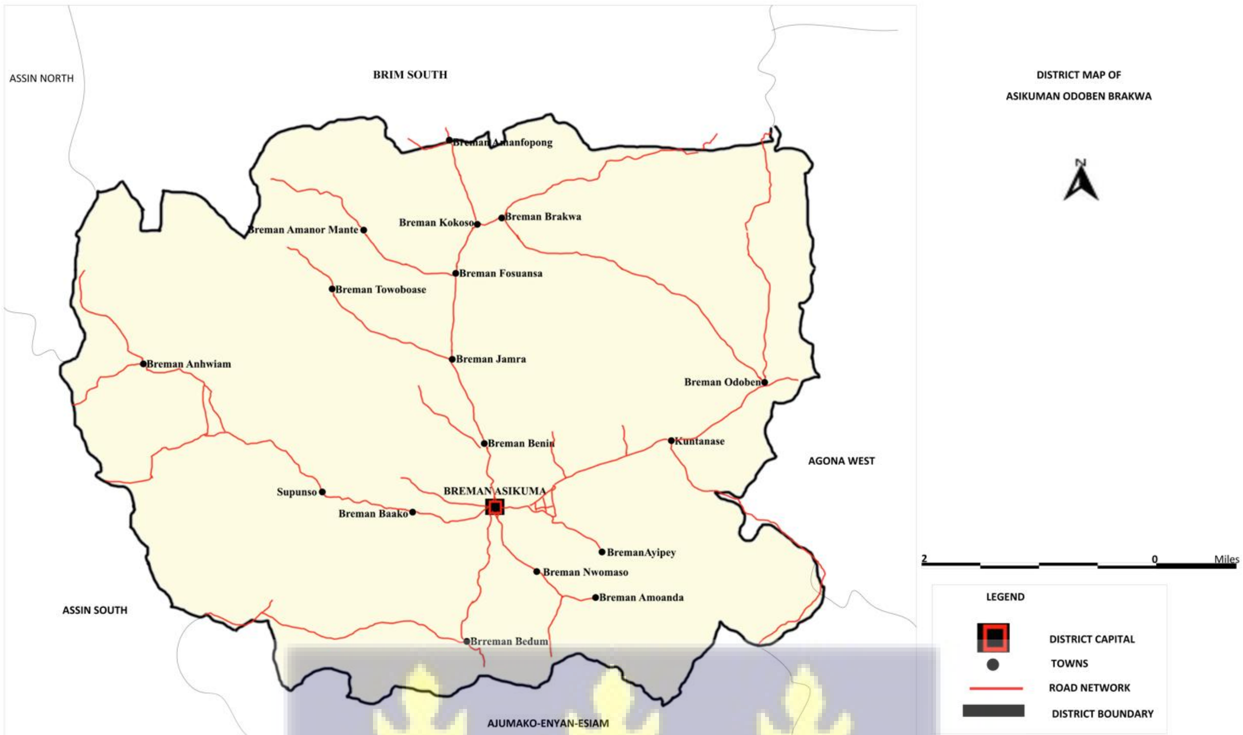

Figure 4.2: District Map of Asikuma-Odoben-Brakwa

Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2014

4.3 Settlement Systems in Asikuma

According to the 2010 PHC, the district's population density was 127 people per square kilometre. However, no community in the district has a population over 5000, except for the three major commercial and traditional towns: Asikuma, Odoben, and Brakwa. Over 464 communities dot the rest of the district, resulting in an average community size of 352 or less per community. The dispersed nature of the settlements and their small population size make equitable provision of infrastructural facilities difficult. Since most of them fail to reach the necessary population threshold for facilities like clinics, health posts, and schools.

4.3.1 Settlements Patterns in Asikuma Adandan and Nsuekyir

The trunk roads, which are branch roads outside the Asikuma main road network, primarily serve as the settlement patterns for the Adandan and Nsuekyir townships. Adandan and Nsuekyir are two neighbouring villages that use the same road to reach these towns. A wooden bridge spans a stream that divides the walking distance from Adandan to Nsuekyir, facilitating simple movement from one town to the next. The two settlements are quite isolated, leading to a lack of basic services. This is because they do not meet the required population threshold for certain services, such as limited electricity and water supply.

The District Planning Co-ordinating Unit's (DPCU) survey on the distribution and location of settlements revealed that most of the district's settlements are rural (DPCU 2005). Asikuma, Odoben, Kuntanase, Bedum, and Brakwa are the only medium-sized towns, and the average size of population in all the other settlements is around 300. This indicates that a large proportion of the district population lives in rural areas where poverty, deprivation, illiteracy, and lack of potable water and educational infrastructure, among others, are more pronounced.

About 87% of the houses in these two towns are predominantly compound in nature and mostly built with clay, block, and cement. Clay makes up 83% of the houses in these towns, while blocks and cement make up 17% (PHC 2010).

In Adandan and Nsuekyir, the materials most commonly used in roofing are thatch and iron or aluminium sheets. Other characteristics of the houses in the district include exposed foundations, cracked walls, leaking roofs, and ripped-off roofs. However, there is a low room occupancy rate of 2.4%, compared to 3.0% at the national level (PHC 2014).

Adandan is home to two basic schools that offer education to children from both Adandan and Nsuekyir. The majority of the structures within the school buildings have sustained damage. Due to a shortage of tables and chairs, some students are forced to sit on stones and other wooden materials during the teaching and learning process. Most of the schools' roofs, made of aluminium, are leaking and ripped off. Churches are spread throughout these towns. Small clay houses with aluminium roofing, some without doors and windows, house the majority of the churches.

In addition to the majority of the community's members working in agriculture, a few others run food stores, hair salons, tailor shops, and tabletop provision stores. Most farm produce is sold on Thursdays, the rest day, and the villagers dedicate the other days to farming activities.

The road network within the district is poor. In Adandan and Nsuekyir, means of transportation are problematic. Cars hardly ever go between the village and other towns because the road to the town isn't very busy. This hinders the smooth movement of vehicles and people in the town, especially during the rainy seasons. This situation has resulted in the expensive haulage of people and goods, especially food items, to and from the market centres. This situation has increased the incidence of post-harvest losses, resulting in a loss of income to farmers and traders.

Zoom Lion Company Ltd., a waste management corporation, is helping to address waste management, a problem in the most densely populated settlements, such as Asikuma, Odoben, and Brakwa. In the case of water, about 15% have no access to potable water and rely on streams. Some settlements with boreholes also have populations far exceeding the capacities of the facilities, leading to constant queues, breakdowns, and high maintenance expenses (PHC 2014). The few settlements, such as Nwomaso, Amanfopong, Fosuansa, Jamra, Brakwa, Bedum, Benin, and Baako, which have access to small-town piped water, also struggle with periodic power outages due to the district's lack of an electricity substation.

Furthermore, outdated pumping machines malfunction occasionally, resulting in an irregular flow of potable water. However, in Adandan and Nsuekyir, the situation is different; there is no waste management system in place, and households primarily collect and burn their waste. There are neither boreholes nor tap water, so people within these two towns use the running stream water for their daily activities. Electricity is available, but people within the community experience frequent power outages.

4.4 Ethnicity Diversity

The district comprises Akan, who occupy 93% of the population, according to the PHC 2014. About 7% of the district's total population consists of individuals from regions outside of Akan. The additional ethnic groups include the Ewes, Krobos, Guans, Gas, and various people from northern Ghana.The majority of migrants are Krobos, who have established their settlement within the Adandan community, known as "Krobo krom."

The neighbourhood has a diverse range of traditions and spoken languages. The migrants dispersed throughout the district primarily focus on agricultural pursuits, including the cultivation of cocoa, oil palm, and food crops. Despite the presence of diverse ethnicities in the district, there is a state of tranquillity and harmony among the numerous ethnic communities. This phenomenon has significantly contributed to the district's current state of peace and stability.

4.5 Religious Composition

The residents of Asikuma, Odoben, and Brakwa have a strong inclination towards religious beliefs and practices. Christianity is the prevailing religion. Christians make up 83 per cent of the respondents, while Muslims account for 9 per cent and members of traditional religions represent 0.5 per percent. Many denominations of the Christian religion exist, such as Catholic (11.0%), Protestants make up 22.4% of the population, followed by Pentecostal/Charismatics at 29.0%, and other Christian groups at 20.7%. Approximately 6.4% of the population expressed their lack of affiliation with any religion, with males outnumbering females by nearly two-fold, according to the PHC 2010.

All religious groups in the district adhere to the local taboos. People consider these taboos to hold significant socio-economic and spiritual importance. They regulate farming days, restrict land uses, and control access to water bodies. For example, the traditional council has designated Thursdays are days when people from Adandan and Nsuekyir are not allowed to visit their farms. During this day's farming, farmers rest and engage in the selling of their farm produce while meeting their individual groups. Other rural communities adhere to taboos, which deny women access to rivers during their menstrual periods and prohibit lumbering in certain areas known as sacred groves, believing them to house ancestral spirits that protect the environment.

4.6 Occupational/ Economic Activities

Agriculture, which encompasses both farming and animal husbandry, is the predominant economic activity in the region, employing approximately 66 percent of the labour force. The main reason for such a ratio is the favourable climatic conditions in the district (PHC 2010). The temperature in the district reflects a good climate. Ideal temperature ranges vary by crop, but generally, most farm crops prefer moderate temperatures that are neither too hot nor too cold. Precipitation, or adequate and well-distributed rainfall, is another characteristic of a desirable climate. Again, other characteristics of a suitable climate for crop production include sunlight, fertile soil with the right structure, pH, and nutrient content for specific crops, humidity, and moderate wind.

The agricultural industry in the district encompasses both crop cultivation and livestock husbandry. The agricultural practices in the district mostly focus on subsistence farming, with a focus on cultivating staple foods such as plantains, cassava, yams, and vegetables. They also cultivate cash crops like cocoa, coconut, citrus, and oil palm. According to PHC 2014, approximately 61 per cent of the farmers surveyed possessed land holdings exceeding 3.7 hectares, with an average of 3.92

hectares per farmer. This percentage exceeds the national average of 3.0 hectares for small-scale farmers by a modest amount.

The data from the Ghana Statistical Service's 2010 Population and Housing Census reveals that 83 per cent of families in the district are involved in agricultural activities. 98% of these households engage in crop farming, and 44% own livestock. Only a small proportion of agricultural households engage in tree growing and fish farming, with engagement rates of 0.3% and 0.1%, respectively.

Based on the PHC 2010 data, around 65.2% of the employed economically active population in the district earns their livelihood in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. Service and sales workers make up the second-largest group, accounting for 13.1%. Managers, professionals, associate professionals, and technicians collectively constitute 6.3 per cent of the employed workforce.

The distribution of sex by the Ghana Statistical Service 2010 reveals that 65 percent of males practice agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, while 62 percent of females fall into the same category. There is a higher proportion of females (20%) as compared to males (5%) working in the service and sales sectors. Plant and machine operators' occupation is predominantly male, with a representation of 4.7%, in contrast to 0.1% for females. The economic structure of the Assembly remains predominantly agrarian.

4.7 Markets and other Commercial Activities

The district is home to three primary periodic marketplaces. On Tuesdays and Fridays, the Asikuma market takes place, followed by the Brakwa market on Wednesdays and the Anhwiam market on Fridays. The Asikuma market is the largest in the district. Several merchants also sell agricultural products along the main Asikuma-Swedru thoroughfares. Traders and farmers face significant difficulties accessing these markets due to exorbitant transportation fees. This is due to the poor state of the feeder roads in district PHC 2014.

The primary agricultural products cultivated on the farm include plantains, cassava, cocoyam, 1kola nuts, palm oil, gari, rice, and maize. Kumasi, Takoradi, and Accra, all located outside the area, supply the majority of the produced goods. Most traders in the district are retailers who sell only there. The primary challenges facing traders in the neighbourhood include exorbitant transportation fees, limited access to credit facilities, and volatile commodity prices, which result in unpredictable incomes. PHC 2014.

4.8 Marketing and Processing

Women from Asikuma and Mankesim are primarily responsible for marketing agricultural products in the district. The majority of farmers sell their agricultural products to intermediaries, both women and men, on designated market days. They then sell them at urban marketplaces, both inside and outside the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, these intermediaries determine the prices of agricultural products. Generally speaking, the farmers suffer from the prices. Farmers complain, but their perishable goods and unprocessed sales leave them no choice. Agya Atta Kow, a male farmer from Adandan, reported:

> " The cost of farm produce is a significant disadvantage for us most of the time. Market women purchase our produce at a low cost from us and then sell it at a high price in the market. For instance, the sellers charge GHC20 for a bucket of maize, but when we inquire at the market, we discover that the same bucket of maize now costs 45–50, posing a challenge for all farmers. Additionally, the prices negatively impact us because market women sell some farm produce, particularly vegetables, at extremely low prices due to their perishable nature, leaving us with no other options".

4.9.2 Banking Services

The area is home to both commercial and rural banks; however, the availability of financial services is not easily accessible to all residents of the district. Rural banks serve the three predominant communities, namely Asikuma, Odoben, and Brakwa (PHC 2010).

Asikuma is home to three commercial banks and one rural bank. Odoben and Brakwa possess Breman Rural Banks. In addition to these services, SIC, ProCredit Microfinance, AKI Microfinance, and SSNIT also operate in Asikuma. The neighbourhoods where these institutions are located exhibit a high level of accessibility. However, a significant portion of these communities do not have adequate access to banking services.

4.9 Government Services

The assembly also includes various government services, such as the Ghana Education Service, Ghana Health Services, Ghana Police, Statistical Service, Bureau of National Investigation, Ghana Cocoa Board, and organisations such as the Centre for National Culture, the National Commission for Civic Education, the Commission on Human Rights and Administration of Justice, the District Electoral Commission, the National Disaster Movement, the National Health Insurance Scheme, Non-Formal Education Division, the National Board for Small Scale Industries, and Ghana Electricity Company Limited.

4.9.1 Cocoa Services

The Ghana Cocoa Board and Cargill have branches in the district. The Ghana Cocoa Board is a government entity that is exclusively responsible for providing support for cocoa production, marketing, and processing in the country. The Board is responsible for determining the purchasing price of cocoa in Ghana (Cocobod 2010). Cargill, on the other hand, is also involved in purchasing cocoa and providing inputs and agricultural services to farmers (Cargill 2018).

The Cocoa Board branch in Asikuma implements monthly programmes aimed at managing pests and illnesses affecting cocoa and coffee in the district. The institution promotes the cultivation of cocoa and coffee by supplying farmers with seedlings and offering agricultural extension services through periodic teaching on agronomic techniques and skills. The initiative aims to enhance production, provide food security, and improve livelihoods.

Kuapa Koko is another cocoa farmers' cooperative based in Ghana. This cocoa cooperative has extended its services to various cocoa production communities, including Adandan and Nsuekyir. Kuapa Koko is, specifically, one of the largest cooperative organisations for cocoa farmers in the country. Kuapa Koko was founded to enable smallholder cocoa farmers, enabling them to actively engage in cocoa sales and decision-making processes that impact their livelihoods.

The cooperative operates differently from a typical cocoa service company, which may offer services such as cocoa procurement, transportation, storage, or marketing. Kuapa Kokoo, on the other hand, focuses on collective ownership, fair trade, and improving the welfare of its farmer members by providing a fair price for their cocoa and supporting community development initiatives.

Aside from the services provided by the Ghana Cocoa Board, Cargill and Kuapa Koko, there are other cocoa purchasing agents and depots involved in the purchase of cocoa beans. These depots aid in assessing the quality of cocoa beans prior to their sale by helping farmers distinguish between inferior and superior beans, ensuring fair pricing during the sales process.

4.9.3 Electricity, Postal and Telecommunication services

All the towns that have access to electricity are located along the main routes that pass through the district, ensuring that all the zonal capitals are well served. However, some of their satellite towns do not have access to electricity.

Three post offices, namely Breman Asikuma, Breman Kuntanase, and Breman Kokoso, serve the district. The facilities in Kuntanase and Kokoso are currently inactive, while the facility in Asikuma is deteriorated and requires renovation.

Asikuma has a deteriorated structure that requires renovation. Asikuma has telecommunication services provided by MTN, AIRTEL, VODAFONE, and TIGO. The presence of these services supports business activities in the district. However, the quality of their network reception is sometimes unreliable and inconsistent.

4.10 Conclusion

Agriculture is the major economic activity in the Asikuma area, employing about 66 per cent of the working population. The agricultural sector of the district includes both crop production and livestock rearing. Agriculture as practised in the district is mainly commercial, producing staple foods such as plantains, cassava, yams, and vegetables, as well as cash crops such as cocoa, coconut, citrus, and oil palm. About 61 per cent of the farmers sampled by PHC 2014 had holdings of more than 3.7 hectares, with an average of 3.92 hectares per farmer. Most of the service sector within the district is concentrated in Asikuma, the district capital, and most of the farming population visit the district capital to access services including banking, electricity, water, education, postal services, and telecommunications.

Adandan and Nsuekyir are significant communities for cocoa production. While the communities lack services, they have attracted cocoa purchasing companies, such as Cargill; NGOs, such as Kuapa Koko; and migrant farmers. They are thus appropriate communities in which to examine developments and change in cocoa production.

CHAPTER 5: WOMEN IN COCOA FARMING AT NSUEKYIR AND ADANDAN

5.1 Introduction

Cocoa production is the main economic activity in Ghana's central region, specifically in the areas of Assin, Breman, Twifo-Hemang, Lower Denkyira, and Upper Denkyira (Ghana Cocoa 2020). Agriculture is the dominant economic activity in the Central Region, constituting approximately 52% of the local population's work. The area is renowned for cultivating multiple crops. The region did not purchase any cocoa from 1947/48 to 1959/60. In 1960/61, the region produced a total of 46,821 metric tonnes for the purpose of regional cocoa purchases. In 2019/20, the region produced approximately 85,526 metric tonnes of cocoa (Gyamfi 2019).

By the 1970s, cocoa in the Western Region had to compete with the opening up of new cocoa frontiers in southwest Côte d'Ivoire. The rapid expansion of Ivoirian cocoa resulted in an oversupply in international markets and rapidly declining prices. More favourable production conditions (including access to ownership of land at cheap prices) in the new frontier areas of Côte d'Ivoire (Chauveau and Léonard, 1996) resulted in most of the Sahelian migrant labour force relocating from Ghana to Côte d'Ivoire. This led to labour shortages in Ghana and increasingly expensive labour. Farmers had to rely more on daily casual labor instead of annual contracts and abusa[2] caretakers hired laborers or farm managers who earn a third of the cocoa's harvest and

[2] **Abusa**; denotes a third share (literally 'divided into three') and abunu, a half share ('divided into two'). This applies to both land rentals and labor hires. The caretaker receives a third share of the harvest from the labor system for maintaining, weeding, and harvesting an established cocoa farm. There are several variants of the tenancy system, in which the tenant may receive a half share or a two-thirds share. In the past, when the tenant created a cocoa plantation from a forest and managed the farm, they received two-thirds of the harvest. Another variation involved dividing the tenant-created plantation between the tenant and the landlord, with the landlords managing their portion. In this arrangement, the tenant received one-third of the land. In recent years, the dominant sharecrop tenancy arrangement has been a half-share between tenant and landlord. See Hill, 1956; Amanor, 2010.

marketing earnings at the conclusion of the farming year. Pest problems and declining soil fertility also affect cocoa after prolonged cultivation and the removal of forest cover. As a consequence, to maintain yields farmers have to invest in increasing purchase of pesticides, fertilizers and hybrid cocoa varieties.

The increasing shortage of land in Ghana has also transformed family labour in cocoa production. The prospect of acquiring land outside of extended family lands confronts an increasing number of farmers. Since the 1970s, studies have documented the increasing conflicts between family members over access to cocoa plantations (Okali, 1983; Amanor, 2010). Insecurity and contestations around access to family land have resulted in growing numbers of farmers seeking land outside the lineage on sharecropping terms, or in families releasing property to kin under sharecropping arrangements, since they gain preferential access.

The decline of family land has also led to the transformation of family labour, as those without land or security in land seek land elsewhere, turn to wage labour, or move into other occupations. This leads to increased labour expenditure by farmers who can no longer rely on family labour. The higher labour requirements and costs involved in rehabilitating plantations often absorb significant capital. This prevents the majority of farmers from investing in new hybrid varieties and inputs, particularly since increasing investment in inputs is not reflected in increases in international prices. Thus, the trend for an increasing number of farmers is one of struggling to continue to produce on small margins, rather than a discernible process of upgrading farm production. This is because, in many areas, there are few attractive alternative livelihood options to cocoa farming available (Duncan 2004).

This chapter examines the main trends arising from fieldwork on women's participation in the cocoa sector in Nsuekyir and Adandan. The early sections of the chapter present an overview of women's access to land, labour, capital and technology drawn from the sample of interviewed farmers. This is followed by detailed case studies of the life histories of 23 women and 5 male farmers, which also delves into women's participation in labouring, alternative livelihoods, migration, marriage, divorce, widowhood and inheritance and how these impact upon their involvement in cocoa farming.

5.2 Women Access to land

The study shows that women in Nsuekyir and Adandan gain access to land through inheritance, purchase, gifts, sharecropping, and leasing. While matriliny provides a cultural framework that might suggest secure rights for women, in practice authority rests largely with men, particularly the *abusua panyin*, who allocate land according to lineage interests. As a result, nephews often benefit more than daughters, confirming Okali's (1983) argument that matriliny traces inheritance through the female line without necessarily conferring autonomy or authority on women. Thus, women's access to land remains precarious despite their central role in sustaining lineage continuity.

Feminist political economy highlights how patriarchal structures reinforce this insecurity. Women's labour is indispensable to cocoa farming, yet their contributions are undervalued because they lack secure land rights. Widowed and divorced women, in particular, see their claims overridden by male relatives, reflecting Whitehead and Tsikata's (2003) critique that women's economic roles are systematically constrained by patriarchal institutions. Economic anthropology further explains how commodification intensifies these inequalities: as land increasingly shifts from a communal resource to a marketable commodity, women face greater barriers to ownership. Sharecropping and leasing, though common, provide only temporary use rights, while outright purchase often privileges men with stronger financial capacity and social networks (Amanor, 2001). Taken together, the findings reveal how kinship, patriarchy, and commodification intersect to limit women's ability to establish land as an independent resource base, undermining their long-term autonomy in cocoa production.

Table 5:1: Nature of Access to land on Cocoa Plantations

Source of Land	Men	Women
Inheritance / family land	_	5
Purchased	1	4
Shared Crop	2	5
Gift	1	2
Hired	-	2
Farm wives	-	2
Labourers	1	3
No of farmers	**5**	**23**

Source: field study August 2023

5.2.1 Land through Inheritance

The inhabitants of Breman Asikuma are of Akan descent and adhere to the matrilineal system of inheritance. The importance of having female descendants within the extended family is considered essential for the overall continuity and wellbeing of the family structure within this particular system. As a result, inheritance is transmitted from male siblings to the offspring of female siblings, namely nephews or nieces.

In matrilineal Akan communities, like Asikuma, there is a prevalent practice where female members of the community pass down their land to their daughters. From table 5.1, the study reveals five (5) women who own lands through inheritance whereas the number of men who owe lands through inheritance was Zero. This practice is a response to the perceived inequitable male dominance over land ownership in the community. Yaa Afedziwa, a prominent cocoa farmer and landowner, commented:

> "We, the Asikuma people, trace our lineage and inheritance back to the mother's line. We pass down cocoa farms through the female line, with our daughters serving as the primary heirs. This has been a practice of our ancestors, and based on what I know as an elderly woman from the existing narrative, I can say that since the introduction of cocoa in Ghana, women have worked extensively in various farms, including cocoa, but they were not involved in purchasing land for cocoa production. Instead, they primarily gained access to land based on the lands their fathers had allocated to them. In an attempt to protect this land, they redefined it as their property and passed it down from mother to daughter. In agricultural production, it has become a tradition to sustain the family's livelihood".

The field study's, table 5.1 revealed that the Asikuma community has some family lands that are temporary, in addition to individually owned and inherited properties. Family members bestow these plots upon those who can effectively oversee and sustain the land for a designated duration as user rights. These types of lands are characterized by their lack of individual ownership and their inability to be inherited as individual holdings. These are commonly referred to this as "Abusua Asaase" (family property). Family members who show interest and competence in land management receive parcels of land. Moreover, the cultivator, their immediate family, and members of their ancestral lineage share the revenue from the agricultural yield. The distribution of income occurs periodically, either on an annual or quarterly basis, depending on the generated yield.

5.2.2 Sharecropping

Shared cropping in Asikuma is a practice wherein the landlord and tenant divide the agricultural yield in an equitable manner. Family heads and individuals primarily hold land ownership in the

Asikuma region. The landowners often mutually agree to lease land for a predetermined duration. The landlord consistently retains ownership of the land. Table 5.1, revealed that, the number of women who work on sharecrop lands are 5 whereas men are 2. this indicate that, most cocoa farmers within the study communities work as sharecroppers.

There are two primary forms of sharecropping, a prevalent agricultural practice. The first kind, known as *abunu* involves the division of the crop output equally between the tenant farmer and the landlord. The practice of *abunu* involves a tenant cultivating a specific area of land, typically focusing on cash crops like cocoa, palm fruits, and farm crops, among others. Another arrangement, known as *abusa,* entails allocating two-thirds of the crop to the farmer and one-third to the landlord. A sharecropper Beatrice commented:

> "Sharecropping systems vary depending on the region, but the two main models used in Adandan here are *Abunu* and *Abusa*. Under the *Abunu* system, the land is divided equally between the landowner and the sharecropper after a certain period, usually after the cocoa trees mature. We keep one half of the cocoa harvest and may sometimes gain part of the land. *Abusa* (Three-Share System): Here, the landowner takes two-thirds of the crop yield, while the sharecropper gets one-third. The sharecropper is responsible for managing the farm and maintaining the cocoa trees".

With Land Division, the sharecropper plants and tends the cocoa trees until they reach maturity, which can take around 3 to 5 years. Once the trees start producing cocoa, the land is typically divided in half. One half remains with the landowner, while the other half goes to the sharecropper. This arrangement allows the sharecropper to eventually gain some level of land ownership or control, which is a key feature of the *Abunu* system.

Along with the land division, the cocoa harvest is also split equally between the sharecropper and the landowner. The sharecropper's portion may vary based on the specific terms of the agreement, but typically, they keep half of the cocoa beans harvested from the farm.

In some cases, after the land is divided, the sharecropper may formally acquire ownership or long-term control of their portion of the land, depending on local agreements and customs. This provides a path for sharecroppers, including women, to gain greater access to land, which is often a rare opportunity due to traditional land inheritance systems that favor men.

For women in cocoa farming, participating in the *Abunu* system can offer a potential route to land access and ownership, albeit with challenges. Women who manage cocoa farms under *Abunu* agreements can secure land rights if the system is applied equitably, though in practice, gender norms may limit women's ability to fully benefit from these agreements without formal support or recognition.

In summary, the *Abunu* sharecropping system allows the sharecropper to gain access to land and retain half of the cocoa harvest, with the possibility of acquiring land ownership, which can be empowering for farmers, including women, who otherwise might not have access to land.

For women, participating in either system can be beneficial if they have access to land through family connections or informal agreements. However, the specifics of these arrangements often depend on gender dynamics and the landowner's willingness to involve women.

5.2.3 Land as a Gifts

The acquisition of land by female cocoa farmers in Asikuma primarily occurs through the transfer of ownership as presents from their mothers and husbands. Table 5.1, reveals that, 2 women who own lands were through gift. According to the study's findings, however, it was revealed that historically, land was frequently bestowed upon men by their wives as a type of gift, and vice versa. However, it has been observed that the practice of gifting land to spouses has become increasingly prevalent in rural communities. Aunty Nana, a woman cocoa farmer and land owner who gifted her husband her farmland, responded:

> "Before marriage, my father had given me a cocoa farm, which my husband and I decided to work together on. Due to family domestic responsibilities, my husband is mostly the one who manages the farm. We use the revenue from cocoa bean sales to finance our

> household expenses. Even though I have not permanently given my husband the farm land, he uses the majority of the income as a source of livelihood".

A response from Adjoa Bedua who was gifted a portion of land by her husband;

> "I worked with my second husband on his farm, and as compensation, he gifted me land, which I work on currently. After his demise, his maternal family shared his properties among my husband's own children and his maternal nephew's. At present, my children oversee the cocoa farm I inherited from my husband. After selling the cocoa beans, my children give me a portion of the money for my upkeep. My husband's children occasionally present me with gifts of food and money".

Furthermore, , the allocation of a larger portion of land as a gift indicates a notable trend towards the establishment of land rights in Asikuma. Marriage serves as one of the primary means through which both men and women acquire land in Adandan and Nsuekyir. Moreover, it is worth noting that women may receive land as a gesture of appreciation from their husbands, serving as a kind of recompense for their contributions. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that this practice is not universally observed, as there are instances where women do not receive land as gifts from their husbands despite their assistance in agricultural activities.

Aunty Nana's analysis illustrates that, in certain instances, land inheritance extends beyond the female line as gifts. Yaa Afedziwaa's narrative also supports this, stating that "historically, fathers give lands to their female children for work, which they regard as their property and pass on to their daughters." However, fathers still gift land to their daughters in some cases, while mothers commonly gift land to their female children for cocoa farming.

Moreover, at first glance, gifting of land appears to represent women's empowerment through access to land. However, when viewed through the lens of kinship reciprocity in economic anthropology, the notion of a "gift" reveals underlying obligations. Such gifts are rarely unconditional; they are embedded in expectations of loyalty and continued support for the lineage.

The abusua panyin, who retains ultimate authority over lineage land, may at any time reallocate the plot if broader family interests demand it. In this sense, the gift reflects women's conditional autonomy—access to resources that is real but precarious, reinforcing Amanor's (2001) and Duncan's (2004) observations that women's claims are often mediated by male authority rather than independent ownership.

5.2.3.1 Revisiting the Interpretation of Reciprocity, Abunu, and Household Labour

The analysis of women's access to land and labour in Asikuma initially presented gifts and material support from kin or husbands as forms of compensation. A closer engagement with the literature, however, indicates that these should be understood within frameworks of reciprocity and complementarity (Guyer, 1981; Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003). Gifts are not payments in the strict economic sense but symbolic gestures that reinforce interdependent household relations. Women's interpretations of such gifts as "rewards" for their labour highlight how acts of reciprocity can simultaneously affirm dependence and provide leverage in negotiating autonomy.

The same nuance applies to abunu (sharecropping) agreements. Although mediated by lineage authority and male landowners, abunu serves as a crucial entry point for many women to secure land. For young farmers and widows, abunu offers a degree of independence otherwise unattainable through inheritance or purchase. Its role is therefore dual: it can expand opportunities while also reproducing structural inequalities, depending on the nature of the agreement.

Similarly, the discussion of patrilocality requires contextualisation. While some respondents indicated that moving to a husband's settlement restricted women's land rights, such cases represent exceptions. In Akan cocoa-farming contexts, matrilocality remains dominant, with patrilocality arising primarily under specific conditions such as migration or resource scarcity. Treating these as the norm risks overstating women's exclusion.

Finally, household labour should be reframed not as compensatory but as complementary and communal. Although women may describe male support in terms of "compensation" or "reward," these terms reflect blurred boundaries between reciprocity, obligation, and appreciation in household economies. Farming households depend on interdependent contributions from both men and women—albeit unequally—to sustain production and reproduction. Recognising this complementarity underscores the relational rather than transactional nature of gendered labour dynamics in Asikuma.

5.2.4 Land by Purchase

Through the purchase process, women and individuals in the Asikuma community acquire land for cocoa cultivation. Table 5.1 reveals that, 5 women who own lands were through purchase. In this procedure, women who possess an interest in acquiring land for agricultural purposes initiate a formal request for land acquisition from community heads or individual landowners. Martha, a migrant farmer, responded that:

> "As a migrant farmer who travelled to town through marriage, at a time when I intended to acquire land for agricultural purposes, I had to pass my request to my husband, who assisted and directed me to the right authorities and individuals, and helped with the negotiation process."

The interviews revealed that a significant number of women rely on male individuals, particularly those within their family network, to act as intermediaries in negotiating the purchase price of desired land parcels when acquiring land. One explanation for this phenomenon is that men have a better understanding of land acquisition and related contractual arrangements, as well as superior negotiation skills in land purchases. The present findings corroborate the assertions made by Bessa et al. (2020) on the diminished autonomy experienced by women in the context of land acquisition. Esi Bedua, an elderly female cocoa farmer, commented:

> "When I decided to acquire the land from the landowner, I found it necessary to seek the assistance of my uncle, who stayed in a separate town, in order to facilitate the acquisition of the land in Adandan for the purpose of cocoa production. This is due to the fact that having a male guide you through this process increases the chances of successfully acquiring the land, avoiding any misunderstandings or fraudulent transactions".

In Asikuma, married women who are interested in acquiring land often employ their husbands as intermediaries throughout the land acquisition process. The husbands provide support and assistance to their wives throughout the procedure. The respondent provided an explanation that women tend to opt for the involvement of family members or relatives as arbitrators in land purchases. This preference is attributed to the desire for proper documentation or autoreactive witnesses, which serves to prevent any potentially fraudulent activities.

5.2.5 Land Leasing

In the cocoa villages of Asikuma, it is possible to lease portions of land for a finite period from local chiefs and individual landowners for the purposes of agricultural cultivation and cocoa production. Table 5.1 indicates that the number of women farmers who own lands through hiring are 2 whereas the number of men is Zero. Farmers make formal requests and enter into agreements to lease parcels of land for a specified duration. The predominant type of land lease observed is cash rent, in contrast to share crop leases. The income and food produced from leased lands are the exclusive property of the tenants. The lessees own the prerogative to use the land for any intended purpose, with minimal intervention from the landowner. Tenants may subsequently purchase on a rented agreement, although declining fertility through use by the tenants may lead the farmers to seek out other lands for purchase.

5.3 Women Access to Labour for Cocoa Production

Cocoa farmers in Adandan and Nsuekyir draw on multiple sources of labour, including family support, female labourers, community work groups (nnoboa), hired workers, and cooperatives.

However, the security of these arrangements is shaped by kinship obligations, gender hierarchies, and wider economic pressures.

From a matrilineal perspective, reciprocal labour obligations are intended to provide women with dependable assistance from brothers, nephews, and maternal kin. In practice, however, labour allocation is often controlled by male lineage heads, who prioritise male-owned farms. This reinforces women's dependence and echoes Okali's (1983) observation that matrilineal obligations, while theoretically supportive, frequently disadvantage women by diverting labour resources away from their farms.

Feminist political economy highlights how such patterns reflect the persistent undervaluation of women's agricultural contributions. Respondents noted that women were routinely expected to perform unpaid tasks—such as cooking for farmhands, weeding, and carrying cocoa pods—without reciprocity. Yet when women required labour, men contributed little or demanded payment. Many female farmers therefore had to hire additional workers, which increased production costs and deepened their economic vulnerability. This dynamic confirms Whitehead and Tsikata's (2003) critique that patriarchal structures systematically devalue and exploit women's work.

From the standpoint of economic anthropology, commodification has further reshaped labour relations. Traditional cooperative work groups (nnoboa), once based on mutual exchange, now increasingly operate on cash terms, while hired labour has become more expensive due to rural–urban migration that reduces the availability of young men for farm work. As a result, women with limited financial resources are often priced out of both hired and cooperative labour arrangements. This supports Amanor's (2001) argument that commodification erodes traditional support systems, disproportionately disadvantaging women.

These challenges are compounded by the labour-intensive nature of cocoa cultivation. Tasks such as weeding, pruning, shade management, mistletoe removal, harvesting, pod breaking, fermentation, and drying can demand over 100 man-days per hectare each year (Beckett, 1944; Urquhart, 1961; Bray, 1959). As secondary bushland and degraded soils replace original forests, labour requirements rise even further, making dependable access to labour a critical determinant of productivity (Ruf, 2010).

Overall, while women farmers secure labour through family support, hired workers, cooperatives, and community groups, these arrangements remain precarious. Kinship obligations are inconsistently honoured, patriarchal norms limit reciprocity, and commodification increases the cost of labour. Together, these intersecting pressures constrain women's productivity and reinforce their economic dependence within the cocoa.

Table 5:2 Women Access to labour

Types of Labour	Women Farmers	Total (%)
Family Labour	8	30
Hired Labour	5	22
Community Cooperation	4	22
Farmer Groups	3	13
Women labourers (only)	3	13
No. of Farmers	**23**	**100**

Source: Field Study August 2023

The table 5.2 shows that, compared to other forms of agricultural labour, a larger proportion of women rely on family labour, in addition to their involvement in cocoa farm work. The farmer group functions as a labor source. Within the community, every farmer uses at least one of the aforementioned sources of labor. According to the study, the majority of farmers employ multiple work methods on their farms. Women, in particular, who work side by side as farmers on their respective farms rely heavily on family, hired, and community collaboration when working on cocoa farms.

5.3.1 Family Labour

Most cocoa farms in Asikuma use family labour, which is commonly referred to as unpaid family labour and primarily involves the contributions of family members, including working-age children. Table 5.2 indicates that 8 women solely depend on family labour for their cocoa farms. Women frequently depend on their family members, such as their spouses, offspring, and other relatives, to assist them with their responsibilities on the cocoa plantation. Family members contribute to the cultivation, gathering, and other agricultural tasks. In an interview with Kessiwa, she expressed that:

> "My husband and I regularly perform the majority of the labour on my cocoa plantation, with occasional assistance from my working-age children and visiting family members."

5.3.2 Women labourers

Due to the labour-intensive nature of cocoa production, women labourers play a crucial role in Asikuma's cocoa production. From Table 5.2, women who work solely as labours on people's farms are 3. In Adandan and Nsuekyir, women labour on their husbands' farms and on other people's farms for payment. Moreover, women who work exclusively as labourers on other people's farms receive payment either by day or through the contract labor system (*adopaa*). Under the by-day system, a daily-hired labourer receives payment for completing a specific task such as weeding and pruning around cocoa trees. The labourer usually works from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.

In the Adandan and Nsuekyir areas, weeding contracts are usually negotiated for small areas of farm measured by 'ropes' (*ahoma)* consisting of a number of arm spans, which may be 10 by 10 or 15 by 15. For example, one respondent, Gladys, stated:

> "Before I start working on a farm, I negotiate with the land owner on the kind of labour they prefer, whether by day or on a contract base. On by day, usually, we measure the farm by the acre and charge you accordingly. If I am weeding the cocoa farm, I charge about GH₵100 per acre. If I work by contract (*adopaa*), I perform specific tasks for a defined period with a negotiated payment method."

However, the study revealed that farmers travel outside Adandan and Nsuekyir to different towns for a longer period of time to work as laborers on people's cocoa and crop farms. Some women in the town work as labourers entirely as a source of livelihood, even though some of the cocoa labourers engage in other occupations such as selling farm produce and involving themselves in trade.

5.3.3 Community workgroups

Another means by which women access to labour in cocoa production in Asikuma is through community workgroups (*nnoboa)*. From Table 5.2, women who access labour through community workgroups are 4. Women in Asikuma engage in cooperative efforts with fellow farmers in the community to pool their labour resources. This entails mutual agreements in which farmers assist one another during periods of high demand or labour-intensive activities. A 36-year-old woman cocoa farmer responded:

> "In this community, farmers especially women occasionally support each other on the farm during labour intensive task such as harvesting of cocoa pods, and the processing of cocoa beans. This type of labour is mutual and farmers reciprocate by providing labour support to each other".

5.3.4 Hired labour

Occasionally, women may employ local labourers to aid in the cultivation of cocoa. Hired labour, usually referred to as paid labour, is employed specifically to aid in the production of cocoa. As illustrated in Table 5.2, where 5 women hire labours for their cocoa farms. The two dominant forms of task specific labour in Asikuma are by-day and the contract labour system (*adopaa*). This system involves payment to a labour hired on a daily basis to perform a specific task for a short period of time. Agricultural workers receive remuneration in the form of currency or alternative means, such as farm produce or accommodation. For instance, Ohenema Yaa Afedzewa reveals that:

> "I mostly hire people to work on my cocoa farms. The workers are paid by day service and I have other two farmers who take care of the management of my farms. Hiring labour solely for her cocoa farms, is cost expensive compared to family labour which in most cases farmers cannot afford".

5.3.5 Cooperative or Farmer groups

Women in Asikuma engage in collective action by joining cooperatives or farmer groups, which offer opportunities for labour-sharing arrangements and access to various resources. Table 5.2 illustrate that 3 women cocoa farmers who hire labour through famer groups. These collaborative endeavours assist women in combining their assets and enhancing their ability to negotiate labour service rendered. A comment from a woman farmer in Adandan:

> "During seasons of planting cocoa seedlings, those of us farmers who have large acres of lands and practice hand pollination, have the opportunity get access to labour by arrangement made by KUAPA, COCOBOD and CARGIL group. These labourers are paid an amount negotiated on before they render their services on the farm".

However, the field investigation uncovered that the involvement of younger children in labour has been eliminated in Asikuma and other cocoa-producing areas as a result of the adoption of the "Child Labour" policy. This policy explicitly forbids the involvement of children in agricultural and livestock-related activities if they are in a younger age category. This condition generally hinders farmers for using children to engage in farming operations, hence forcing them to seek alternative forms of labour for their agricultural and cocoa-related pursuits.

Women employ several strategies to obtain labour for cocoa production, which are contingent upon elements such as the scale of their agricultural plot, the presence of family members, and the socio-economic circumstances of their community.

5.4 Women access to Capital for cocoa production

Farmers in Adandan and Nsuekyir rely on various avenues to secure capital for cocoa production, including personal savings, rotating savings groups (susu and Village Savings and Loan Associations), family support, moneylenders, and, to a lesser extent, banks and microfinance institutions. Yet, as with land and labour, access to financial resources is structured by kinship ties, gender hierarchies, and the broader dynamics of rural credit markets.

From a matrilineal perspective, kinship networks are expected to provide women with a safety net through small loans or start-up capital from brothers, nephews, or maternal relatives. In practice, however, such support is often minimal or directed toward male relatives, leaving women with limited financial backing. This affirms Okali's (1983) observation that even within matrilineal structures, resource flows are not gender-neutral but tend to prioritise men's farming ventures.

Feminist political economy highlights the structural barriers women face in accessing formal financial institutions. Respondents reported that banks and microfinance institutions demanded collateral, guarantors, or land titles—requirements that most women could not meet due to insecure land rights. Those who did secure loans often faced high interest rates that eroded farm profits, reinforcing their economic vulnerability. Women also described how financial support from husbands or relatives was frequently conditional, reflecting Whitehead and Tsikata's (2003) critique that patriarchal systems limit women's economic autonomy by controlling their access to productive resources.

From an economic anthropology perspective, commodification has reshaped women's reliance on informal credit systems. While rotating savings groups (nnoboa-style savings, susu, and VSLA) once operated on trust and reciprocity, they now increasingly demand cash contributions and formalised rules. Participation requires regular payments, and women struggling with fluctuating incomes risk exclusion. Moneylenders, though more accessible, charge exploitative interest rates that further disadvantage women farmers. This aligns with Amanor's (2001) argument that market-driven credit systems undermine traditional support networks and intensify gendered inequalities.

Ultimately, while women farmers draw on a mix of informal and formal financial sources, their access to capital remains highly constrained. Kinship networks provide limited support, patriarchal norms restrict autonomy, and commodification imposes new financial burdens. These intersecting pressures limit women's capacity to invest in farm inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides, and hired labour, thereby constraining productivity and reinforcing cycles of dependency within the cocoa sector.

Table 5:3 Percentage of farmers in savings Association

Women farmers	**No. of farmers**	**Percentage**	**Assessment**
Members of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA)	14	60.8	Positive
Those not joining any savings group	5	21.7	Undefined
Other Savings Associations	4	17.5	
Total	**23**	**100**	

Source: Field study, August 2023

From the table 5.3, it was revealed that, out of twenty- three (23) women cocoa farmers interviewed, fourteen (14) of them are members of the savings association. All these women farmers shared positive result on the activities of the association. For instance, Grace stated:

> "My family experienced financial instability until engaging in a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) in Adandan. As a result, I have gained the ability to effectively manage my agricultural activities, afford hired workers, and provide education for my grandchildren".

Portia one of the women cocoa farmers, who also serve as the treasure for the VSLA described how the scheme works:

> "Farmers who are members of a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) regularly and modestly contribute money to a shared fund. This fund allows us to obtain loans at advantageous interest rates, which can be as high as three times the amount we have contributed, after a three-month waiting period. After one year, the total value of the pool is divided among we the members, starting a new contribution cycle. Furthermore, the organization's members also establish a specific insurance fund with the purpose of offering aid in the case of unexpected situations, such as illnesses or accidents".

Moreover, the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLAs) is not restricted to only farmers but provides accessibility to both farmers and non-cocoa farmers. Community members involvement in other professions such as trading, hairdressing, among others actively participate in the initiative. Once more, it was observed that women employed as labourers also possess the capacity to save funds from their daily earnings, which might be allocated towards the acquisition of land for personal ownership, as well as for addressing unforeseen familial contingencies. The *Susu* plan in Asikuma rural villages has serves as the sole financial access point for the local community, thereby mitigating poverty among its residents. The provision of capital to farmers has significantly contributed to the financial empowerment of the community. The provision of capital will enable cocoa farmers to get necessary resources for the preservation of their farms, hence enhancing the income generated by these farmers. Mercy a cocoa farmer and a member of the VSLA stated:

> "In this town specifically, almost all cocoa farmers and other traders are on the Scheme because of the flexibility of their loan terms. Moreover, currently there is no bank in Adandan and Nsuekyir, so most often people have to travel for long distance to Asikuma to deposit their monies in the banks. But with the VSLA, they have representatives who are also farmers who takes the monies weekly from us and deposit them in our respective

> accounts. This has help people to easily partake in the scheme. We are able to access our monies quickly and the loan terms are moderate. Ever since I joined the scheme, I always have a sense of financial security".

Of the twenty -three women cocoa farmers interviewed, five did not join any of the savings' association. This is because some of the farmers are not able to contribute regularly due to their financial incapabilities. Some women who work as labourers depend solely on their labour on farm work as source of livelihood and with that, their insufficient income makes it challenging for them to contribute to the Savings Scheme as required. As Maame Adjoa explained:

> "I have a cocoa farm, the farm activity is what sustains my family, I am not a member of the savings and loans association, because my husband doesn't support me financially after he gave me a land temporary to work on as source of livelihood. This makes me unable to save. Even though, I get money from selling of food crops, that is what my family of six feeds on, and most times is not sufficient so I don't have spare money for savings".

Additionally, from the table 5.3, it is revealed that four women have not joining the village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) because they have their own private means of saving money either through bank or other savings and loan associations. Nevertheless, most farmers in Adandan and Nsuekyir have joined the Village Savings and Loans due to it flexible terms and conditions.

5.5 Women access to Technology for cocoa production

The extent to which women can utilise technology for cocoa production is contingent upon variables such as their socioeconomic standing, geographical placement, and resource accessibility. Nevertheless, in Adandan and Nsuekyir, there exist multiple avenues through which women might obtain technology to enhance cocoa production.

<u>Women access to Training</u>

Initially, via means of training programmes. Women in Adandan and Nsuekyir engage in training programmes that educate them on the utilisation of contemporary agricultural technology and methodologies to enhance cocoa cultivation. These programmes cover topics such as appropriate planting methods, effective pest and disease control, and good post-harvest handling. These programmes are coordinated by government bodies such as the Ghana Cocoa Board, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), or private sector partners. Esi Bedua a female cocoa farmer reported:

> "When it comes to training from cocoa officials, before a year will end, we have opportunity to meet with cocoa officials from Cargill Ghana and Cocobod two (2) or three (3) times. The meeting is normally held on Thursdays where most farmer are available and don't engage in farming activities since is a "resting day and taboo". With this there will be an announcement on the local station to inform the farmers about the coming of these cocoa officials. This makes farmers available for the training. They train us on how to apply fertilizers on cocoa trees, how to utilise appropriate planting methods and frequently they visit some of our farms to inspect it growth. The last training was held last five (5) months from Cargill. They thought us how to handle cocoa pods and have good harvest. We have already been practicing some of the things they teach us, but the teachings help us to utilize it well for good yield and harvest".

Access to equipment.

Women in Asikuma have benefited from access to modern agricultural equipment and tools, such as sprayers and harvesters which has helped to improve the efficiency and productivity on their cocoa farms. The partnership of private a company such as Cargill Ghana has helped farmers by introducing them the modern farm tools and providing market information related to cocoa production. However, women farmers express how they are challenged with the distribution of this farming equipment. A response from Abena Asemanyiwa, a female cocoa farmer:

> "The harvester am using currently was shared among farmers here, the harvesters were not plenty so it was shared based on the acres of land one has and also it at times distributed base on gender. This is one of the challenges we face as women farmers in this community. Sometimes when the equipment comes, even though we have written our names for the distribution, few gets to us, you will realize that the men will share it among themselves before it gets to us it will be finished".

In summary, the discussion above, explains women access to resources for cocoa production in Adandan and Nsuekyir by analysing the response gathered from interviewees which express how land, labour, capital and technology is accessed in the community. The next segment will delve into details the life background of cocoa farmers as case study explaining their experiences as farmers and how they access resources for cocoa production.

5.6 Negotiated Autonomy: Labour, Capital, and Technology as Access Routes

The evidence on women's access to labour, capital, and technology complicates the argument that their participation in cocoa production is defined solely by marginalisation. Instead, it reveals a more nuanced condition of negotiated autonomy, where women's agency is constrained yet actively exercised through diverse strategies.

In terms of labour, women in Nsuekyir and Adandan draw on multiple avenues to sustain their farms. They mobilise family labour, participate in community work groups, and hire labourers when resources permit. Cooperative labour-sharing, in particular, enables women to overcome shortages and ensure continuity of production even without consistent male support. These practices highlight how, despite the dominance of lineage authority, women maintain the capacity to secure critical labour inputs for cocoa farming.

Women's access to capital through informal mechanisms also provides important pathways for sustaining production. Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), rotating credit groups, and personal savings schemes enable women to hire labour, lease land, and invest in seedlings. Although excluded from most formal banking systems, women creatively mobilise funds through these indigenous financial networks. This capacity to raise capital weakens the assumption of total dependency on male relatives and demonstrates resilience within structural constraints.

With regard to technology, women are not entirely excluded from innovation. While affordability remains a barrier—particularly for chemical inputs against swollen shoot disease—many women adopt hybrid seedlings, agro-chemicals, and extension advice. Those who integrate these technologies report increased productivity and improved farm management. Such adoption demonstrates that women are not passive recipients of change but rather active participants in technological transformation, even if access is uneven.

Taken together, these findings reveal that women's experiences in cocoa production are not simply cases of exclusion. While patriarchal norms and kinship authority continue to constrain their autonomy—particularly in matters of land tenure and revenue control—women's creative use of labour, capital, and technology demonstrates adaptive strategies that enable them to sustain livelihoods and make meaningful contributions to household and community economies. This evidence therefore weakens the claim of absolute marginalisation, showing instead a spectrum of negotiated autonomy.

5.7 Characteristics of the interviewed farmers

Table 5:4 Categories of Farmers for Cocoa Production

Cocoa Farmers	Landowners	Sharecroppers	Laborers
Teenagers/ young women	1	_	1
Middle aged Women	9	5	2
Elderly Women	4	1	_
Men	2	2	1
No. of Farmers	**16**	**8**	**4**

Field work Survey, August 2023

Table 5.4 illustrates thirty people participated in the interview. This included 23 women and seven men. The study involved two teenage and young girls, aged 17-25 engaged in cocoa cultivation, one of whom owned her own farm and the other worked as a farm labourer. The second group of women interviewed were between the ages of 26-55. This consisted of sixteen women, including twelve married women, two divorced or separated women, one single woman, and one widowed woman. Within this group nine owned their own land for cocoa cultivation and seven worked as labourers and sharecroppers.

Within this group of middle-aged women cocoa producers, there were two prominent individuals who held influential positions in the community. These women are given the chance to engage in the socio-political affairs of the community, such as serving as the treasurer for the Rotational Savings and Credit Association (*susu*) scheme or being appointed as opinion leaders by the women in the community.

The elderly women constituted the third subgroup of female farmers, comprising 5 women. These women were aged sixty years and above. Out of these five old women, one of them remarried following the death of her first spouse, three are widows and one is divorced. The study found that almost all five elderly women interviewed were landowners, each owning an average of two -three plots of land. Their lands were primarily used for cocoa production alongside crop production, with the exception of one woman who worked as an *abunu* (half-share in which the land is equally shared between tenant and landowner) sharecropper on someone else's land.

Fourteen of the women interviewed were originally from Adandan and Nsuekyir townships, whereas nine women were migrants who have settled in the town due to marriage or economic opportunities. However, seven men were included in the sample, aged between 25 and 60 years. respectively. Three of these originated from the communities of Adandan and Nsuekyir, where a considerable number of their family members still live. Among these three indigenes was one agent and a cocoa farmer at the cocoa buying depot. Four of the men migrated to engage in agricultural activities of which two among the four are professional workers. Two of these possessed land for cocoa cultivation, while three worked as cocoa labourers or sharecroppers. The remaining two were professionals employed in the Cocoa Service of Cocobod and Cargill Ghana. The study interviewed a professional of the Breman Asikuma Branch of Ghana Cocoa Board and one employee of the Pest and Disease Control Department of Cargill Ghana.

There was a total of 16 cocoa farmers were land owners (male and female) while there were 12 farmers who worked as labourers and sharecroppers. Additionally, there were 2 individuals who were professionals and not farmers within the community.

5.8 Profiles and Personal Experiences of Women Engaged in Cocoa Farming

This section provides the biographical data and life experiences of the interviewees and their perspectives on cocoa and the involvement of women in the cocoa industry.

5.8.1 Interviews with Young Female Cocoa Farmers

1. Linda

Linda is seventeen-year-old, she is currently a third-year junior high school student and she is enrolled in Sacred Heart Primary/Junior High School. Linda is the eldest girl among her six siblings. She has two older brothers and two younger siblings, a girl and a boy. Both of her parent's hail from Nsuekyir. Prior to her mother's death, Linda's parents had already undergone a separation, where Linda don't know where his father resides currently. According to Linda, the father's family has informed her that the father is staying at Koyarko a village outside the Asikuma district, where she has never visited the fathers current home. Linda claimed:

> "My parent got separated when I was twelve years, it was recently that we were told by my father's family that my father is married to a different woman in a different town with children".

Linda actively helped her mother in cocoa production, dedicating her time on weekends, vacations, and holidays before her mother's demise. Presently, she oversees the cocoa plantation, as her older siblings have migrated elsewhere. One of her brothers is involved in masonry, while the other is engaged in the business of selling shoes. Linda responded:

> "Before the death of my mother, at that time, my younger siblings were very young, so my mother found it challenging to add farming work to taking care of my younger siblings. So, I had to help her with the farming activities whilst my elder brothers work outside the town. My siblings provided assistance on the farm occasionally when they visited".

Linda discussed the difficulties she encountered as a young girl working as a cocoa farmer, such as encountering bias when it came to accessing necessary resources like fertiliser and seedlings distributed by cocoa officials. In order to overcome this bias, she has to falsely register the farm as belonging to one of her elder brothers or her deceased mother, instead of herself. The community cocoa leaders fail to recognise and value her contributions as a young cocoa farmer, resulting in her being ignored during the official distribution of inputs to farmers. Linda commented:

> "It is sad to say that, the distribution of farm resources within the Nsuekyir community is not fair. The so-called leaders mostly ignore me when distributing the resources. Probably it may be that they don't recognise me as a cocoa farmer …. Due to this challenge, I have been forced to register my "passbook"[3] in the name of my elder brother. I first use my mother's name, but I had to change it to that of my senior brother since the use of my mother's name was challenging".

Linda stated that cocoa farming is a vocation that is benefiting the youth in the community and discussed the importance of women in this activity. She explained the manner in which several young individuals have managed to gain meaningful incomes through their involvement in cocoa

[3] **Passbook**; is a book used by cocoa farmer in Asikuma as a source of farm land registry and ownership. The passbook gives cocoa farmers the opportunity to sell their cocoa beans to cocoa agents. It also serves as a form of ticket to indicate the identity of a cocoa farmer. However, without the passbook, cocoa farmers may not be able to sell their cocoa produce unless they pass it though someone with the passbook who serve as a middle man in the sale of cocoa.

production. She commented that although the youth, particularly the males, occasionally venture to nearby towns for alternative sources of income, the majority of them return to the town to cultivate cocoa or work as labourers on cocoa.

Linda was of the view that women were increasingly participating in cocoa production. She provided a personal example illustrating that in the past, she might not have had the chance to fully manage her mother's cocoa farm. She believes that providing women cocoa farmers of her age with the necessary resources and opportunities will enable them to become successful farmers. However, she argued that many young people view cocoa farming as a challenging and labour-intensive occupation, leading them to pursue alternative livelihoods.

2. Maame Esi

Maame Esi is a 21-year-old junior high school graduate. She is currently waiting to further her studies at the secondary school level. She resides with her parents in Adandan, Asikuma. Maame Esi is the youngest and the only female among a total of four siblings. She is a farm worker who does not own land, but works as a labourer on other people's fields. Maame Esi said that both of her parents are farmers. Her father works as a sharecropper on the *abunu* land tenure agreement. Her mother helps her father in the production of cocoa. But her mother primarily works as a labourer on other people's farms. Maame Esi stated that her job as a labourer will enable her to save the necessary funds to pay for her secondary schooling. Maame Esi commented:

> "I have been working on people's land for a long time now, I started when I was young, I accompany my parent to work on people's farms until my father was able to get a land to work on from a landowner, we once worked for on *abunu* land agreement. Myself and my parents are working hard through farm work to finance my education".

Maame Esi observed that many young people, particularly men, lack enthusiasm for participating in cocoa growing due to the obstacles associated with resource availability, leaving some of them to abandon the farming work and move to other occupations. She stated that cocoa production has experienced an increase in popularity within the community, with a corresponding rise in women's engagement. While men still work as farmers, women appear to be increasingly involved in managing cocoa, as many of the males have migrated out of the communities in search of alternative sources of livelihood.

Maame Esi stated that the implementation of artificial pollination in cocoa plantations across extensive areas in Adandan has also enhanced the involvement of young women. She stated that both young men and women had been employed in artificial pollination of cocoa, including both students and individuals from nearby towns who want to work temporary for money to support themselves.

5.8.2 Interviews with female middle age women

3. Aba Kessiwa

Aba Kessiwa is a 32-year-old cocoa farmer who hails from Agona-Nyarkrom. Kessiwa and her husband have been blessed with four children, with the oldest being seven years old and the youngest being six months old. Egya Kow, Kessiwa's spouse is a cocoa farmer who hails from Gomoa Manso but currently resides in Adandan, Asikuma. He specifically came to Adandan to obtained land for cocoa cultivation.

After being married, Kessiwa joined her husband to take up cocoa farming in Adandan. Before her marriage, she worked as a trader specialising in the sale of kitchenware such as bowls, spoons, and cooking pots in Nyarkrom. She also engaged in crop production and livestock breeding i.e. fowls, ducks and goats on a plot of land given to her by her father. A response from Kessiwa;

> "The portion of land I farm on is an allocated share from my father, my father shared his lands among myself and my two other siblings in Agona-Nyarkrom. I used my portion of

> land to grow crops and rear animals for sale and consumption. After getting married, I decided to lease out my section of land to a farmer under the "Abusu" sharecrop arrangement".

Currently, Kessiwa provides substantial support to her husband in agricultural activities. Through her diligent efforts, her husband supported her financially to purchase land for cocoa production as well as assisting her in its management. She stated that although she has leased her family's farm land on *abusa* sharecrop agreement, she still asserts her ownership of the land.

Kessiwa drew a comparison between the role of women in cocoa production in her birthplace and the role of women in Adandan. In her opinion, every home has women involved in cocoa cultivation. She affirmed that her involvement in the cocoa industry is a result of the industriousness of the female cocoa growers she met when she migrated to the community. Kessiwa stated:

> "In Agona Nyarkrom, cocoa farming is not a dominant occupation there. Only a few women are engaged in farming activities - especially cocoa production. Most women cocoa farmers are the elderly who are not active in trading. These elderly women are in their seventies and eighties and engage in farming to keep themselves busy whilst home. Most younger and middle age women are actively engaging in trading and hawking all sort of goods, from foods, clothing's among others as source of livelihood, so farming is mostly done by men, while here in Adandan cocoa farming is extensively done by both men and women".

4. <u>Aunty Nana</u>

Aunty Nana is a 28-year-old woman, who hails from Nsuekyir. Aunty Nana is married to Kwame Bassaw and has three children, aged 5, 3, and 1. Kwame Bassaw is originally from Gomoa Odumase in Gomoa East district. They reside in Adandan with their children and are engaged in the planting of cocoa. Kwame Bassaw met Aunty Nana on recommendation from a family member who was her aunty. They got married in Adandan and the couple decided to stay in Nsuekyir and work as farmers because Aunty Nana's land is located there.

Aunty Nana possesses a parcel of land in Nsuekyir that was bequeathed to her by her parents. Her elderly parents divided their acquired lands among their six children. She stated that both parents agreed to share the properties equally among the siblings. Her share of the land was located in Nsuekyir, which is why her family had to move there. However, after each harvest, aside the income they use to manage the family and the farm, a portion of the money from the sales of cocoa is handed to her parents for their maintenance in their old age. Aunty Nana stated:

> "The piece of land on which my household works currently belongs to me. It was given to me by my parent. But my husband is the one who primarily manages it because my children are young and I am mostly engaged with domestic responsibilities which has led to less time for farming. My husband aims to use our savings from farming to purchasing more land for cocoa farming which will help us to improve the source of livelihood of the family. This is because since my parent are alive and the land was given to me by them, after the sale of cocoa beans, we give some of the money to them for their upkeep which makes the income not adequate for us".

From Aunty Nana's experience, it can be said that, even though she owes a plot of land through gift she doesn't have total autonomy over the farmland. This is because her parent depends on the income generated from the sale of cocoa beans whilst her husband work extensively on this farm making Aunty Nana have less control over her own land. Aunty Nana commented:

> "Once my husband is working on the farm, it is the same as managing the farm myself, since the produce and income from the farm is used to manage the home".

5. <u>Maame Seguwaa</u>

Maame Seguwaa, who is currently 43 years old, hails from Elimina (Edina) and currently resides in Adandan in Asikuma. Her deceased parents worked as fisherfolks in Elmina. Seguwaa is a single mother with two sons, aged 24 and 19, and two grandchildren. She divorced her spouse and move to Asikuma as a result of difficulties in their marriage. She chose Asikuma from the advice of her former employer, with whom she had worked as a chop bar assistant in Elmina. Asikuma was suggested to her by the employer because of the abundant agricultural opportunities that were there. The employer suggested Asikuma because she has a family who are indigenes of Asikuma. Maame Seguwaa reported:

> "When I first arrived in the Adandan township, I started working as a farm labourer, working on people's farms for income, I worked as a labourer on farms for about 6 years as source of livelihood. After a period of time, I was able to purchase a plot of land for 20 million cedis, where I began cultivating crops and cocoa. As the head of my household, I single-handedly oversee the management of the family's affairs and ensures the family's financial stability. I oversee my cocoa farm with the occasional assistance of two of my adult children. I am basically responsible for the majority of the farm work as my children are engaged in charcoal production and electrician work in town. I may say cocoa growing has been of importance to my family and has provided me with the opportunity to manage the affairs of my family".

Maame Seguwaa believes that the involvement of women in cocoa production in the community has empowered them. As a single parent, she serves as a prime example of this empowerment. However, this empowerment has sometimes led to power struggles within homes and the community as a whole. Seguwaa responded:

> "Some women in this community are encountering marital difficulties. They dismiss the financial assistance from their spouses due to their own success in the cocoa industry, while men perceive these women cocoa farmers as a threat to their position in the family".

Maame Seguwaa remarked that being a cocoa farmer might be advantageous if one successfully maintains the land to produce a bountiful harvest. Furthermore, she elucidated that the current increase in women's involvement in the field can be attributed to their access to capital through savings and loans. Additionally, the prevailing challenges in gaining access to resources for farming has compelled a majority of women to work as farm labourers or to take up alternative livelihoods.

6. Abena Asemanyi

Abena Asemanyi is a 32-year-old female cocoa farmer. Abena and her parents are originally from Agona Nsaba but they moved to Asikuma Adandan to farm. Abena has never been married, but has two children from two different men. She cares for the children with the help of her parents and siblings. Nevertheless, she is preparing to get married soon. Abena's husband to be is one of the cargo drivers in Asikuma, who owns his own car and transport foodstuffs and cocoa sacks from Asikuma district to designated areas.

Abena farms alongside her parents and four siblings on their family lands in both Nsaba and Nsuekyir. Abena previously traded in second-hand items, specifically women's thrift items before she engaged extensively in cocoa production. Abena Asemanyi commented:

> "The selling of thrift (Faux dresses) was not going on well, so I decided to engage in cocoa, I started working as a labourer at the age of 24. After every day's work I was paid GHC50. At times some of the landowners I work for didn't pay me on time. But I still worked as labourer as a source of income for some time, until the man I am about to marry provided financial assistance by assisting me purchase a piece of land in Asikuma Nsuekyir. Currently I engage in cocoa and food production on this land".

7. <u>Sofia Sandoh</u>

Sofia Sandoh is 41 years old and is married with four children, whose ages span from 22 to 6 years. She hails from Adandan, but her husband comes from Gomoa Assin in the Central Region. Sofia's father hails from Adandan, while her mother is from Oda in the Eastern Region. She grew within a farming household where her parents were farmers in Adandan. Sofia is the second child out of seven siblings. Sofia and her family have been staying at Adandan throughout her life until she got married to her husband and stayed shortly in Gomoa Assin. At Assin she worked as a trader selling soaps and other detergents whilst her husband worked at a sachet water production company. Due to financial difficulties the family was facing, Sofia decided to migrate back to Adandan and engage in farm work as labourer on people's farms for income. She then convinced her husband to also relocate to Adandan due to the lucrative cocoa production prospects in the area. Sofia responded:

> "When I was married in Assin, I was quite young - around 18 years. I engaged in trading activities selling soaps and other detergent whilst my husband was working with a water processing company. Life was manageable until my husband lost his job. My family now depended on my trading as source of income and livelihood. Life became difficult so I decided to relocate to my hometown and continue my farm work. I started working as a labourer and providing for my family for some time before my husband and children joined me in Adandan, where we worked as farm labourers together. Through our work as labourers, we were able accumulate money to purchase our first land. Currently we have two plots in Adandan, although both of our farms are far from the Adandan township".

Sofia, an experienced cocoa farmer, observed that the involvement of women in cocoa farming has significantly grown over time. Initially, women's participation in cocoa was not as prevalent as it is now. She elaborated that in Adandan, women have predominantly assumed control of the cocoa-farming sector, perhaps because cocoa cultivation has been the primary emphasis in the community. She stated that adolescent males and females migrate to the town with the purpose of engaging in labour on cocoa plantations in order to earn an income. She affirms that the implementation of the women empowerment programmes in the district has also influenced women's attitudes positively and their enthusiasm for farming.

8. <u>Grace Abban</u>

Grace is a 52-year-old and a cocoa farmer divorced with four children, ranging in age from 31 to 23 years. She come from Bedum where she involved in the cultivation of crops, notably maize, on a large scale alongside with her husband, she worked and stayed with her husband in Bedum for about 18 years until they ended up separating due to the husband's abusive behaviour and infidelity. Grace responded:

> "My husband left me with nothing after the divorce so I relocated from Bedum to Asikuma Adandan without knowing any relative there. I travel there as a migrant with my children for the intention of starting life all over with less family interferences. When I got to Adandan, I was accommodated by the queen mother of the community and started engaging in farming as labourer on one of Nanahemaa's farms. My migration and settlement in Adandan as a single mother were particularly a difficult experience. However, I found motivation to engage in farming, specifically cocoa cultivation, due to the active participation of women in the industry Adandan. I started earned income by working as labourer on other people's farms to support my family. My work as a labourer continued for some time until I got a portion of land to farm on *abusa* land tenure agreement. Later the landlord was in urgent need of money to address health-related matters so I immediately went for loan from my savings association to purchase the land. This made me a landowner and independent cocoa farmer".

Grace disclosed the significant profitability of cocoa cultivation in Adandan, as it has effectively alleviated poverty among farmers, particularly women. Grace viewed cocoa production in Asikuma as providing opportunities for female farmers to have a profitable source of income.

9. Esi Abasah

Esi Abasah, a 49-year-old female cocoa farmer, is a childless widow. Her father originates from Agona Swedru, while her mother's family are from Nsuekyir. Esi stated that she gave birth to four children, all of who had died in infancy. Esi is originally from Nsuekyir and still resides there with her two children who she adopted from her maternal family. The two children are from the younger sister who out of financial difficulty abandoned her children and travelled to another town. Her sister is married to a different man and working in different town outside Asikuma.

During Esi's marriage life, she worked with her husband on their palm plantation in Axim until the death of her husband. When the death happened, her husband's younger brother took control over the farmland with the family's assertion that the brother had a rightful share in the farm. The husband's family compensated her with some money as a widow for her to start life all over. Since she had no children for the husband's family, staying in Axim became difficult for her emotionally, so she decided to return to her maternal hometown. and establish permanent residence there.

Esi Abasah is presently working as a cocoa farmer on a plot of land that was bequeathed to her by her mother. She observed that, in comparison to before she moved to Axim with her husband, there has been a significant transformation and increase in the involvement of women in cocoa production in Nsuekyir.

10. Mercy Ahinsah

Mercy Ahinsah, is a forty-two-year-old married woman with six children. Both of her parents are from Adandan, but are no longer living. Mercy has not received formal education and has been engaged in farming throughout her life. She married a prominent farmer called Enock Tetteh in Adandan, who possesses extensive agricultural holdings for cultivating both cocoa and food crops. The husband is a Krobo migrant from Somanya. Enock's parents were migrants who travelled to Nsuekyir for agriculture purposes. Enock's left behind some acres of lands in Nsuekyir parents before their death. This led Enock to travel to Nsuekyir purposely to manage his deceased parent's farms that had been abandoned.

Mercy is currently a prominent female influencer in the society appointed by the women's group in the community called the Kuapa Kokoo Women Funds in Adandan. She has the responsibility of advocating for women and articulating their perspectives to the community authorities and beyond. Mercy has substantial land holdings (approximately 4 acres) gained from both purchase and family inheritance. She gained her lands before she married her husband. However, her current commitments in the community as women leader prevented her from physically engaging in farm work because she frequently travels to different towns for meetings. Therefore, she employs labourers to handle most aspects of the cocoa production process.

Mercy, as a women group leader, observed that the individual groups are focused on women's involvement in cocoa production in local communities, and providing solutions to curb the challenges women cocoa farmers encounter, and moreover encouraging them to participate extensively in this industry. She strongly advocated for the autonomy of all women, particularly mothers and young women. Mercy credits her success in cocoa production to her diligent efforts and unwavering will. Concerning farming groups, Mercy responded:

> “From what I am told, these cocoa groups have been established long ago and aim to support farmers mostly through labour intensive process of cocoa production. Cocoa groups such as Kuapa Kokoo Women Funds in Adandan are formed by the women cocoa farmers themselves to support each other. The groups have become the main means of support for individual women cocoa farmers in terms of the distribution of farm inputs, training, financial contributions and many other things. Every woman cocoa farmer in this community has the freedom to join the group without considering the status of the cocoa farmer, as labourer, sharecropper or landowner. The group is funded by the individual cocoa farmer. We contribute every week at our Thursday meetings. Every farmer pays GH¢ 5 every Thursday and the money is used to support each other during social and economic functions such as funerals, weddings, and developmental projects, among others.

11. <u>Portia Essuman</u>

Portia, a woman of thirty-eight years, is married to Mr. Patrick. They have three children. Portia presently resides in Adandan with her family. Her parents are wealthy cocoa farmers who own farms in both Nsuekyir and Deboase. Her mother hails from Deboase in the Western Region, while her father is from Nsuekyir. Portia described how the father occasionally visits and assists the mother on her farm in Deboase, while both parents work on their acquired fields in Nsuekyir. Portia commented;

> “I started farming cocoa independently at the age 19, after I completed my education at the senior high school (SHS) level. After SHS, I decided to drop out of school and venture into agriculture. Upon helping my parents with the farm work while I was in school, my parents

> decided to gift me a portion of land as the first child among two siblings in Nsuekyir for me to work on to support my younger sibling and sometimes myself. This made me a landowner before I got married, and during the early stages of my farming activities, my parents provided financial assistance to help me manage my cocoa".

Portia disclosed that her husband is also a farmer in Adandan, where he owns a plot of land on which the family cultivates crops and cocoa to sustain them. Portia clarified that she and her husband work together on the husband's farm, while the husband at times assists her in her work on her own farmland.

Portia, with her educational background as a SHS graduate and her achievements as a cocoa farmer, is currently the representative and treasurer for one of the community's Savings and Loans Associations. Her role is to collect the funds received from farmers during the week and document them before depositing them at the bank. Portia observed that women in Adandan and Nsuekyir have played a significant role in the cocoa industry. She added that the *susu* plan has facilitated women becoming landowners and has provided farmers with the chance to manage their fields more easily and financially.

Susu schemes are traditional, informal savings and loan systems commonly found in many parts of West Africa, including cocoa farming villages which Adandan and Nsuekyir are not exception. In these communities, especially in countries where cocoa farming is a major source of livelihood, susu schemes hold significant socio-economic value. Portia Reported:

> "Cocoa farmers in Adandan and Nsuekyir often have trouble using formal banking services because we live in remote areas, we don't have a credit history, and we can't meet the collateral requirements. As an option to loans, susu schemes give us money that we can use to buy things like fertiliser and tools for farming. Paying the workers during the times when the cocoa is planted and harvested. Susu scheme as well provide help to small businesses in the town. During the off-season or in a disaster (like getting sick or crops failing), we in a susu group can use our savings or loans from the pool to cover our costs. This makes it less likely that farms will lose money. Susu plans help people in the community trust each other and work together. Members regularly add to a pool, and loans are generally given out based on trust and understanding between members. The fact that these plans are group

> efforts makes social ties stronger and encourages unity among cocoa farmers in our community".

Susu schemes are integral to the financial stability and development of cocoa farming villages. They provide access to credit, promote savings, support agricultural productivity, and enhance social cohesion in communities where formal financial institutions may be inaccessible or unaffordable. Their role in empowering farmers, particularly during the volatile cocoa production cycle, makes them a valuable asset in these regions.

12. Martha Annan

Martha is a married woman in her thirties, with three children aged between 18 months and 12 years. Martha hails from Sefwi Hongyebre in the Western Region, where her maternal and paternal families reside. Martha met her husband at Hongyebre where they were all working at the mining site. Martha's husband George comes from Asikuma Jamra but he migrated to Sefwi to engage in informal gold mining (known as Galamsey) to earn a living. After some years of staying at Sefwi, the family decided to come back to Jamra, George's hometown, to settle due to the collapse of the Galamsey business in Sefwi. Currently Martha resides with her family (husband and children) in Adandan, one of the neighbouring towns of her husband's village. Martha Reported:

> "Upon returning to Adandan, my husband and I engaged in various trading activities in Jamra, such as selling of food, and George worked as a commercial bus conductor. We stayed in Jamra for some time until we eventually negotiated a plot of land with a family member at Adandan for cocoa farming, which was granted to us on *abunu* sharecrop arrangement. We then relocated to Adandan to work the land. I assist my husband on the farm, as well as engaging in labouring on other individuals' farms to get additional revenue".

Martha emphasised that women play a crucial role by providing labour on their cocoa farms and by engaging in all aspect of cocoa farming. As a female migrant, Martha has been able to incorporate herself within the society and expressed that, the people in the community are accommodating and hardly discriminate against migrant farmers.

13. Akua Ahema

Akua Ahema, has no land of her own and helps her husband's and her mother on their cocoa farm. She is currently 51 years old and has six children, ranging in age from 32 to 12 years. Both Ahema and her spouse are natives of Nsuekyir. Her mother comes from Nsuekyir, while her father hails from Brakwa, also within the Asikuma area. Nevertheless, Ahema, her husband and children, reside in Nsuekyir and engage in the cultivation of cocoa. Ahema works on the cocoa plantation owned by her mother and husband in Nsuekyir. Response from Akua Ahema;

> "Growing up my parents were prosperous agriculturalists, cultivating both crops and cocoa. In addition, my father in his younger years acquired land in Brakwa, the place where my parents, and my siblings and I resided throughout our early life. Following my father's death, my mother moved back to Nsuekyir with us. This was due to a disagreement over my father's properties. My mother and we the children were denied the right to inherit our father's farmland. This incidence made life financially difficult for us, so my mother brought us to Nsuekyir to engage in farming. My mother started working on a family land in Nsuekyir, and even currently in her advance age, she still manages the family land and engages in agricultural activities. My siblings and I often lend a hand with the farming tasks".

Ahema is currently employed as a wage labourer on various farms, and primarily assists her husband and mother on their cocoa farms. Ahema further mentioned that, as a result of her mother's advanced age and health issues, she with her siblings carry out the majority of tasks on the mother's farm. Currently, she assists her husband in managing his cocoa farm as well as working on other people's farm as hired labour to support the family.

Ahema's experiences indicate some of the inheritance disputes within the community. In some cases, not all women are able to inherit their husbands' cocoa farms or get access to land in the form of a gift from their husbands. In the case of Ahema's mother, she was prevented from gaining access to the husband's land despite working all her life with him. As a result, the family were forced to move back to Nsuekyir where they struggled to get land.

14. Mary Bamfo

Mary Bamfo is a 32-year-old cocoa farmer. Mary is married and has two young children. She is an immigrant who has established herself in Nsuekyir through marriage. Mary's spouse is a farmer who resides in Nsuekyir, but he is originally from Odoben. Mary's mother is from Gomoa Okyereko, while her father's lineage is from Dominase in the Central Region.

Following her marriage, Mary relocated to Asikuma, where she has been assisting her husband on his farm and serving as a farm labourer on other people's farms. Her role as an agricultural labourer, working on both people's farms and her husband's land, enables her to contribute towards financially supporting her family. Mary narrated that her husband's farm generates income after the seasonal sale of cocoa beans, which she uses to manage the family. When the farm yields are good, he gives her some of the money for her upkeep.

The present circumstance of Mary portrays distinct family roles within the community where cocoa farming is often a family endeavour, with the household members working together on cocoa farms as source of providing labour where in some case family members are been reciprocated for the service rendered on the farm in the form of money or portion of land as gift.

15. Bernice Afful

Madam Bernice is a 44-year-old immigrant residing in Adandan, originating from Nsaba. Her female friend Maame Mensiwaa introduced Bernice to cocoa farming in her early years. Bernice and her friend travelled to neighbouring towns, including Adandan, to engage in cocoa farming as labourers. She occasionally spent extended periods of time in Adandan working on cocoa farms. It was during this time that she met her husband and permanently moved to Adandan.

Bernice met her husband when she was a young agricultural labourer in Adandan. Bernice and her spouse have four children. Kwesi, Bernice's husband, hails from Adandan and works with his wife on a cocoa farm as a sharecrop tenant. Bernice assists her husband on the cocoa farm and also works as a labourer on other farmers' land. Bernice disclosed that in addition to cocoa growing, she also participates in the sale of food products, primarily cassava and plantains, and occasionally vegetables. Bernice narrated:

> "After marriage, we were able to negotiate with a family member from Kofi's paternal family to give us a plot of land on a sharecrop basis to assist in taking care of the home. We worked as sharecroppers because of our inability to get access to land. Our inability to own land stems from the limited availability of land in this area, making it challenging for farmers, even with sufficient financial resources, to gain access to the land. Most lands within the community are far away from the town, which means if one purchases land from those areas, one needs to consider buying a tricycle for easy transportation of farm produce to and from the town to the farm. However, in my family's case, we lack the necessary capital to afford any of these options".

Bernice's experience confirms Okali's (1983) literature, which discusses the increase in farmers difficulty in accessing land for cocoa production. Bernice clarified that her husband's inability to own land stems from financial difficulties. Moreover, as an indigene of Adandan, Kofi was able to access family land due to the availability of land within the family. In contemporary times it is not only women but men also have difficulty in gaining access to land and many wives work with their husbands on sharecropped land. Thus, marital responsibilities, obligations and reciprocities are no longer about women gaining access to land for supporting husband's in establishing cocoa plantations, but about jointly working as sharecropping tenants or as farm labourers.

16. <u>Aunty Efua</u>

Aunty Efua, a 40-year-old cocoa farmer, is married and has two male children aged between 22 and 19. Aunty Efua's father is from Adandan, and her mother is from Jamra in the Asikuma district. She currently lives in Adandan with her husband and children. Her spouse is an immigrant from

Bibiani in the Western Region who has recently relocated to Adandan to pursue cocoa farming. Aunty Efua's husband was a farmer in Bibiani who worked as a wage and contract labourer on people's farms. As a labourer, Efua met her husband at Jamra, one of Asikuma's dominant cocoa production communities, and decided to get married and start their family. Aunty Efua narrated:

> "I met my husband at Jamra, where we were both part of the labourers assigned to work on a particular cocoa farm. My husband expressed interest in me, and we lived together for a while before we tied the knot. After marriage, my husband and I decided to look for land for farming on a sharecrop basis until we were able to get access to land through hiring. The chief of the community currently leases the plot of land we work on. My family has been working on a leased portion of land for over eight years. We temporarily leased the land for a community project, as it belongs to the village and is not available for purchase or ownership. Moreover, the chief and the community can request that those of us working on such lands leave the area at any given time. My household engages in cooperative farming with other tenants who have also rented parcels of land in the same area. In addition to working on our hired plots, we also work on other people's cocoa fields to earn revenue".

Aunty Efua disclosed that female labourers frequently experience exploitation in terms of payment following their work, but that labouring provides women with access to an income to support their families. Again, Aunty Efua's experience reflects the shortage of land, that she and her husband work as labourers and moved to Adandan to lease land, since it is difficult to purchase land now because of its scarcity. Her mother owns a plot of land in Jamara in Asikuma district, which the mother currently works on for survival. However, in the future, when the mother is too weak to engage in farm work, she intends to take over her mother's plot of land to work on it as well.

17. <u>Gladys Inkoom</u>

Gladys Inkoom is a 36-year-old cocoa farmer at Nsuekyir. She is married and has three children. Her mother is from Agona Nkum, while her father is from Agona Nyarkrom, all in the Central Region. Her parents moved to Asikuma Nsuekyir to farm cocoa. Gladys, on the other hand, used to sell pastries and beverages at Asikuma station, along with assisting her mother with farm work in Nkum. Gladys's mother owns a plot of land in Nkum. But her father, on the other hand, does not own any land and instead serves as an *abusa* sharecrop tenant. After Gladys got married, she and her husband took up cocoa farming on a sharecrop arrangement in Nsuekyir. On their farm, the husband is the one who mostly works on the cocoa farm, while Gladys assists the husband often. Gladys also works as a labourer on other people's farms. At times, she travels as far as Gomoa Manso, a distance of 65 km, to engage in labour-intensive work. Gladys explained her family's inability to own land for cocoa production. Glady's reported:

> "My husband and I work as sharecroppers and labourers without our own lands. We have not been able to purchase our own land because the income we generate from our work as cocoa farmers is insufficient to meet our family's needs, which include providing for family upkeep, children's educational costs, healthcare, and farm management costs".

Gladys, a young mother, described the difficulties she encounters as a cocoa farmer who travels for several days outside of town to earn a living. She also highlights the difficulty of acquiring land and the large number of farming families that depend upon casual labouring and sharecropping, and the large distances people travel to engage in labouring. Glady's parents are poor; her father doesn't have his own land. While her mother owns a plot of land, elsewhere they have difficulty in making this financially viable, and consequently depend upon labouring and sharecropping. Her husband has also been working as a mason and a labourer on building sites since he married his wife, until she got land on a sharecrop agreement. They work as labourers to raise money for their sharecropped cocoa farm. This illustrates the growing presence of a female labouring class.

18. <u>Maame Adjoa</u>

Maame Adjoa is a 42-year-old native of Adandan who is married to a migrant cocoa farmer from Ekumfi Otum in Awutu District. They currently live in Adandan. Maame Adjoa and her spouse have four young children. Her father is from Adandan, while her mother hails from Odoben, also within the Asikuma area. Both her parents reside in Adandan, engaging in cocoa farming on their privately owned parcels of land. Her mother owns large acres of land in Odoben, which she has leased to farmers on an *abunu* sharecrop arrangement. Her mother leased the lands because of the distance between Odoben and Adandan, which prevented her managing farms there.

Adjoa's husband has two plots of cocoa farms in Adandan, one acquired through purchase and the other operated on a sharecrop basis. Her husband uses his farmland to produce cocoa and other crops. Maame Adjoa does not possess her own land in Adandan. Instead, she works with her husband. Maame Adjoa mostly manages the land her husband has acquired through purchase; she grows food crops for household consumption alongside cocoa. She sometimes assists the husband on his *abunu* sharecropping land and provides labour. The husband hires labour most of the time to assist Adjoa in managing the family land. Maame Adjoa commented:

> "I work on my husband's farm. Sometimes, my husband and I split the profits from cocoa bean sales, with my husband taking the lead, but most of the time, we use the money to support our family's needs, from health to childcare. On my husband's farm, I do farm work such as growing food crops, weeding around cocoa trees, drying cocoa beans, and applying fertilizer, among other things. I spend most of my time working on the farm, from morning until sunset. Since my husband acquired the land, he has relied heavily on my assistance to increase productivity".

5.8.3 Interview with Elderly women cocoa farmers

Five elderly women were also interviewed for the study.

19. <u>Nanahema Yaa Afezewa IV</u>

Nanahema Yaa Afezewa IV is 67 years old and has six adult children and one grandchild staying with her. Her husband is deceased. Nanahema holds the position of queen mother in the Adandan community. One of her primary responsibilities is to organize and motivate women and community residents. Additionally, she serves as the spiritual leader and guardian of the community's ancestral lineage. Nanahema's parents hail from the *Oyoko* royal dynasty in Adandan. She is the second child and the eldest daughter among 12 siblings, of whom eight are still living. At present, one of her male siblings is the chief in Adandan. Nanahema Yaa Afeaewa IV reported:

> "I have been involved in cocoa farming since I was young. I started cultivating on my own farm at the age of 17, after my parents allocated a portion of their land to me. At that time, farming was the primary occupation in Adandan. At first, as a child, if your parents owned land and you reached a certain age, they would temporarily assign you a portion of their land to work on as a source of income. Before marriage and before becoming the queen mother, I owned my own personal land. During the early years of marriage, I worked and supported my husband on his farm, as well as on my own farm. But currently, we both work and manage our individual lands. Currently, in addition to the stool lands that I oversee, I possess four plots of land all in Adandan. In order to manage my farm, I employ wage labourers for my cocoa farms, and I occasionally visit and supervise them. Among these, three acres are dedicated to cocoa cultivation, while one acre is exclusively used for cultivating food crops for both personal consumption and sale. Due to my advanced age, my children currently oversee my farms and mostly hire individuals to assist in farm management as labourers".

Nanahema stated that the role of women in cocoa cultivation has undergone a significant transformation over time. She noted there has been a shift in gender roles as well as an increase in women's participation. Nanahema stated that a group of cocoa officials has actively involved the community's farmers in various forms of contact and education. This has resulted in an increased level of community involvement in cocoa farming.

Nanahema's experiences underline that a woman's position in society influences her access to farming resources. Those coming from privileged backgrounds and in privileged positions, such as elders, leaders, chiefs, and queen mothers, among others, are able to exert influence in decisions-making regarding land, dispute resolution, communal activities and command over labour.

20. <u>Adjoa Kunkuntar</u>

Adjoa Kunkuntar is a 76-year-old woman who resides in Nsuekyir. Her husband has passed away, but she is fortunate to have four children. Both her parents resided in Nsuekyir before their death.

Adjoa's mother hails from Nsuekyir, whereas her father's is from Anomabo. She currently lives in her mother's home with two teenage children from her maternal home. Adjoa was raised in Nsuekyir but she later moved to Manford with her spouse and children. Adjoa worked as a fishmonger in Manford, while her husband worked as one of the fishermen. Adjoa recounted that she and her spouse provided their children with a satisfactory education, resulting in a pleasant lifestyle for the family.

Adjoa is the youngest of three siblings. While she was staying in Manford, Adjoa regularly visited her maternal home and assisted her parents with cocoa farming. Adjoa expressed her desire to purchase a plot of land in Nsuekyir during her regular visits, and her father helped her acquire one. Adjoa stated that, due to her involvement in the fishing industry in Manford, she employed an individual to help her oversee the farm on *abunu* basis. Nevertheless, she made regular visits to the farm whenever she went to see her parents in Nsuekyir.

Adjoa used the profits from fish sales to acquire an additional parcel of land in Nsuekyir, specifically for cultivating cocoa. In addition to the land parcels she acquired in Nsuekyir, she and her husband also invested in properties in Manford, including building a house and owning a fishing boat. Following her husband's demise, a family disagreement arose concerning the properties they had jointly acquired. The husband's family seized the properties. As a result, she had to return to her family in Nsuekyir with her children and support them through cocoa farming until they found employment. Adjoa Reported:

> "My life as a woman actually began when I settled with my husband in Manford at 26 years old. I joined my husband in fishing, which was his occupation before we got married. I began by selling fish that the fishermen had transported to the seashore. I, along with a few other women, had the opportunity to directly sell fish to the fishmongers. Along the way, my husband introduced me to several buyers, paving the way for me to connect with them and increase my income. My husband and I purchased land in one of Manford's neighbouring towns and built a 3-bedroom apartment together. We were able to accumulate

> money to buy our personal boat for fishing, and we employed fishermen to work for us in our boat. Life became comfortable for my family. Along the way, I decided to purchase land in my hometown, here in Nsuekyir. I made a wise decision to purchase two separate plots of land, as my husband's family took everything from me after his death, including the house and boat in which I had invested heavily. The family seized the properties, leaving me and my children with nothing. As a result, we were forced to return to Nsuekyir to work on our land".

Adjoa has now totally immersed herself in farming. She used her two parcels of land to cultivate cocoa, occasionally receiving help from her children. Currently, she manages her parent's farms in addition to her personally acquired farms. She clarified that primarily she employs individuals as hired labour to assist with the physically demanding tasks involved in farming. Due to her advanced age, she has hired individuals from her maternal household to oversee and administer the farm on *abunu* sharecrop basis.

Adjoa Kukuntar and her husband led a relatively wealthy lifestyle, amassing several properties. However, upon her husband's death, her husband's family seized these properties, forcing her to return to her hometown to rebuild her life with her children on the lands she had previously secured for cocoa farming. Knowing the perils of marriage, Adjoa acquired these lands, and she decided to buy land in her maternal home as a form of personal security. However, Adjoa went ahead and bought properties with her husband, hoping for the best. Adjoa's experience confirms the tensions in matrilineal inheritance between lineage members making claims upon the resources of men and the rights of women for supporting their husbands, providing them with children, and participating in their livelihood endeavours (Okali 1983, Duncan 2004). While Okali (1983) documents the case of women who established cocoa plantations with husbands only to lose them when their husbands died. In Adjoa's case, her husband's matrilineal relatives confiscated the house and canoe they had jointly acquired. In this particular case, the respondent maintained cocoa farms in her hometown, providing a safety net following her husband's death.

21. Efua Bedua

Efua Bedua is 82 years of age and hails from Nsuekyir. She remarried after the passing of her first husband and lived with her second husband until his death. She has six children. Bedua is the third child out of a total of nine siblings and the only surviving female of her parents. Her mother was from Adandan, and her father from Ajumako in the Central Region. Her parents raised Bedua in Adandan until her first marriage, when she moved to Jamara to live with her husband and raise her children. In Jamra, she engaged in the sale of prepared foods such as beans, rice, and fried plantains, while her husband worked as a carpenter. Bedua acquired farmland through inheritance from her mother in Nsuekyir. Bedua, however, described how her husband was suddenly struck with a severe illness, which led her to exhaust all of her savings in an attempt to care for him and give him a chance at survival. Unfortunately, he passed away during this process.

After her husband's death, she returned to her maternal home and began cultivating the land she had inherited. Bedua found operating the farm in Nsuekyir somewhat easier due to the financial support she received from her deceased mom and brothers. She disclosed that by engaging in cocoa farming, she managed to maintain her household until she met her second spouse. Bedua commented:

> "I was 44 years old when I entered into my second marriage. My spouse was a successful cocoa farmer in Nsuekyir. We welcomed two children into our family, in addition to the four children I had from my previous marriage. I assisted my husband with his farm work while simultaneously managing my own farm activities. Occasionally, my husband also provides assistance in managing my farm. My husband gifted me a portion of land for farming as a result of my appreciation for supporting him with farm work. My husband passed away from an unexplained illness after 25 years of living together dividing more than half of his assets among his biological children and my husband's maternal family. This was because he did not recognise my children from my first marriage as his responsibility but he described the as strangers, "not of the same blood" as him. However, before he died, my second husband gifted me a portion of land, which my first children can now work on and inherit".

After Bedua's husband died, she continued farming into her old age until she became weak and handed over her lands to her first husband's children. She divided her two plots among the children, giving one plot to her two female children and giving the remaining land to her two male children. Her remaining two children from her second husband have individual lands they inherited from their father. Both children from her two marriages arranged for their mother, who is no longer actively involved in farm work, to receive frequent food supplies and monthly financial allowances. Additionally, after every sale of cocoa beans, the children give their mother a portion of their income.

22. <u>Efua Atta</u>

Efua Atta is an 83 years old woman from Adandan with five mature children. She lives in Adandan with her four other children, three of whom are teenagers and one younger child, who help her with household chores and farm work. Her mother hails from Osamkrom, a town in the Gomoa West district, while her father hails from Adandan. Her late parents lived in Adandan, where they pursued cocoa farming. While some of her siblings left the town, she currently resides in Adandan with one of her brothers.

Following her marriage, she moved to Ada with her husband, where she became involved in the production of salt, which she then supplied to customers. Her husband worked as a forklift and cargo truck operator. Her marriage was initially peaceful, and they lived a nice life due to their ample source of income. However, the marriage encountered difficulties that ultimately led to separation and eventual divorce. Efua divorced her husband at the age of forty-eight years. Efua reported:

> “I migrated to Ada and engaged myself in salt-making. Life was comfortable with my family because of the nature of the occupation I and my husband find ourselves in. We had

> sufficient financial resources to support ourselves. Along the way, my husband had an extra marital encounter with another woman in the town, which led to misunderstandings between myself and my husband's concubine's family. This brought a lot of issues, leading to my husband and I divorcing, which later led to divorce".

Following her unsuccessful marriage, she returned to Adandan with her children. Efua's paternal family granted her a parcel of land to cultivate food crops and cocoa. She also managed to purchase a plot of land with financial assistance from her elder brother and working as labourer. Currently, Efua possesses two plots of land for agricultural purposes, namely the family land and her personal land. Efua Atta disclosed that, despite not owning the family land, she has diligently laboured on that particular land for a while. Efua Commented:

> "When I returned to Adandan, my father's family was kind to me and gave me a portion of family land to farm on for survival. I worked on the farm to take care of myself and my children. When my children reached adulthood and could manage their lives, I decided to save some money to buy a plot of land for myself. I have been managing the family land for about four decades now, in addition to working on my own farm land".

Efua described her previous experience as a female cocoa farmer as both advantageous and demanding, particularly because she was the head of her household and had limited access to farming resources. Efua elucidated that in her era, the involvement and responsibilities of women in cocoa production diverged from the present day. Efua claimed:

> "As a single mother, I became a full-time farmer, taking care of five children without assistance. Life was tough, especially combining farm work with raising children. At that time, I couldn't afford to work, so I sometimes used my children for farm work. Previously, farm work was difficult and quite different from now. Women at that time work on less tedious farm tasks such as weeding under cocoa trees, harvesting cocoa beans, and drying cocoa beans, among others, but with the exception of women like myself who do not have the money to hire labour, we tend to force ourselves to do all the work on the farm, which mostly means we tend to depend on family labour. But now, most women manage their farms independently without relying on many other people, providing one with funds to push into farm management. Again, currently, farmers are exposed to new tools for farming, which makes their work easier than before".

23. <u>Mary Say</u>

Mary Mary Sey is a 91-year-old woman who is married and has four children. Mary is staying in her household with two female grandchildren. She is her parents' second female child, and she was born and raised in Adandan with five other siblings. Mary is presently in her second marriage and resides with her spouse in Nsuekyir. Mary has three offspring from her second marriage, whereas she had two children with her first husband. Mary’s mother is originally from Winneba (Simpa), while her father comes from Konyarko, a neighbouring town within Gomoa East in the Central Region. But because of farming activities, her parents settled in Adandan, where the family has stayed for a period of time.

During Mary's formative years, she actively participated in cocoa farming alongside her parents. After marrying her first spouse, she subsequently moved to Agona Swedru. She worked on her husband's farms in Swedru, and sold tomatoes and other vegetables they produced at the market.

Besides farming, Mary's first spouse worked for a wood processing company in Swedru. Unfortunately, after a few years of marriage, he dies in a tragic workplace accident. Following his death, Mary continued to live in Swedru with her children before returning to Adandan.

At Adandan, she worked as an agricultural labourer before being able to gain a sharecrop tenancy on the *abunu* (half-share) system. After several years of farming, she married her present spouse and moved to her husband’s home in Nsuekyir, working on both her husband's cocoa farm and her own farm at Adandan. Because of her advanced age, three of her male children from both her first and second marriages are currently managing the farm. Currently, Mary’s two female children are married and stay in different towns with their families. The three male children live in the town, helping their parents with their cocoa farms. She explained that the children and the landlord will decide the future of her family's sharecrop arrangement after her death.

Mary's experience as a cocoa farmer indicates that she and her husband worked together with their children in developing their cocoa farm. The female children worked together with their brothers before they got married. Mary and her husband hardly visited their farms, especially in their old age. After every yield, on each farm, the income was divided into seven, and each person within the family allocated a share accordingly. Mary responded:

> "If we harvest one bag of cocoa beans on my husband's farm, which is worth GH₵2,000 per 64 kg, we divide the money into seven, with each person getting about GH₵290. This is because farm labour is extensively dependent on the family. If we harvest more than one bag of cocoa beans, we divide the income appropriately. However, on my own sharecrop cocoa farm, I distribute the landowner's share to him after each harvest, as per our agreement. Depending on the cocoa harvest quantity, we either use the remaining income for home maintenance or reinvest it in our farming activities".

In a significant number of cases, women's husbands also have limited access to land, and the married couple participates in the cocoa sector as labourers and sharecrop tenants, eventually saving up to purchase small plots of land, which they place under cocoa and food crops but use to complement their incomes from awe labour and sharecropping, rather than resulting in the upgrading of their livelihoods into independent farmers.

5.8.4 Interview with male cocoa farmers

The accounts of these women show complex relations with men, and a variety of conditions under which women work in cocoa that are affected by the status of men. While some men have their own cocoa plantations which their wives work on and receive gifts of land in acknowledgement of their contribution to the success of the cocoa plantation, other men without land, usually of a migrant status, work on their wives' land. However, in a significant number of cases women and husband both lack land and work together either as labourers or sharecroppers, or a combination of the two. Thus, a small number of men were interviewed to gain a perspective of the range of conditions under which men work in the cocoa industry and their relationship to women as wives working on their land, as labourers, sharecroppers or hirers of labour. The purpose of these interviews was to gain an insight into the processes of commodification of land and labour and social differentiation and the impact of these on gender relations.

24. Kojo Marfo

Kojo Marfo, a 44-year-old married man, is a native of Adandan and currently resides there with his wife and five children. Kojo's father hails from Adandan, while his mother comes from Akotsi in Awutu Senya District in the Central Region. Kojo grew up in Adandan and later relocated to a different town in the Central Region to further his education. He has attended polytechnics and currently operates a depot for cocoa bean purchase. In addition to his position as a cocoa buying agent, he owns several acres of cocoa, which he has hired out to farmers on *abunu* sharecrop tenants.

Kojo Marfo received a plot of farmland from his father after completing his studies at the polytechnic. However, he also focussed on establishing a cocoa depot for cocoa trading in Adandan. which has now become the largest cocoa depot in the community. Kojo Marfo has since acquired additional farmland plots.

Marfo discussed his firsthand experience with women's involvement in cocoa production, both as landowners and as cocoa purchasing agents. Marfo employs several women on his cocoa plantation as both casual labourers and sharecroppers. He also employs several women as wage labourers in the cocoa depot who play the role of inspecting, sorting, and grading the quality of cocoa beans, which includes checking for mould, fermentation levels, and the overall bean condition. Other women carry out administrative and clerical work, such as record-keeping and customer service. At the cocoa depot, Marfo reported that several women farmers now have passbooks, which were previously difficult to obtain, signifying their importance as independent cocoa farming. He stated that the sales of cocoa beans by women have grown significantly in recent years.

25. Agya Atta Nkwantabisa

Agya Nkwanta Bisa is an elderly man, 84 years old, and a resident of Nsuekyir. His mother is from Brakwa, and his father is from Abura Dunkaw. His parents raised Agya and his six siblings in Dunkaw. His parents relocated to Asikuma in order to engage in trading. Subsequently, his father became a farmer on a portion of land he hired on a sharecrop *abunu* agreement and commenced the cultivation of cocoa in Nsuekyir. Eventually, Agya's father saved enough to obtain his own land using the proceeds from farming. His mother primarily worked in Nsuekyir, preparing and selling cooked food such as Fante kenkey and fried fish.

In Brakwa, Agya Atta learned carpentry from his maternal uncle. Subsequently, he made the deliberate choice to combine carpentry with farming. With the support of his father, he acquired land in Nsuekyir for cocoa and food crop farming while he worked as a carpenter at Brakwa. Agya Atta is in a polygamous marriage with two living wives. He presently resides with one of his wives in Nsuekyir and has six children from his marriages. Agya farms with his wives. He stated that he had successfully helped his first wife obtain her own piece of land in Brakwa. She uses the land for cocoa farming. Agya Nkwanta Bisa reported:

> "I have two wives; the one I currently stay with in Nsuekyir is my second wife. My first wife stays in Brakwa. When I married my first wife, she was working as a labourer on other people's farms. Because of this, I decided to financially assist her in acquiring land for herself, and I was successful in doing so. I have helped her get land, which she uses for crop and cocoa production, and she uses the income to support the family and herself".

26. Kwame Ewool

Kwame Ewool, 76, is an elderly farmer from Adandan. Agya Ewool's mother is from Asikuma Adandan, while his father is from Gomoa Odumase. He resided in Assin Manso for the entirety of his life, where his wife and four children currently dwell. Agya Ewool began farming in Assin Manso, focusing on the cultivation of food crops such as yam, sweet potatoes, and cassava.

Kwame Ewool lived in Assin Manso for a few years before returning to Adandan after his parents' deaths to manage his parents' properties and cocoa farms. Because the land is family property, he shares some of the income generated from the sale of cocoa beans with his siblings. Ewool frequently travels to Assin Manso to visit his family (wife and children). Previously, Ewool ran the farm with his adult children and siblings. His younger siblings frequently provide labour on the cocoa farm, while his adult children occasionally help with farm work during their visit.

Kwame Ewool stated that, due to his advanced age and the unavailability of family labour, he currently employs people to work on his cocoa farm. He affirmed that the majority of women in Adandan work as hired farm labour, which is important for sustaining their families. Ewool reported:

> "Here in Adandan, I can say that the women who are into cocoa farming are doing well. Farming is the main work women do; they either work as labourers or farm owners. For example, if I travel to Assin Fosu to visit my family on my farm, I sometimes hire a female labourer to manage the farm in my absence. I pay the farmer whenever she goes to work on the farm; however, it depends on the kind of duty she performs when she visits the farm. I chose a female farmer to work for me because the women here are hardworking and dedicated to their farm work".

27. Isaac Anumel

Isaac Anumel is a 35-year-old married man with two younger children. He hails from Besiase, a town in the Central Region, but presently resides with his family in Nsuekyir. Isaac is the third child of four siblings. His father hails from Besiase, and his mother is from Jomoro in the Western

Region. Raised in Besiase, he has dedicated his life to farming. He has also pursued other occupations, such as selling locally manufactured footwear. Isaac disclosed that he had to leave junior high school (JHS) because of financial difficulties. Following an unsuccessful venture in footwear production in Besiase, he decided to seek alternative means of making a living. Isaac commented:

> "After completing my JHS, I began selling Asante-made slippers in Besiase. However, as more people entered this market, the sales became unprofitable, leading me to seek alternative sources of income. I relocated to Asikuma and began working at the car station, assisting in the loading of passenger vehicles. After a period of time, I entered into farming. I started working as a labourer on various crop and cocoa farms in towns like Sofokrom, Jamara, Kukudo, and Adandan, all within the Asikuma district, until I was able to get land on the Abunu sharecrop system in Nsuekyir. This is when I became a full-time cocoa farmer".

Isaac's involvement in cocoa growing had significantly improved his financial situation. He is successfully married and has consistently provided for his family with minimal financial hardship. Isaac disclosed that his wife has provided valuable support in their farming process, which has contributed to a successful farm yield. He stated that in the majority of cocoa farming households, wives provide assistance to their husbands on the farm. It is uncommon for married women to participate in other livelihoods. Isaac reported:

> "From my experience as a cocoa farmer, I realised that in most cocoa households, wives work together with their husbands to build their farms. Men rely on their wives to provide labour for farming activities, so they try to keep them in cocoa production and frown on them adopting other occupations. I am no exception to this rule. My wife is a trained hairdresser, but because I am a farmer, I want her to assist me with the farm work. Therefore, I haven't opened a hairdressing shop for her yet, preferring to engage her extensively in farming. Although she occasionally works from home as a hairdresser, she is more involved in farm work".

28. <u>David Akornor</u>

David Akornor is a 28-year-old male cocoa farmer. David is unmarried, but he has fathered a child with a former girlfriend from high school in Swedru. David's mother is from Asikuma Adandan, whereas his father is from Lartebiokorshie in the Greater Accra Region. Both David's parents currently reside in Adandan, where he received his upbringing. David discontinued his education at the secondary school level as a result of his inadequate academic performance. He frequently works on his parents' and other people's farms. David stated that his job as a farm labourer has provided him with an income and a means of sustaining his livelihood. David responded:

> "I am a labourer. In my work, I encounter quite a number of women who also do the same labouring work. As labourers, our intention is to save money in order to get our own piece of land for cocoa farming".

David, stated that women play prominent and divers roles in cocoa production. He explained that the majority of women gain their incomes from cocoa. Women own most of the farms he has worked on, he said. He confirmed the significant involvement of women in the cocoa sector. David responded;

> "Throughout my time working as a labourer on people's farms, especially in Adandan, most of the farms I work on are for women and, in some cases, supervised by the women themselves, their elderly children, or by family-related men. Sometimes it can be challenging to identify the true owners of the land, but upon investigation, it becomes clear that the land belongs to a woman".

Although only a few men were interviewed, their experiences within the cocoa sector affirmed the general patterns found in the experiences of women. This revealed significant social differentiation among men, with landowners selling land, hiring out land to sharecroppers, and expanding areas cultivated through the hiring of labour. The purchase of land among men, sharecropping, and labouring were also evident. The accounts of men also suggest that men engage in farming with their wives, and depend upon the family labour of their wives. Some of these farmers are reluctant to support their wives in moving into other ventures such as Isaac, whose wife was a trained hairdresser. But wives also engage in casual labour on other farms to supplement their income, particularly when their husbands do not have their own land. Often couples without land will work together as hired labour in an attempt to save money to acquire land.

As with women, social mobility was prevalent among men, who also migrated to take up alternative livelihoods in other areas but returned to their hometowns when they experienced difficulties or to help their parents in old age and took up cocoa farming. While some men, like Kojo Marfo, inherit land from their parents, and employ large numbers of labourers and sharecroppers including women, others were not as fortunate. For instance, Isaac moved to Asikuma after failing to sell footwear. Without land to farm, he worked at the truck station until he was able to get land on a sharecrop basis. Similarly, David, a native of Adandan, has no land of his own and works as a casual farm labourer. The experience of landlessness is not limited to young men. For instance, as a child, the elderly Agya Nkwantabisa moved to Asikuma with his parents, where his father rented land. Other farmers live elsewhere, returning to their hometowns after their parents' deaths to manage family land. Prosperous farmers like Marfo have established other trading ventures, but they continue to purchase farmland, which they release to sharecrop tenants.

Other cocoa farmers like Isaac, depend upon their wives' labour and are reluctant to provide support for them to establish other ventures such as hairdressing.

5.8.5 Conclusion

The sample of women cocoa farmers has revealed a rich diversity of experiences and circumstances among them. While some female cocoa farmers are relatively wealthy, own several plots of land, and hire labour, a significant number do not own land, work as agricultural labourers, save money by labouring to purchase small plots of land, or have acquired some capital to purchase cocoa seedlings and inputs, hire labour, and transition from farm labour to cocoa farming. The case studies also reveal a complex rural setting, in which there is considerable commodification of land and labour, as well as high levels of population mobility.

Unable to rely on their lineage or parents for land, a significant number of women now acquire it through purchases. Women are also highly mobile as a result of marriage or alternative livelihood options, which results in their movement to towns or other agricultural settlements. The fragility of marriage, tensions within the matrilineal system regarding the rights of wives and matrilineal members, and changing life circumstances often lead women to return to their farming villages and engage in cocoa production as a means of reconstituting their lives. However, a large number of women cannot rely on their families to provide them with land, and their entry into farming occurs through casual labouring. Although tensions in family relations exist and land is increasingly acquired through market transactions, family reciprocity still continues to be important, and there were several instances where women helped their elderly parents, taking on the responsibility of managing their farms when they became old and sharing the proceeds of the cocoa farm with them.

The life history approach also reveals significant differences between women of different ages. Young women experience increasing difficulty in gaining access to family land. They either have to purchase or lease land or gain it on a sharecrop tenancy. While many younger women continue to work with their husbands in cocoa, they now work as sharecroppers and labourers with them rather than on their husbands' cocoa farms. In contrast, many of the elderly women gained access to land through inheritance or as a gift from their husband. However, this does not mean sharecropping or labouring are recent innovations, since the 91-year-old Mary Sey began cocoa farming as a labourer and sharecrop tenant.

Among women, relatively prosperous farmers can be found with several plots of land who lease it out on sharecrop arrangements or hire labourers to farm, such as Yaa Afedzewa, the queen mother of Adandan, an elderly woman who has several plots of land and hires labour mostly for her farm work. Similarly, Mercy Ahinsah, a mature woman with 4 acres of land in Nsuekyir, has given out some of her land to farmers on a sharecrop arrangement. Additionally, there are poor women who are married to impoverished men and only benefit from sharecropping arrangements. These women work with their husbands on shared farmland and also work as casual labourers on other farmers' land. A significant number of women are cocoa workers.

An important concern arises from the cases of Nana Yaa Afedziwa and Aunty Nana, who appear as landowners in the field data. Far from weakening the thesis, these examples reinforce the argument that women's autonomy is highly differentiated. As a queen mother and prominent cocoa farmer, Yaa Afedziwa's ability to pass land to daughters reflects her elevated social position and the protective strategies of matriliny, not the everyday experience of younger or economically vulnerable women. Likewise, although Aunty Nana inherited land, her narrative shows that her husband manages the farm and her parents depend on its income, thus limiting her effective control. These cases exemplify the paradox at the centre of this study: women may formally own land, yet customary authority, economic dependency, and reciprocal obligations constrain their decision-making power. Recognising these exceptions therefore strengthens the study's conclusion that women's landholding is conditional and uneven within cocoa production systems.

Several women migrated elsewhere to pursue other livelihoods, returning to their hometowns as a result of adversity, which may include marital problems or seizure of their assets by their husband's family when he dies. Some of these women begin their careers as casual labourers and gradually accumulate savings to purchase a plot of land or establish a cocoa plantation under a sharecrop arrangement. For example, Adjoa Kunkuntar acquired properties after working jointly with her husband as a fisherman in Manford, but after his demise, the family assessed their assets, forcing her to return to her hometown with the children. Similarly, Esi Abasah, who migrated to Axim with her husband, jointly engaged in palm plantations, but after the husband's demise, the family seized the land, and this made her travel back to her hometown to start as a sharecropper on family land. Some of the women farm with landless husbands, who are often migrants, such as Aunty Nana.

Many women experience difficulty saving up enough money to purchase land and become dependent on working as casual labourers to earn an income. In Asikuma, women's casual labour is critical to cocoa production. Most of the participants within the interviews were of the view that women were becoming increasingly important in cocoa farming, both as autonomous farmers with their own land, as wives of men working on their husbands' farms, and as labourers employed by cocoa farmers. Most women within these villages worked in cocoa rather than in other female occupations such as food vending, market trading, hairdressing, and sewing. Thus, female labour is crucial to the cocoa industry in these settlements.

5.9 Insights from Focus Group Discussions

In addition to in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted at the Adandan community centre on a Thursday, a taboo farming day. Ten participants took part: one young female labourer, four middle-aged women (including a group leader, landowner, sharecropper, and labourer), two elderly women (landowner and sharecropper), and three men (labourer and sharecroppers). The discussions, held in Fanti, explored women's participation in cocoa production and access to resources such as land, labour, capital, and inputs. The insights from the FGDs provided rich perspectives that complement the individual interviews. They are presented thematically below.

5.9.1 Women's Participation in Cocoa Production

The focus group discussions affirmed women's indispensable role in cocoa production, while also revealing how their contributions are shaped by structural inequalities and differentiated experiences.

One woman noted: *"We do almost all the work—planting, weeding, harvesting, breaking pods. Without us, there will be no cocoa."* This testimony underscores women's centrality to production, resonating with Barrientos and Bobbie's (2016) documentation of the extensive tasks women perform in Ghana's cocoa sector. However, while their labour is essential, their roles are often undervalued, and their control over the benefits of cocoa farming remains constrained. This reflects the broader feminist political economy critique that women's labour sustains the agricultural economy but is rarely matched with proportional recognition or reward (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003).

Another participant explained: *"The farms may be in the name of our husbands or uncles, but it is us women who care for them every day."* Her words point to the disjuncture between ownership and labour: men are recognised as landholders and farm "owners," while women provide the bulk of everyday farm management. This aligns with Okali's (1983) observation that women's work undergirds cocoa farming, yet land and revenue are legally and socially attributed to men. The testimony highlights the persistence of gendered property relations, in which women's contributions remain hidden under the authority of male kinship heads.

A third voice highlighted women's resilience: *"Even when my husband travelled, I stayed and continued the farm so that the cocoa would not spoil."* This reflects a historical pattern in which migration or absence of men shifted responsibility for cocoa farms onto women, a phenomenon also noted by Duncan (2010). It illustrates women's ability to sustain production independently, even under conditions of limited recognition. At the same time, this resilience should not be romanticised, as it often comes with a heavy burden of labour and without matching decision-making power.

Taken together, these testimonies reveal that women are not supplementary actors but central producers in the cocoa economy. Yet their contributions are mediated by cultural norms of landholding, male authority in revenue control, and a lack of recognition in formal agricultural structures. Women's participation is therefore best understood not simply as "helping" but as essential and systemic, even if structurally undervalued.

5.9.2 Access to Land

Women in the focus groups consistently identified land as the most critical and contested resource for cocoa production. Their testimonies reveal how access is structured by matrilineal kinship, mediated by male authority, and increasingly influenced by commodification and scarcity.

One respondent explained: *"Even though the land is from our mother's family, it is the men who decide how we use it."* This statement highlights the paradox of matriliny in Asikuma: descent and inheritance are traced through women, yet men—particularly maternal uncles and lineage heads—retain control over allocation. This supports Duncan's (2004) argument that matriliny both enables and constrains women, offering them potential access while simultaneously reinforcing male decision-making power.

Another participant observed: *"If you are lucky, your uncle will give you land. But if he has many nephews, the women are the last to be considered."* Her account underscores how gender interacts with generational hierarchies, where nephews' claims often take precedence over nieces'. This reflects Okali's (1983) finding that women's land rights in matrilineal systems are conditional and often secondary, despite being formally recognised within the lineage.

A further testimony pointed to the effects of commodification: *"Now land is not like before. People sell it, and if you don't have money, you cannot get any."* This indicates how the shift from communal to market-based land tenure has eroded traditional access channels. Amanor (2001) similarly notes that the commercialisation of land in southern Ghana disproportionately disadvantages women, who typically lack the capital to compete in land markets.

These experiences reveal that women's access to land is not a straightforward entitlement but a contested and negotiated process. Kinship rules theoretically provide women with access, but male authority, generational competition, and land commodification limit their autonomy in practice. For many women, especially the young and economically vulnerable, land access depends less on lineage rights and more on their ability to mobilise relationships, resources, or market opportunities.

5.9.3 Access to Labour

Labour emerged as another critical factor shaping women's participation in cocoa production. The discussions highlighted both the reliance on women's labour within households and the challenges women face in mobilising additional help under conditions of scarcity and cost.

One participant explained: *"In the past, we could call family to help on the farm, but now everyone is busy with their own work."* Her account reflects the decline of kinship-based reciprocity in labour relations. Duncan (2010) has argued that reciprocal household labour, once a stabilising force, is increasingly undermined by economic pressures and migration. For women farmers, this erosion translates into heavier workloads, as they must compensate for the absence of extended family labour while still managing household responsibilities.

Another woman observed: *"To hire labourers, you need cash. If you don't have money, the work delays, and the farm suffers."* This testimony underscores the centrality of cash in accessing nonfamily labour. Women, already disadvantaged in accessing credit and capital (as discussed in Section 5.9.4), find it particularly difficult to mobilise hired workers. This reflects Amanor's (2001) observation that the commodification of agricultural labour has introduced new inequalities, where women limited financial capacity leaves them unable to compete for scarce labour resources.

A third respondent highlighted gendered dynamics: *"When men need help, their sisters' children will come. But for us women, even our brothers do not always come when we call."* This remark illustrates how kinship obligations are unevenly enforced, privileging men's claims over women's. It resonates with Okali's (1983) findings that while matrilineal kinship recognises women as lineage members, the practice of labour reciprocity often privileges male farmers, marginalising women's ability to mobilise kin support.

Taken together, these testimonies show that women's access to labour is increasingly precarious. The decline of kinship reciprocity, the rising costs of hired labour, and the prioritisation of men's claims within kinship structures mean that women farmers often face significant delays in farm work or must resort to overwork. Labour, therefore, is not simply a resource but a site where economic commodification and gendered norms intersect, further constraining women's autonomy in cocoa production.

5.9.4 Access to Capital and Inputs

Women in the focus groups consistently highlighted financial exclusion and difficulties in obtaining farm inputs as major constraints in cocoa production. Their testimonies reveal not only personal struggles but also structural inequalities embedded in the rural credit and agricultural support systems.

One respondent lamented: *"When you go to the bank, they ask for land papers. But the land I farm is not mine. How can I bring papers?"* This statement underscores how formal credit systems are designed around collateralised land ownership, a criterion that systematically disadvantages women whose land access is mediated by kinship or marriage. As Doss (2014) and Whitehead & Tsikata (2003) argue, such requirements reflect institutional biases that assume male landholders, effectively excluding women from financial services even when they are productive farmers.

Another participant observed: *"The fertiliser and chemicals are there, but they are expensive. We hear of government support, but it never reaches us."* This testimony points to a gap between agricultural policy intentions and lived realities. Although government input distribution programs exist, women often lack the social networks or institutional visibility to benefit from them, leaving them dependent on local markets where prices are unaffordable. This reflects Amanor's (2011) critique of agricultural commercialisation, where subsidies are captured by wealthier or better-connected farmers, while poorer women farmers are marginalised.

A third woman explained: *"Sometimes I borrow small money from our susu group. It helps, but it is not enough for fertiliser or hiring labour."* Her reliance on rotating savings groups illustrates how women draw on informal networks to cope with exclusion from formal finance. While these mechanisms provide some relief, they are insufficient for covering the high costs of inputs required for competitive cocoa farming. This aligns with studies on informal finance in rural Ghana (Aryeetey, 2005), which stress that while community-based systems promote resilience, they cannot substitute for structural access to credit.

Taken together, these quotations reveal a paradox. Women farmers are central to cocoa production, yet their access to capital and inputs is precarious, shaped by gendered land tenure, institutional bias in credit systems, and uneven state support. Their testimonies highlight that financial exclusion is not merely about individual poverty but about structural constraints that reproduce gendered inequalities. Without addressing these barriers, women's productivity in cocoa farming will remain limited despite their resilience and resourcefulness.

Women's agency is strong and often decisive in cocoa production. For example, women's testimonies describe managing farm finances, coordinating hired labour, and making choices about crop diversification. However, the critical question is not whether women participate, but whether their decision-making power is secure. Many respondents acknowledged that final control over cocoa revenues or land transfer still rested with husbands or male lineage elders. In this way, autonomy is best understood as negotiated autonomy—a spectrum in which women's authority is real but mediated by social norms, kinship obligations, and household dynamics. By framing autonomy in relational rather than absolute terms, the study demonstrates that leadership in production does not equate to full independence in decision-making.

5.9.5 Gender Relations and Household Dynamics

The focus group discussions revealed entrenched gendered dynamics within households, where women's labour was central to cocoa production but their authority over decision-making remained contested.

One male participant, Kobina, remarked: *"We know the women carry much of the burden. But when money comes, men are expected to control it. That is how the house is managed."* His words capture the contradiction at the heart of gender relations in cocoa households. While women provide critical labour input, the proceeds are culturally coded as belonging to men. This reinforces Whitehead and Tsikata's (2003) argument about "separate budgets" in Ghanaian households, where women's contributions to subsistence and daily expenses are recognised, but their claim over cash crop revenue is limited. Kobina's statement shows how men acknowledge women's efforts yet uphold the norm that financial authority must remain male.

Another woman, Aba, explained how resource allocation is tied to male decision-making: *"Even if I bring money from my own trading, my husband decides what we should use it for. I cannot spend without his knowledge."* This testimony illustrates how household financial governance constrains women's autonomy even when they generate income independently. It reflects Duncan's (2004) finding that women's economic agency is often mediated by marital authority, where their role is not the absence of contribution but the absence of recognised decision-making power.

These testimonies also highlight subtle forms of negotiation. Some women described instances where they influenced spending decisions indirectly, such as convincing husbands to invest in farm inputs or children's schooling. Such strategies demonstrate women's agency within restrictive structures, where bargaining and persuasion rather than formal authority shape household financial outcomes.

Taken together, the findings reveal that gender relations in cocoa households are marked by a paradox: women's labour sustains production, and their incomes supplement household welfare, yet structural norms of male authority limit their control over farm revenues and resource allocation. This dynamic reflects both continuity in patriarchal household structures and the gradual emergence of women's subtle strategies to assert influence within them.

It is necessary to clarify that the co-existence of complementarity and women's land access in some cases does not invalidate the central argument about constrained autonomy. In this study, autonomy is not defined as separation from men or rejection of household cooperation. Rather, it is understood as the capacity of women to make independent and binding decisions regarding land, labour, and income. The evidence demonstrates that even when women access land or share responsibilities with husbands, their decision-making power is frequently mediated by lineage authority, spousal management, or reciprocal obligations. For instance, Aunty Nana inherited land but conceded that her husband controls farm operations and income while her parents depend on the proceeds, leaving her with partial authority over her own land. Similarly, although some households function cooperatively, women's labour does not always translate into recognised ownership or authority, as reflected in the role of male lineage heads in land distribution. Complementarity therefore exists alongside structural inequality. Autonomy remains necessary precisely because, without secure decision-making rights, women's contributions remain vulnerable to dispossession during widowhood, divorce, or conflict. Thus, the demand for autonomy is justified, not as an alternative to cooperation, but as a guarantee that women's substantial contributions to cocoa farming are matched by secure rights and recognised authority.

5.9.6. Emerging Challenges

The focus group discussions revealed that women's participation in cocoa farming is increasingly shaped by new pressures—ranging from generational aspirations, policy shifts, and household dynamics, to environmental risks. Respondent testimonies highlight how these challenges are experienced in gendered and differentiated ways.

Gloria, a young female labourer, remarked: *"If I get money, I will leave cocoa and go to Accra. The trees take too long before you see money."* Her statement captures a wider trend of youth disengagement from cocoa farming, where the long gestation period of cocoa trees contrasts with the immediacy of urban economic opportunities. This reflects shifting aspirations and the declining attractiveness of cocoa as a livelihood option for younger generations, raising concerns about the future sustainability of cocoa production in rural Ghana.

Aba Ackon added: *"Since children cannot work on the farm like before, we spend too much on hired labour. It is good to protect the children, but it increases our costs."* This comment highlights the unintended consequences of child labour restrictions. While child protection policies are crucial, their implementation disproportionately raises production costs for smallholder women, who already face limited access to capital and credit. The testimony illustrates a policy dilemma: safeguarding children's rights while addressing the economic vulnerability of women farmers who depend heavily on family labour.

Kobina, a male participant, stated: *"We know the women carry much of the burden. But when money comes, men are expected to control it. That is how the house is managed."* His words reinforce entrenched gender norms, where women's labour sustains cocoa farming but decision-making over revenues remains male-dominated. This finding is consistent with Whitehead and Tsikata's (2003) notion of separate household budgets, where women's financial contributions are recognised but their control over cash-crop income is restricted. The persistence of these dynamics undermines women's bargaining power, limiting their ability to translate labour contributions into financial autonomy.

Esi Komfo contended: *"The rains are no longer stable. The swollen shoot disease is killing my trees. I cannot afford the chemicals they tell us to buy."* Her perspective underscores how climate change and plant disease compound the challenges faced by women in cocoa production. Unstable rainfall disrupts planting cycles, while swollen shoot disease erodes productivity. Yet the recommended chemical solutions remain unaffordable for many women farmers, reflecting broader structural barriers of credit, subsidy access, and institutional support. In this way, environmental risks not only threaten yields but also intensify existing gendered inequalities in access to inputs and technologies.

Taken together, these testimonies reveal that emerging challenges in cocoa production are not only ecological or economic but also deeply gendered and generational. Youth disengagement, the costs of child labour policies, persistent male control of income, and the impacts of climate change and pests all reinforce the precarious position of women cocoa farmers. Rather than isolated problems, these challenges intersect to shape women's livelihoods, exposing the need for policy responses that are sensitive to both structural inequalities and local experiences.

5.9.7. Conclusion

The FGDs revealed that while women are deeply engaged in cocoa production, their access to land, labour, and capital is mediated by kinship authority, male decision-making, and economic constraints. Women expressed both resilience and frustration, often drawing on informal networks and sheer perseverance to remain in farming. The male voices acknowledged women's importance, but also reinforced traditional expectations of male authority. These insights confirm that women's participation in cocoa farming is active but constrained, shaped by age, lineage, and gendered household dynamics.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study investigated women's participation in cocoa farming in Asikuma Odoben Brakwa District, specifically in the communities of Adandan and Nsuekyir. The research investigated the extent of women's involvement in cocoa production as independent producers, sharecroppers, and labourers, as well as the factors affecting their access to land, labour, and capital. The analysis centred on the impact of kinship systems, economic conditions, and gender relations on women's ability to participate effectively in cocoa production.

The study provides an in-depth analysis of the diverse roles that women play in cocoa farming, including their participation as independent farmers, sharecroppers, and laborers. Women who own or manage their own cocoa farms independently make agricultural decisions, control farming practices, and directly benefit from cocoa sales. In some cases, their husbands work as sharecroppers on their lands. The study focuses on the critical, yet often overlooked, contributions of women to the cocoa industry. By documenting the life histories of women cocoa farmers, the study offers new perspectives on the social and economic experiences of women in agriculture, thus filling a gap in gender-specific studies on cocoa farming.

The study builds upon literature that addressed challenges related to women's access to resources. It delves deeper into the specific constraints faced by female cocoa farmers, such as the impact of kinship systems, migration, and socio-economic factors on resource allocation. It emphasises the paradox of matrilineal systems, where women may inherit land but do not fully control it, thus challenging simplistic assumptions about gender equity in such societies. The study provides empirical evidence of how socio-cultural norms continue to mediate women's access to land, labour, and capital, reinforcing their economic marginalisation.

The study shows that the problem of difficulty in accessing land affects both men and women equally. The majority of both women and men face challenges in gaining access to land, leading to situations where many women are forced to work as sharecroppers and labourers alongside their husbands who do not own land, with the hope of pooling resources to purchase their own lands for cocoa farming. This indicates that a significant shift has occurred, with the majority of people opting to buy land instead of inheriting it. This is not a complete and new phenomenon; the study revealed a case of an 83-year-old Efua Atta who as a young woman worked as a sharecropper on family land and a laborer on other people's land to assist her to pool resources together to purchase her own land, indicating this happening long before. This also highlights the importance of conducting life biographies to show life changes among women and their involvement in cocoa production. The study also revealed that in earlier times, the abundance of land provided most elderly women with easier access to land through inheritance than the experience of the younger generation.

Inheritance within lineages is not completely dead. Okali (1983) refers to the persistence of inheritance practices, albeit in altered forms, despite changes in socio-economic conditions. In particular, Okali explores the impact of evolving economic pressures and land scarcity on traditional inheritance practices in cocoa farming communities. Even though inheritance customs are no longer as prominent as they once were, they continue to play a role in land distribution, indicating that inheritance, while transformed, has not entirely disappeared. The study reveals an instance where Esi Abasah, a 49-year-old, relocated to Axim following her marriage. Following her husband's death, she faced hardships due to the loss of the rubber plantation she and her husband had established for their family. She then moved to her maternal home, where her mother gave her a portion of land to work on as a source of livelihood.

Again, in areas where land scarcity is severe, the practice of transferring land as an inheritance has diminished, leading to more reliance on alternative means like purchases or gifts to acquire land. Yet, inheritance as a mechanism for passing on land persists in more limited forms, influenced by social relationships and kinship ties. This means that while formal inheritance practices are less common, the principles of family-based land transfer—especially from fathers to children—and mother to children continue to shape land ownership and farming dynamics.

Perceptions about the "physically arduous" nature of the work have traditionally framed cocoa farming as a predominantly male occupation. Both academic and policy circles have largely undervalued or ignored women's contributions due to this perception. By bringing to light the various roles women perform, the study directly challenges the narrative of male-dominated cocoa farming and reveals that women are key actors, albeit often in ways that go unnoticed. This shift in focus is critical because it provides a more inclusive picture of agricultural labour in the cocoa industry.

Women play a significant role in cocoa production as labourers, both as hired casual labourers and teaming with their husbands as labourers. Women becoming critical to labour in the villages is due to the shortage of labour, migration of men and the abolishing of child labour within cocoa villages. Duncan (2004) argued that, in the Western Region, the bride price signifies a husband's productive and sexual rights over his wife, but it also establishes the wife's expectation for maintenance, which includes provisions like land and financial support. Duncan (2004) underscores that in cocoa farming communities, economic compensation intertwines with the exchange of conjugal labour. Therefore, as part of the reciprocity inherent in their marriage relationship, women who assist their husbands in farming often anticipate receiving land or cocoa farms in return.

Okali (1983) also argued that migrant farmers often leverage the family labour system, where both husband and wife contribute to cocoa farming. Wives frequently play the role of unpaid labor, with the expectation that husbands will reward their wives' labor contributions with land or other forms of support. This reflects a broader expectation that marriage is not merely a domestic or social contract but also an economic one, especially in contexts where labour - intensive activities like cocoa farming are involved. In the past, when women worked on their husbands' cocoa farms, they could expect to receive land as compensation for their efforts. However, with the rising pressure on available land, husbands can only reward their wives with independently acquired land, not lineage land, as lineage land must often revert back to the family (Okali 1983). However, the study found that in Adandan and Nsuekyir, the typical form of reciprocity—gifting land to the wife for her labor contributions—is currently impossible when both husband and wife lack land. In these situations, people often express reciprocity through alternative means like financial support, education for children, livestock, or goods. The lack of land causes both partners to become more reliant on sharecropping or labor arrangements, where they work on other people's farms in exchange for a share of the harvest or wages. This setup limits the wife's ability to gain long-term assets, such as land, and makes her more dependent on her husband's capacity to secure paid labour opportunities to poll resources together in hopes of purchasing their own lands.

Finally, the study's exploration of social differentiation among women in cocoa farming—considering factors like age, marital status, and wealth—offers an intra-gender analysis that is often missing in the literature. The study underscores the heterogeneity of women's experiences in agriculture, highlighting the significant influence of their socio-economic status and life stage. This adds a layer of complexity to the discourse on women's participation in agriculture and underscores the need for differentiated support strategies.

The study integrates multiple theoretical frameworks—feminist political economy, gender relations, kinship theory, and economic anthropology—to offer a comprehensive understanding of the gendered dynamics within cocoa farming. This interdisciplinary approach helps to bridge gaps between different theoretical perspectives in the literature, particularly by connecting socio-cultural factors (like kinship and gender norms) with economic outcomes in agriculture. The nuanced exploration of feminist political economy offers insights into how patriarchal structures limit women's economic autonomy, providing a critical perspective that complements the broader discourse on gender relations in agriculture.

Methodologically, the study uses qualitative research techniques, such as life histories, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews, to provide rich, context-specific insights into the experiences of women cocoa farmers. By giving voice to women often marginalised in quantitative surveys, this qualitative approach contributes to the literature, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of the socio-economic factors affecting their participation in agriculture. The emphasis on case studies from specific communities in Asikuma adds empirical depth to existing research and demonstrates the importance of localised studies in understanding broader gender issues.

6.1 Recommendations

The study of cocoa farming dynamics in Ghana reveals significant challenges faced by farm owners, labourers, and sharecroppers, all of whom are essential contributors to the country's agricultural sector. The study proposes the following policy recommendations, focussing on land access, resource distribution, gender equity, and economic empowerment, to address these challenges and promote inclusive growth:

Current practices of land inheritance and gifting are insufficient for meeting the needs of labourers and sharecroppers, especially women, who often rely on these avenues for land acquisition. Policy interventions should aim to formalise and secure land access for sharecroppers through long-term lease agreements or co-ownership arrangements that recognise the contributions of labourers to farm productivity. This would create an opportunity for sharecroppers and labourers to build their capital and invest in farm development, thus improving economic stability.

Traditional inheritance practices remain important for land distribution, though they are becoming less effective due to scarcity and economic pressures. To counteract these trends, local governments should establish community-based land committees to mediate inheritance disputes, ensure equitable land distribution, and facilitate gender-inclusive land transfer. Special emphasis should be placed on promoting women's rights to inheritance to strengthen their economic independence.

Enhancing access to financial resources and agricultural inputs is crucial. Many farmers and labourers lack the financial resources to improve their farming operations or invest in inputs such as fertiliser, pesticides, and high-quality seedlings. Government and financial institutions should collaborate to provide targeted credit programs for small-scale farmers and labourers, with specific provisions for women. Local cooperatives should also provide subsidized agricultural inputs to lower production costs and enhance farm yield.

Establishing and supporting VSLAs in cocoa farming communities can provide farmers with accessible financial resources, especially those who may not qualify for formal credit. VSLAs can help labourers and sharecroppers pool resources, access emergency funds, and invest in their farming activities.

The study has, highlighted the socio-economic and cultural barriers, such as land access challenges, kinship constraints, and gender norms, which significantly affect women's participation in cocoa farming. Despite being key actors in cocoa production, womens' contributions are often undervalued due to patriarchal structures and socio-cultural expectations.

The findings reveal that women in these communities actively navigate economic pressures, leveraging a mix of inheritance, labor, and purchasing practices to access land. The study illustrates that while traditional inheritance remains a mechanism for land acquisition, it is increasingly complemented by other means like purchases or gifts. This evolution underscores the complex and dynamic relationship between land ownership and gender relations, as well as the shifting economic roles of women in agricultural settings.

The study contributes to understanding the gendered dynamics of agriculture by providing an interdisciplinary approach that combines feminist political economy, kinship theory, and economic anthropology. It calls for policy interventions aimed at formalizing land access, recognizing women's contributions, and promoting equitable resource distribution to ensure a more inclusive and sustainable cocoa industry in Ghana. These strategies are crucial for empowering women and enhancing their economic independence, thereby contributing to the overall growth of the agricultural sector.

6.2 Implementation of Recommendations

The successful implementation of these recommendations requires coordinated action by multiple institutions. The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR), together with the Office of the Administrator of Stool Lands and traditional authorities such as chiefs, queen mothers, and lineage heads, should ensure equitable land access and secure tenure for women.

The Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA), COCOBOD, and the Cocoa Marketing Board must strengthen women-focused agricultural credit schemes, extension services, and input support, while rural and community banks, microfinance institutions, and village savings and loan associations expand grassroots financial inclusion. District Assemblies (MMDAs), MoFA extension units, and NGOs such as Oxfam, Care Ghana, Solidaridad, and the World Cocoa Foundation should facilitate cooperative formation, labour-sharing initiatives, and capacity-building programmes. To promote access to technology and inputs, COCOBOD and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) – Crop Research Institute should prioritise the distribution of improved seedlings, fertilisers, and women-friendly technologies, in collaboration with private agribusinesses. Gender equity interventions must be championed by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP), supported by the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), women's farmer associations, and the Ghana National Association of Farmers and Fishermen (GNAFF). Finally, broader policy integration and oversight should be driven by Parliament (through its Select Committee on Agriculture and Cocoa Affairs), the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), and COCOBOD to ensure that gender-sensitive programmes in cocoa production are effectively monitored and sustained.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON

INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES

This interview guide is used to access information on Cocoa production and women's autonomy in Asikuma in the Central Region of Ghana. The interview aims to understand your experience and participation in cocoa farming, access to resources, and the challenges you face. You are kindly required to answer the questions honestly as possible. You are

assured of anonymity. Your responses will remain confidential, and you can choose not to answer any question. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. Also, the information provided would only be used for academic purposes and would be treated with the greatest confidentiality.

Section 1: Demographic Information

- What is your age?
- What is your marital status?
- Sex?
- Number of Children (if any)?
- Educational Status?
- Religious Affiliation?
- How long have you been involved in cocoa farming?
- What is your role in cocoa farming? (e.g., farm owner, labourer, sharecropper)

Section 2: Personal History in Cocoa Farming

1. **Background**
    - Can you tell me how you got involved in cocoa farming?
    - What inspired or led you to choose cocoa farming as a livelihood?
    - Did you inherit your farm, or did you acquire it through other means?

Section 3: Participation in Cocoa Farming

1. **Role in Cocoa Farming**

- How did you start working in cocoa farming?
- What type of work do you typically do in cocoa farming? Are there specific tasks that women are responsible for?
- Has your role changed over time? If so, how and why?

2. **Motivations for Farming**
   - Why did you decide to go into cocoa farming? Was it something you chose, or was it a family decision?
   - What do you enjoy most about working in cocoa farming?

3. **Access to Resources**
   - How did you acquire access to land for cocoa farming? (Inheritance, purchase, gift, sharecropping)
   - How easy or difficult is it to gain access to land in your community, especially as a woman?
   - What kind of support (financial, labor) do you have for your farming activities?

4. **Labour**
   - Who assists you in working on your farm? (Family members, hired labor, community groups)
   - Is there a gender division of labor on your farm? Who does what work?
   - How do you balance your household responsibilities with your farm work?

Section 4: Social and Economic Challenges

1. **Challenges in Farming**
    - What challenges do you face as a woman in cocoa farming? (Access to land, resources, gender roles).
    - Has anything changed in recent years that has made it easier or harder for women to farm cocoa?
    - How do government or NGO programs support or fail to support you in overcoming these challenges?
    - Have there been any changes in your farming due to the policies that discourage child labor?
2. **Income and Financial Autonomy**
    - Do you earn income independently from your farm, or is it shared with your household?
    - How do you decide how to use the income from cocoa production?
    - Are you involved in any savings or loan associations (e.g., Village Savings and Loan Associations)?

Section 5: Gender Dynamics and Household Relations

1. **Household Roles**
    - How do you manage household decision-making, especially regarding farming-related decisions?

- Does your husband (or male relatives) help you with farm work? If so, how?
- Do you think women are valued equally in farming compared to men in your community?
- How do you think the community views women who own or manage their own farms? Do you face any challenges as female farmers in your community?

2. **Marriage and Inheritance**
    - How has marriage influenced your access to land or resources?
    - Have you experienced any conflicts in your family related to land inheritance or use?
    - Have you made plans to pass on your land to your children? If so, how?

Section 6: Government and Policy Interventions

1. **Policies and Programs**
    - Are you aware of any government policies or NGO projects that aim to support women in cocoa farming?
    - How effective do you find these programs? Have you participated in any, and what was your experience?
    - What more can be done to support women like you in cocoa farming?

Section 7: Migration, Livelihoods, and Social Change

1. **Migration**

- Have you or members of your family ever migrated for work? If so, how has this impacted your farming?
- Have economic changes forced you to consider other forms of livelihood apart from cocoa farming?

2. **Alternative Livelihoods**
   - Have you ever considered leaving cocoa farming for other livelihoods? If so, why?
   - What would make cocoa farming more viable or attractive to you as a woman farmer?

Section 8: Closing Questions

- Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience as a woman in cocoa farming?
- What advice would you give to other women considering cocoa farming as a livelihood?

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Opening Questions (Ice Breakers):

1. Let's start with brief introductions. Could each of you tell me your name, how long you've been involved in cocoa farming, and what role you play on the farm?

QUESTIONS

2. Why did or do women shift from subsistence farming to cocoa farming?
3. What are the typical gender roles of men and women in cocoa families?

4. Has there been changes in the gender roles of Cocoa farmers? If Yes Specify
5. Can you share your knowledge about the roles of women cocoa farmers in these various stages?
    a. Girls
    b. Middle age or matured women
    c. Elderly women
6. How does the developmental stages of women influence their participation in cocoa farming?
7. How do the developmental stages of women and their status affect women's access to resources?
8. What is the kind of reciprocal help or support do women cocoa farmers receive from the matrilineages, households and conjugal units?
9. Share your knowledge about the challenges facing women in cocoa production?
    a. Market
    b. Migration
    c. Societal norms and practices
    d. Land access and control
    e. Decision making process
    f. Limited access to labour and capital
10. Can you tell me some of the advantages women cocoa farmers have over women who are not into cocoa farming.