



BREAKING GROUND

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Breaking Ground Interim Program Progress Report

April 2014 – September 2014

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Progress Report

Grantee Information

Organization:	Breaking Ground
Program Title:	Lebialem Valley Women's Entrepreneurial Program
Contact Person:	Paul Zangue, Program Director
Grant amount:	\$22,924 USD
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Program Overview

In the communities of Lebialem Valley, as in much Cameroon's rural areas, women are responsible for providing food, financing the education and health needs of their families, and meeting these financial obligations by engaging in small-scale economic activity such as agro-processing, food trade, and raising livestock. However these women have often lacked access to education and economic livelihood opportunities so these activities remain at subsistence level. The financial support received from Dining For Women has allowed Breaking Ground to continue our efforts on behalf of women of Lebialem Valley in South West Cameroon to strengthen the capacities of women in this region to manage commercial agricultural activities. These programs are increasing income and living conditions and improving the nutrition of women and their families through crop diversification.

Program Outcomes

This program is designed to empower the women of the Lebialem Valley to become economically self-sufficient through the creation of community gardens, business and agricultural training, and access to financing. The program will build female leadership, encourage entrepreneurship and create role models for young girls.

Funding Situation

There have been no new developments in program funding. The Lebialem Valley Women's Entrepreneurial Program continues to be funded exclusively by DFW.

Organizational situation

Breaking Ground's Board of Directors made a strategic decision to transition more of the organizations' decision-making and administrative and fundraising duties to Cameroon over the course of the next year or two. This move will allow Breaking Ground to minimize overhead and thus maximize the resources going to Cameroon for direct programming. More importantly, it allows Breaking Ground to align its organizational structure with its mission. By investing further in Cameroonian staff and by building direct relationships with funding organizations in Cameroon, we aim to place decision-making closer to target communities, further empower local actors (particularly our own Cameroonian staff and partners), and bolster the sustainability of Breaking Ground's programs. As a first step, in May 2014 Executive Director responsibilities were transferred to The Board of Directors and the Project Director. Breaking Ground is currently working on a comprehensive plan to complete the transition.

Challenges

The greatest challenge to program success is also one of the fundamental development challenges that the program seeks to address: the reduced status of women in the target communities. This reduced status makes the task of getting women to participate in programs a difficult one. Through facilitated group discussions and community meetings, Breaking Ground is highlighting the importance of women to community and family well being and advocating for a transformation of harmful, counterproductive attitudes and behaviors toward women's role in society. We work with local administrative and traditional leaders to identify social barriers to women's participation and to seek locally appropriate solutions to surmounting those barriers. In Breaking Ground's programs, women are treated as individuals and as farmers, not simply as wives. By supporting women's entrepreneurial education and their investment in commercial agriculture, we promote income earning opportunities and independence for women.

Breaking Ground planned to introduce an animal husbandry program during the reporting period as another income generating activity for women, specifically pig raising. Swine fever has returned to the zone, and after consulting with veterinarians in the area, we decided that pig raising carries too much risk at this time. We're currently exploring other options, including fish farming. Tilapia and catfish are currently farmed in the region, and there is a

reliable market for fish sales. We continue to explore the possibility of introducing fish farming activities in the next reporting period.

This reporting period coincided with the heaviest agricultural period of the year. As a result, women's obligations to their own subsistence farming reduced their availability to participate in business classes and leadership trainings. In the more remote villages of Nkong and Bangang, participation would have been too low to justify the time and resources necessary for offering the business classes in each village. Folepi and Bechati are close enough to each other that we could offer one class for women from both villages.

Women took the skills they learned in the Community Gardens and replicated them in their own gardens. They are growing tomatoes and greens to ensure access to fresh food in the dry season. This is a fantastic thing. However, they don't have proper watering cans for dry season irrigation, and watering from buckets is causing damage to plants and soil and reducing their potential harvest. Breaking Ground will look for funding to provide each participant with her own watering can for improved dry season production in the future.

During the first year of program implementation, Program Director Paul Zangue estimates that he spent on average 40 – 50% of his time on the Lebialem Valley WEP. Currently, 30% of the Program Director's salary is covered by Dining For Women funds. His time was spent working with the Ground Coordinator to design, plan, implement, monitor and document activities, as well as general troubleshooting, community engagement and program administration. Breaking Ground anticipates that this level of effort will continue and likely increase in the second year, as the loan program begins and participation in activities increases as Breaking Ground becomes more known and trusted in the community. Breaking Ground will assess the situation, and, if necessary, may formally request an increase in the percentage of the Program Director's salary covered by Dining For Women funds.

Objectives

The program objectives remain the same. They are:

- To strengthen the capacities of women in these communities to manage commercial agricultural activities and thus improve their incomes and living conditions.
- To improve the nutrition of women and their families through crop diversification.

We are just finishing a program evaluation to determine the continued suitability of these objectives and Breaking Ground's progress toward achieving them. As a next step, we will hold community meetings to present the results to program participants, and seek feedback from participants to validate or refine the results. Breaking Ground will present the findings of the evaluation in the next Interim Progress Report.

Progress toward meeting objectives

Between April and September 2014, Breaking Ground's Ground Coordinator and Program Director worked with community members to implement activities that advanced program objectives. The activities are organized below by objective.

a) Women's capacity building and income generation

- Breaking Ground implemented a 6-week business class for 20 women from the villages of Folepi and Butchati. The 6-week class consisted of 8 modules:
 - Introduction/ identifying constraints/ sharing experiences;
 - Entrepreneurship;
 - Creating business goals and objectives
 - Planning and preparing for agricultural production;
 - Budgeting;
 - Saving and credit;
 - Accounting and book keeping;
 - Marketing.

Building on the experience of the business classes during the previous reporting period, the class benefited from improved educational materials that were further adapted to local languages and low literacy among participants. Also, new Ground Coordinator Marie Nguele is a trained educator and is proving to be an excellent instructor and facilitator for the classes.

- Breaking Ground held two educational community discussion sessions for women:
 - One in late April 2014 on women's role in child education, with 52 participants; and
 - One in late July 2014 on behavior change for women's empowerment, with 40 participants

Participants came from all four target villages. Women leaders from the community also participated and encouraged Breaking Ground to continue organizing community meetings for women's empowerment.

- Continued regular site visits to women participants' households and farms. The site visits provide continued follow up and support to participants to help them apply the lessons and skills learned in business classes and educational sessions.
- Breaking Ground encouraged and supported 20 women to invest in the cash crops of cocoa and oil palm. Traditionally, these cash crops are considered the exclusive business of male farmers. The intervention aims to reduce the gap between men and women in cash crop production.
- Breaking Ground worked with Community Garden participants to establish black and white pepper nurseries. Once the plants are ready for transplanting, participants will take them to their personal gardens to produce pepper commercially.
- In the next reporting period, Breaking Ground will begin the loan program to provide women participants in business classes with seed capital for implementing their agricultural business plans.

b) Nutrition Improvement

- Breaking Ground continues to work with participants to farm two community gardens in the villages of Folepi and Bangang. During the reporting period:
 - Women grew and harvested tomatoes and greens to increase household dietary diversity and the consumption of fresh vegetables.
 - In September, women established nurseries of tomatoes and greens to ensure access to fresh foods in the dry season (November – March).
 - In May, women established black and white pepper nurseries. The plants will soon be ready to transplant into participants' personal gardens for household consumption and commercial exploitation.
 - In Folepi, 60 women participate in the community garden
 - In Bangang, 30 women participate in the community garden.

Anticipated difficulties

The Lebiale Valley Women's Entrepreneurial Program was originally planned as part of a larger agricultural development program targeting smallholder farmers in seven villages in the Lebiale Valley. Breaking Ground is still seeking funding partners to cover the broader agricultural development component of the project and its expansion into the three other target villages in the Valley. The overall program would target women and men smallholder farmers, and by treating them equally in programs and activities would further improve women's status and role in their communities.

Spending for the Reporting Period

The table below breaks down expenses by category for the reporting period (April 2014 – September 2014). It also presents expenses from the previous reporting period and total expenses to date. Expenses for the reporting period totaled \$9,272.87. Total expenses to date are \$18,938.87, which leaves the Lebiale Valley Women's Entrepreneurial Program with a balance for the reporting year of \$3,985.13. The reduced spending is a result of the previously mentioned delays in livestock and loan program spending. We expect those expenses to be incurred in the next reporting period.

Category	Expenses October 2013 - March 2014	Expenses April 2014 - September 2014	Total Expenses through September 2014
Personnel	\$ 5,466.00	\$ 4,786.56	\$ 10,252.56
Operating	\$ 1,088.00	\$ 1,802.10	\$ 2,890.10
Programming	\$ 3,112.00	\$ 2,684.21	\$ 5,796.21
Business Class & Workshops	\$ 495.00	\$ 157.90	\$ 652.90
Community Garden	\$ 742.00	\$ 526.32	\$ 1,268.32
Loans	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Livestock	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Women/Agriculture	\$ 1,875.00	\$ 421.05	\$ 2,296.05
Evalutaion Costs	\$ -	\$ 1,578.95	\$ 1,578.95
Total Cost to Date	\$ 9,666.00	\$ 9,272.87	\$ 18,938.87

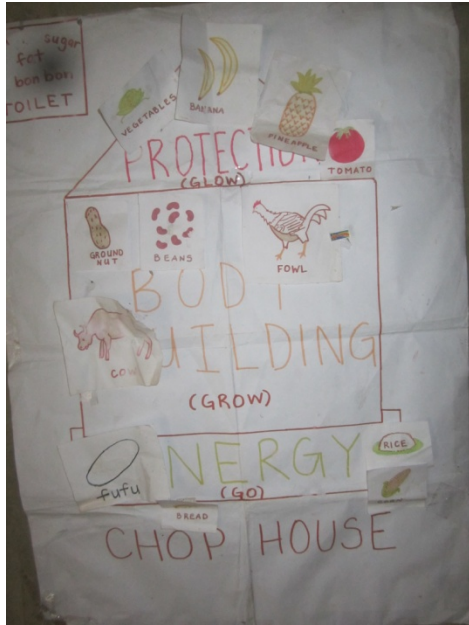
Photos



Washing greens from the community garden in Folepi.



Black and white pepper nurseries in the community garden in Bangang.



Training materials developed for nutrition education



Business class with participants from the villages of Folepi and Bechati



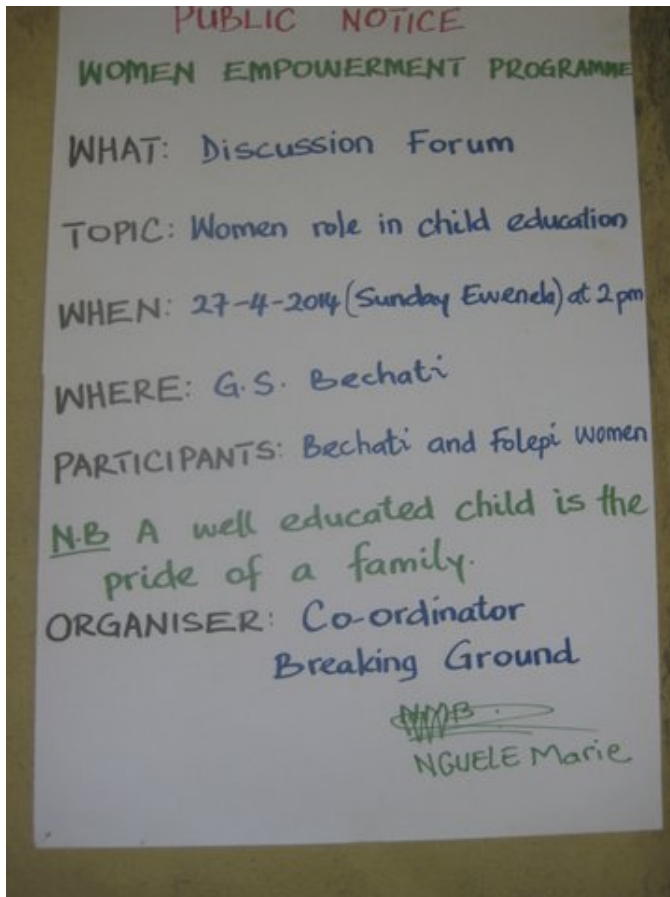
Business class participants from the villages of Folepi and Bechati



Women participants registering to receive oil palm plants to start commercial production



Madame Forsung in Folepi with her oil palm plants ready to transplant.



Public notice advertising educational community discussion session on women's role in child education.



Ground Coordinator Marie Nguele on a site visit to a participants' field.