



THE CHOCOLATE ROUTE: Empowering Chocolate Producers in the Peruvian Amazon

Uniterra is a Canadian volunteer cooperation and international development program that is jointly operated by WUSC (World University Service of Canada) and CECI (the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation). The program supports inclusive economic development to benefit women and youth in 14 countries across Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Uniterra works with key private, public, and civil society partners to facilitate growth and change in markets that have the greatest impact on the marginalized.

The Chocolate Value Chain

Peru has become an important cocoa producer and exporter, particularly of fine aromatic cocoa, reaching a production of 120,058 tons in 2017. The cocoa/chocolate industry's value chain, including processing and transforming into chocolates and derivative products, provides massive employment opportunities for youth and women. Currently, more than 90,000 families benefit directly from cocoa. Cocoa is mainly produced in the Amazon region.

The high quality and demand for fine aromatic cocoa has resulted in cooperatives and small entrepreneurs, mostly women, entering the chocolate business. Chocolate is produced on a small or medium scale, and is traditionally crafted. Most producers sell to local and national markets, and a few export internationally. Very few producers have obtained the organic and fair trade certifications. Top products are chocolate bars, with 35% to 70% cocoa, pure or mixed with nuts or dried fruits, and candies.

Main Constraints for Women as Small Scale Chocolate Producers

Small scale chocolate makers face several challenges. First, there is a lack of specialized equipment and artisan women learn to make chocolate from workshops or trainings that use basic appliances or home equipment. Second, there is a lack of technical knowledge and best practices in chocolate manufacturing. Finally, there is a lack of exposure to international commercial opportunities and information about trends and innovations.

Country

Peru

Program

2015-2020 Uniterra Volunteer Cooperation Program

Date

August 27, 2018

Implementing Partner

Cocoa & Chocolate Show 2018, Cocoa Producers Association of Peru (APPCACAO)

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Key Themes of the Story

Capacity building, women's empowerment



Direct Beneficiaries

16,507 participants at the Cocoa & Chocolate Show.

57 cocoa producers (63% women) participated in chocolate-making workshops on how to prepare new products with cocoa derivatives and local ingredients.

Chocolate factory Q'Uma, an organic, fair-trade bean-to-bar woman-led chocolate factory, was trained on new chocolate techniques.

Indirect Beneficiaries

Women and young cocoa/chocolate producers have access to better economic and social conditions.

Intervention Undertaken to Address This Issue

Specialized training on chocolate making and best practices benefits small chocolate makers. With proper training, they can improve the quality of their products, innovate using local products, and be more competitive. For this reason, the Unitererra Program welcomed top Canadian master chocolate makers, **Narada Brind'Amour** and **Luc Marcel Gielen**, as volunteers to offer conferences and demonstrations at the Cocoa Show in Lima. They also provided capacity building activities for cocoa cooperatives in the Amazon region. These activities sought to improve the technical skills of small chocolate entrepreneurs, update their knowledge of current trends and best practices, and provide valuable information about international markets.

Unitererra partnered with the Association of Cocoa Producers of Peru (APPCACAO) and Alianza Cacao Peru (ACP) which organizes the Cocoa & Chocolate Show. It benefits 19,263 families in Huánuco, Peru (25% female headed households) and Ucayali, Peru (20% female headed households). The volunteers focused on sharing the latest trends and consumer habits in cocoa products during the Cocoa & Chocolate Show; showing cooperatives and small local businesses ways to innovate and be competitive using local products, new recipes, and cocoa derivatives (liquor, butter, and powder); and highlighting the importance of giving women opportunities to access quality, on-site training.

Results

- Entrepreneurs interested in exporting gained knowledge in current trends and new insights into the chocolate market.
- Increased knowledge in techniques and best practices of chocolate making for small chocolate factories belonging to cooperatives. In most cases, these initiatives were carried out by women.
- Small chocolate producers are applying new techniques. For example, in a follow-up visit, cocoa producers mentioned they were developing a banana chocolate spread, a recipe learned at one of the workshops.

Scaling up, Replication, Sustainability and Innovation

The Unitererra Program facilitated the participation of Canadian chocolate makers at the Cocoa & Chocolate Show on three occasions. Peruvian chocolate makers are interested in learning how things are done in other countries and how to reach international markets. Regarding innovation, one of the volunteers demonstrated different ways to use cocoa derivatives to prepare salty snacks using cocoa butter.

Training provided for cooperative members has proven to be very effective. It allowed for female chocolate makers, who typically can't travel, to be reached and access training they otherwise wouldn't have been able to. The small group, participatory workshops created a space for women to feel confident and ask questions. The interest generated from participants and demands for this type of training are reasons to replicate this type of volunteer mandate in other cocoa producing regions. Some chocolate producers are already applying techniques and recipes taught by the volunteers.

Conclusion

The cocoa and chocolate sectors are growing and people require training to achieve sustainable economic growth. Training needs are both technical and organizational. In this regard, the participation of Canadian volunteer chocolate experts has proven to be very effective and well received, especially by women.

This project contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals: 1 – End Poverty; 4 – Quality Education; 5 – Gender Equality; 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth.



Luc Marcel Gielen, a Canadian-Belgian chocolatier and co-owner of the chocolate shop Chocomotive in Quebec, has 45 years of experience in pastry and chocolate production. He uses cocoa in creative ways, including specialties from Belgium. His international experience makes him the perfect speaker to talk about consumer habits in Canada and new trends.



Narada Brind'Amour, a Canadian chocolatier, and chocolate and pastry instructor in Montreal, owns Le Cacaoyer Inc., a chocolate factory in Quebec that produces chocolates, pastries, ice creams, and sorbets. Winner of the 2016 Pastry Award, Narada is passionate about chocolate. In the Amazon region, he demonstrated how to mix local fruits with chocolate.