

World Cocoa Foundation and Mars, Incorporated Team Up to Provide School Lunches in Cote d'Ivoire Cocoa Communities

BOBOUO, Cote d'Ivoire, July 20, 2015 /3BL Media/ - The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) and chocolate maker Mars, Incorporated, officially inaugurated the first of 11 planned school cafeterias in the heart of Côte d'Ivoire's major cocoa-growing region. Mars Global Chocolate President Jean-Christophe Flatin, as well as other senior leaders from Mars, was on hand for the opening ceremony, which is part of a visit to the region to see the results of Mars' Vision for Change program.

The cafeterias will help ensure that children of cocoa farmers in Bobouo can attend school in a healthy environment that encourages learning and increases the likelihood that the children will remain in school. The community of approximately 2,000 people is located 270 kilometers (170 miles) from San Pédro, the world's largest cocoa-exporting port. The jointly funded WCF and Mars initiative focuses on providing children with the opportunity to attend school in their own communities and enhances school infrastructure.

According to Flatin, "Mars Global Chocolate is committed to improving the farms and communities for cocoa farmers and their families within Cote d'Ivoire. It is gratifying to see the excitement of this community and their support in making this canteen a reality for their children. I am confident it will have a positive influence on education within the community. I'm also pleased to see another result of our long term relationship with WCF."

In addition to the school cafeteria, latrines and hand-washing facilities are being installed. By providing lunches and sanitation facilities, the school and others like it will serve as a magnet for children. Better facilities also mean that children, and especially girls, are more likely to stay in school, instead of dropping out. During its most recent academic year, the primary school in Bobouo had an enrollment of 127 pupils, including 62 girls. According to recent studies, approximately 71 percent of children in cocoa-growing households in Côte d'Ivoire attend school, a 12 percent increase from five years ago.

"WCF is very happy to partner with Mars and the community of Bobouo on this important project, which will help provide crucial educational opportunities for children who grow up in cocoa-farming families," says Bill Guyton, WCF president.

The initiative in Bobouo was made possible by WCF's privately-supported Cocoa Community Development Fund and the Vision for Change program of Mars, Incorporated. Vision for Change provides training and other inputs to farmers through an innovative approach to extension and couples this effort with community development activities. Together these work to improve cocoa farming as a sustainable source of income for farmers in the region. It was initiated in 2010 through an agreement with Côte d'Ivoire's Ministry of Agriculture. The Cocoa Community Development Fund supports community-identified projects in Côte d'Ivoire and scientific research where WCF and WCF member-supported programs are currently active. The fund does this by providing grants in three core areas: Community Challenge Grants, Cocoa Family Scholarships, and Cocoa Research Exchanges.

About WCF: The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) is an international membership organization that promotes sustainability in the cocoa sector. WCF provides cocoa farmers with the support they need to grow more quality cocoa and socially and economically strengthen their communities. WCF's members include cocoa and chocolate manufacturers, processors, supply chain managers, and other companies worldwide, representing more than 80 percent of the global cocoa market. WCF's programs benefit

farmers and their communities in cocoa-growing regions of Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Americas. For more information, visit www.worldcocoafoundation.org or follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

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