

INSPIRATIONS IN SUSTAINABILITY

IVORY COAST - DECEMBER 2020

My name is Kouamé Akissi Therese. I live with my family, my husband and 6 children (3 girls and 3 boys) in the village of Gôgô.

Two years ago, a Villages Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) was created in the village.

Before the project arrived in our village, I was part of the village women's self-help association, which aimed to support the village's development activities. Our children were going to school in the nearby village about 2 km away Madame Kouame explained.

As a farmers' wife, we could hardly cope with the different burdens of the household in terms of health, education and food. I had no savings and no property except our cocoa farm. Our livelihoods were very weak. It was in this situation that I learned of the arrival of a project in the village that aimed to bring people together to enable them to invest in income generating activities. I didn't know what VSLAs were and at the start I was afraid to join, because people had stolen from us in the past in other projects.

But with the encouragement of village members and the field agent from Blommer, I decided to participate. As the project was well explained it gave us the strength to try.



Madame and Messer Kouame, VSLA members from the village of Gôgô and now beef cattle farmers thanks to the VSLA

We named our VSLA "Abonouhan" (meaning: "it's going to surprise people"). Thanks to my savings in Abonouhan, I took a loan to maintain my yam field and sold the harvested produce at the market of Hiré. The money I earned from my sales allowed me to repay my loan and pay for household expenses. At the end of first year, I got paid out savings amounting to **90,000 FCFA (\$137)**. I was very happy.

Seeing this result, my husband joined a new VSLA that was created. At the end of the next year, the sharing of savings for my husband was the sum of **155,000 FCFA (\$237)** and I received **150,000 FCFA (\$229)** from my VSLA. These two amounts allowed us to **buy 2 cows** that will greatly help our family. We continue to save money in our respective groups.

I say thank you to Blommer, because of this project we are happy in our household and we get to provide for ourselves. The VSLA group has also rehabilitated our hydraulic village pump and established a cassava field of about 1 Ha, providing benefit to the whole community.