



# Satellite School - Las Escaleras, Nicaragua



Eastern Congo Initiative (ECI), in partnership with the ECOM Foundation, is taking an innovative approach to addressing gender inequity within the cocoa value chain in the Watalinga community of the Beni territory of eastern Congo. Known as the “EWEZO” Project (“I Can” in Swahili) ECI seeks to improve the lives of women cocoa farmers in Watalinga by increasing the number of women able to read and write. ECI, recognizing that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach, uses human-centered design that highly values input from community members and the targeted beneficiaries to ensure the services are precisely tailored to address the challenges the women face in terms of literacy and numeracy.

2018 was year one of our three-year partnership with ECI on the EWEZO project, and activities this year were centered on generating community buy-in and program design. In conjunction with ECI’s three implementation partners (non-profit organizations ALPHAGEDE, Promotion Program for Primary Health and Umoja (Unity) In Action) a project design boot camp was conducted, in which stakeholders collaborated and provided inputs for training materials and defined a detailed work plan for delivering the literacy and numeracy training to the women of Watalinga. At the close of this boot camp, the implementation partners had a clearly defined plan, driven by the precise needs of the beneficiaries, for the first phase of project implementation - referred to as the “Rapid Prototyping Phase.” The Rapid Prototyping Phase will be conducted January through March 2019 and each of the three implementation partners will conduct two pilot training courses. At the end of this phase, 120 women will have learned to read and write. And, very importantly, by leveraging feedback from the 120 women and other lessons learned during this pilot phase, the program design and materials will be improved upon to ensure maximum effect and impact on the target beneficiaries as the training services are delivered at scale.

Despite difficult social circumstances faced with the Ebola outbreak and tensions arising from the General Elections in the Congo this past year, ECI remained focused on success of the EWEZO project and we are very proud to be a part of their accomplishments thus far.



With major funding from the ECOM Foundation, a Satellite School serving the community of Las Escaleras in the municipality of Matagalpa, Nicaragua is being constructed to provide a space to encourage independent learning. The Satellite School will have two classrooms equipped with modern, quality furniture; 20 individual computer stations; a multimedia projector and Internet access. The facility also has two bathrooms, access to drinking water and a diesel generator (shown on right), guaranteeing its operation in the event of electrical outages.



The philosophy of the Satellite School is to provide access to world-class academic resources to anyone who desires to advance their education – whether to acquire basic computer skills, learn English, or expand their knowledge in advanced topics such as Finance, Statistics, Teaching, Information Technologies, Security, and Business. The curriculum is made available through the Virtual Learning Center (VTC) of Tecnológico de Monterrey, with whom Fundación Nicafrance, the local project manager, entered into a collaboration agreement. The VTC is an online education platform that integrates the newest and most effective teaching methodologies and makes

learning accessible to all students, regardless of geographic location.

The Satellite School is open to all members of the community – ranging from adolescents and youth developing their secondary education on the weekends, to parents, teachers, women, agricultural workers and others who wish to acquire new knowledge and training.

The Satellite School is truly a symbol of innovation and technology in education. The inhabitants of the surrounding coffee communities are proud of the investment made possible through the alliance of the funding partners on this project, the ECOM Foundation, Costa Foundation, Peerless Coffee Company, Inc. and Nicafrance Foundation, all of whom passionately share in the commitment to generate opportunities for vulnerable populations.

Fundación Nicafrance will inaugurate the opening of the Satellite School on March 7th, 2019.