

CHOOSE THE WORLD
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GUARDIANS OF THE RAINFOREST

FILM TRANSCRIPT

Beshey

Hi! My name is Beshey. Welcome to Sierra Leone!

Sierra Leone is in West Africa. It is a small, beautiful country. We have beaches and cities, mountains and forests.

I live in a small town called Gorahun.

Gorahun is near a great forest called the Gola Rainforest. The rainforest is old and has hundreds of rare plants, beautiful birds, and amazing animals.

Once, forests like this covered the whole country, but now there are only a few left. They are at risk from logging, mining and farming.

In my community, we know that the rainforest is important to the whole world. We want to protect it. But it is not easy to do that, when you have to make tough choices to survive.

Life is difficult for many people who live in Sierra Leone. My country has recently seen terrible war and disease. Many people do not earn enough money to meet their basic needs and it can be difficult to access education or medical care.

This is my family. My mother and father are cocoa farmers. My grandmother is a cocoa farmer. Maybe one day I will be a cocoa farmer too.

My parents are members of a group of cocoa farmers called Ngoleagorbu, which means "we who live at the forest edge".

We were supported by the RSPB, Comic Relief and Divine Chocolate to come together as a Fairtrade co-operative to improve our own lives and protect the rainforest.

This is our story.

Every morning, my family gets ready for the day ahead. We wash ourselves, brush our teeth, get dressed and say our prayers. Then we have our breakfast.

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FAIRTRADE

From Monday to Friday, I go to school with my friends.

But today is Saturday! There is no school today, so I am going to show you my family's cocoa farm!

Everyone in my family works as a team.

This is a cocoa pod. It is the fruit of the cocoa tree. The pods turn yellow or red when they are ripe.

Next, the pods are cracked open and the beans are put into a basket to ferment.

After the beans have fermented, they are laid out on a table to dry in the sun.

Fermenting the beans and drying them in the sun gives them their chocolatey flavour. Now the beans are ready to sell.

A full sack of cocoa is very heavy and sometimes the farmer has to walk several hours to get to the collection point.

There the cocoa is checked and weighed by the Ngoleagorbu buying officer who pays the farmer a fair price.

Every few days, a pick up truck comes to collect the cocoa and take it to the nearest city. It is a two hour journey on a long and muddy road.

Eventually it will be shipped overseas and made into chocolate!

As well as cocoa, my family grows lots of different food crops to eat at home.

Garden eggs

Papaya

Sugar cane

Banana

Avocado

Orange

Ginger

Coconut

Kola nuts

Pineapple

Guava

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Lucia

One of the biggest difficulties is food shortages during the rainy season. Our food crops are not ready and the cocoa is not ripe so we cannot sell it. So sometimes we go hungry.

The rainy season is also very wet. It is hard to work outside because we don't have waterproofs to wear.

Another challenge is paying for our children's education. We can usually afford to pay the fees for primary school, but secondary school can be very expensive, as children often need to travel to other towns and we have to pay for their food and accommodation. Almost no one from our community can afford college or university.

Beshey

Life is getting better now that my parents are part of Ngoleagorbu.

Everyone in Ngoleagorbu looks after their farm in a way that will increase their income without harming the rainforest.

We call it 'forest friendly farming', which means: working together, farming sustainably, and protecting the rainforest and the animals that live in it.

[WORKING TOGETHER]

Lucia

In Ngoleagorbu, we work together as a Fairtrade cooperative.

Fairtrade is very good for us because there is a lot of transparency and it works in the best interest of the farmers.

Beshey

Before Ngoleagorbu, we used to sell our cocoa to buyers from outside the community.

Now we have our own weighing scales, we keep records and write receipts, and the price we should receive for our cocoa is clearly displayed for all to see.

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Lucia

We used to work on our farms by ourselves and it was difficult to get all the jobs done. But now we work as a group: we move around each other's farms, spending one day on one farm before moving on to the next.

Since Ngoleagorbu was formed, women now take part in leadership roles and have key responsibilities.

I am the chairperson of the Fairtrade Premium Committee and so I am involved in making decisions for my co-operative.

Because we work together, the quality of our cocoa has improved and our income has increased.

[SUSTAINABLE FARMING]

Amie

Since Ngoleagorbu was formed we have seen many changes in cocoa farming.

Sidie

Now we farm organically. We don't use any chemicals and we have learnt how to manage the diseases that can affect our cocoa in a natural way.

This is black pod. It can be very damaging to our cocoa. Before, we used to just drop the diseased pods on the ground. Now we dig a hole and bury them, so that the disease will not transfer to the other pods or trees.

We have learnt how to plant our cocoa trees properly. In the past, we would put them close together so they were overcrowded. By spacing them out, we have seen the trees produce many more cocoa pods!

[PROTECTING THE RAINFOREST]

Beshey

The rainforest helps us in all kinds of ways. The trees clean the air, nourish the soil, from floods and drought. The forest provides clean water and cools the climate. In return, we protect the forest.

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Sidie

We don't farm in the rainforest, we don't log the trees, and we do not go there to fish or hunt.

Beshey

Ngoleagorbu was formed to create a buffer zone of cocoa farms around the forest edge. The farms help to join up areas of rainforest, so that birds and animals can move between them.

Sidie

One of the good things about cocoa farming is that you can see animals and birds around, the trees provide a habitat for them.

Sidie

The farmers used to hunt and kill the chimpanzees but we have learnt to protect our crops in a different way. We beat a drum or a hollow tree so they will be scared away.

Amie

When they come, I am the one that scares them. I bang the drum and they run away!

Beshey

As well as protecting the forest, Ngoleagorbu means we can also look after our community.

Lucia

After we sell the cocoa, we receive a Fairtrade Premium, the extra sum of money we get for selling on Fairtrade terms. It is for the whole community. We have a committee where we decide how we will spend the money.

Moriba

We want to use the Fairtrade Premium carefully, so we have made a plan that reflects the needs of our community.

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We discuss and agree together how best to spend the money.

Sidie

One thing we plan to do is to purchase a rice mill.

This will relieve our families of a lot of back breaking work.

Amie

Another need we have identified is that we do not have a central daily market for buying and selling food. So we plan to build a marketplace in our town that will also have toilet facilities and a water pipe.

Moriba

Some of the more remote communities in our area do not have any toilets or water pipes.

We plan to provide toilets and clean drinking water for these villages, which will reduce water borne diseases and improve people's health.

Lucia

If we can achieve everything written in our plan, then it will make a huge difference to our lives.

Beshey

The forest belongs to us all.

The cocoa farmers of Ngoleagorbu have come together to protect the forest while earning a decent living through Fairtrade.

If we all work together we can save it.

Ngoleagorbu

Cocoa is our hope!