



Success in the West

All Across Africa Scales to Bolgatanga, Ghana
Public Version



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than 2.8 million Ghanaians are living in extreme poverty, mostly in rural areas. To fulfill its vision to alleviate poverty in Africa, All Across Africa has expanded its production facilities to Bolgatanga, Ghana. All Across Africa seeks to adapt to the new cultural context of Western Africa and to fully understand the intricacies of its new supply chain in order to effectively continue to scale up.

Over 8 weeks in Bolgatanga, we conducted 33 formal and semi-structured interviews and used ethnographic observation to better understand the local culture, AAA's supply chain, and how to improve.

During our time in the field we found four main opportunities for improvement: Quality Control, Supply Chain Efficiency and Predictability, Artisan Accountability, and Artisan Trust. These four opportunity areas are the core of this deliverable.

In The Cultural Context Report, we lay out a framework of what life in Bolgatanga looks like in order to enable AAA to make informed business decisions in Ghana. The first half of the Supply Chain Analysis serves as a descriptive asset for AAA to fully understand each step of the supply chain. The second half begins to analyze where the four opportunity areas can be addressed throughout the supply chain.

Built on the first two sections, the third section, The Operational Scaling Plan for Ghana, lays out 11 recommendations. These recommendations will address all of the four opportunity areas and help AAA scale effectively to and in Ghana. By shifting operations in Bolgatanga to match a new culture, team, and environment, AAA can take advantage of our experience in the field to leverage its capacity as a change agent.

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TESTIMONIAL

“Faolan and Andrea did a fantastic job for us in Ghana figuring out the key components of AAA's recipe for success, learning about Ghana's specific cultural context and making a plan and key recommendations for us to efficiently and quickly scale in Ghana given it's unique context. Their patient and outside perspective has helped us quickly remedy many of the underlying issues to scaling that have been presenting themselves.

They explored and recommended confidential pieces to our business model and in doing so, have added significant value to AAA's scaling plans that would typically take extra funding or Executive level staff to produce. These are key components in making AAA stand out and are what set us apart from standard artisan businesses and therefore need to remain confidential to AAA.

The plan they recommended is currently being followed by our team in Ghana and will have substantial impact on thousands of men and women in Ghana in the years to come.”

Alicia Wallace
Chief Operating Officer
All Across Africa + Kazi

Prepared by:



Global Social
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Santa Clara
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Opportunity Areas

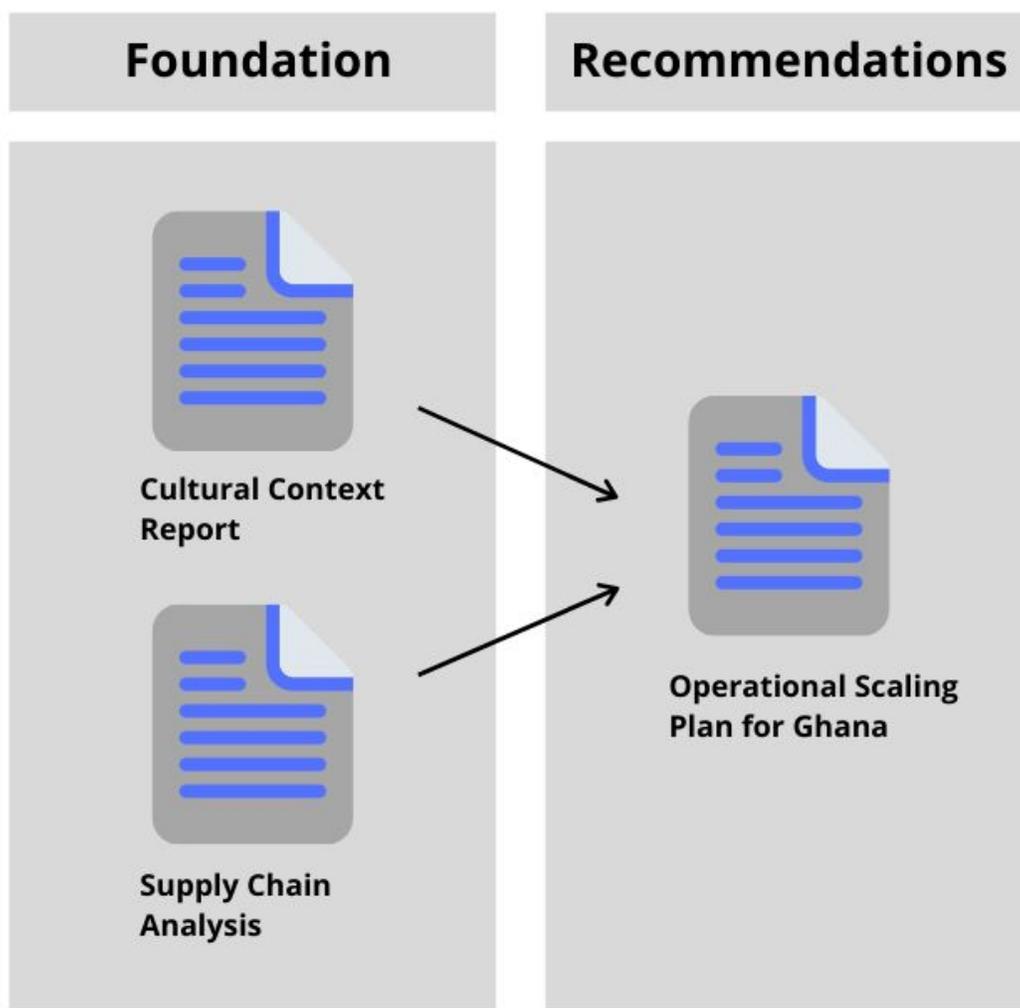
Through our research, we found four main opportunities for improvement: Quality Control, Supply Chain Efficiency and Predictability, Artisan Accountability, and Artisan Trust.

Challenge	Description
Quality Control	Ensuring that artisans produce consistent, high quality products is fundamental for AAA's success. Quality control standards and regulations need to continue to scale as orders increase. There are opportunities to improve quality of products by adjusting AAA's supply chain and by adapting to the local culture.
Supply Chain Efficiency and Predictability	Aspects of the supply chain must shift to be more efficient and sustainable as orders increase. There are opportunities to systematize the supply chain in order to be more effective and efficient. It is also hard to tell when orders will be done and predict timing.
Artisan Accountability	AAA utilizes a contractor model which can result in issues around accountability. The artisans must be accountable to follow through on agreements in a timely manner. There are opportunities to grow artisan accountability by shifting interactions and by creating systematized responses.
Artisan Trust	If accountability is outward facing from AAA's perspective, then artisan trust is the opposite. Artisans must trust AAA to follow through and continue providing work. There are opportunities to build trust as AAA grows.

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HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

Using data gathered while in the field, we created one document with three distinct parts: a Cultural Context Report, a Supply Chain Analysis, and an Operational Scaling Plan. The Cultural Context Report and Supply Chain Analysis collectively lay the groundwork for our recommendations, which are developed in the Operational Scaling Plan (see model below). As was mentioned in the testimonial, much of this public report has been redacted as it is proprietary information.



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Part One: Cultural Context Report



Introduction

To fulfill its vision to alleviate poverty in Africa, AAA has expanded its production facilities to Bolgatanga, Ghana. Scaling out of Eastern and into Western Africa presents a new set of challenges that are unique to Western Africa and the culture of Bolgatanga, Ghana.

AAA must consider these new cultural differences to effectively scale up and expand their impact in this region. The purpose of this report is to provide cultural context to enable AAA to make informed business decisions in Ghana and to facilitate an understanding that some parts of culture cannot or should not be changed. This report lays the groundwork for our recommendations made in Part 3. By understanding the cultural context of Bolgatanga, the recommendations we make will be more comprehensive and actionable.



A mother weaving and taking care of her children.

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Important Cultural Characteristics



Gender Roles are Present and Distinct

There are clear power disparities and instilled gender roles in Bolgatanga, but this is normal for their society and is important to respect. Roughly 97% of the artisans AAA is working with in Bolgatanga are women. Women are generally responsible for housekeeping and their children. It is common for them to weave or sell goods at the market during the day to generate income for their families. Come night, it is generally looked down upon for women to drink alcohol or leave the house. Men, on the other hand, commonly drink alcohol, go to bars, and bet money on sports games. There is an apparent disparity in the ways that men and women spend their money and time. However, this is a deeply instilled norm in this part of Ghana. As for relationships, polygamy is widely accepted in Bolgatanga and practiced within the Muslim communities and villages. Often each village has an appointed chief who has multiple wives and governs the safety and health of his fellow villagers.

Language

Frafra is the local language in Bolgatanga. It is not a written language but a spoken one. The large majority of artisans do not speak any English. Without speaking Frafra, it is hard to successfully communicate with the artisans.

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Important Cultural Characteristics



The Change in Seasons Affects Work Dramatically

In Bolgatanga, seasonality of work is extremely important. The seasons are extreme and influence what day-to-day life for the artisans looks like. June to September is roughly the rainy season as well as the farming season. This is also a time of the year when children have a break from school. Artisans balance farming, childcare, feeding their families, and weaving. Extreme storms are frequent during this time of the year. When it rains artisans are unable to come together and weave. Instead, they must stay in their homes to work, sometimes in the dark. The team is unable to check in on the artisans individually during these storms, so all operations are halted.



Artisans taking a break from weaving to wash vegetables.

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Important Cultural Characteristics



Artisan Groups are Spread Out Around Bolgatanga

The villages AAA is working with are spread all around the town of Bolgatanga and its outskirts. A majority of the artisans have no means of transportation from their villages to other parts of town. They go to town only when necessary to sell their woven products or trade them for other goods. Travel into town is usually done by foot and in many instances, takes multiple hours. Many of these villages specialize in specific weaving styles or products that have been passed down through generations. These villages are well known to the locals. Working with villages spread around Bolgatanga makes for long journeys, averaging 30 minutes from the office, to check on the artisans and be a consistent resource for them.



The outskirts of an artisan village outside of Bolgatanga.

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Important Cultural Characteristics



Temporal Perception

People in Bolgatanga have a different perception of time than people in the US. People are almost always late. It can be challenging to communicate effectively with villagers because they do not have phone service or are busy working. It is normal in Bolgatanga to decide on a time for something and end up delaying it for an hour or more. As has been mentioned in past cultural context examples, deadlines are seldom fixed.

Illnesses

Many people within the villages are unable to afford medication and treatments and fall ill often. When this happens they generally stay in their home and do not work. Personal or family illnesses are a very common reason for the artisans to not meet deadlines. We faced many situations of illness while in Bolga. Three of our co-workers fell ill to Malaria, an artisan was struggling with Elephantiasis, and many people had colds.



Consumption of contaminated water greatly contributes to illnesses.

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Important Cultural Characteristics



Education

A large proportion of the artisans have not received a thorough education and are unable to read and write proficiently. There are usually a few members of each village that are able to read and write and they are well known among the other villagers. These people usually serve in leadership positions within the artisan groups and their villages. There is a very apparent education barrier that we noticed throughout our time in Bolgatanga. Because of the lack of basic education among adult weavers, it can be challenging to communicate with groups about price, order timing, and colors.

Funerals

When a member of a village dies it is customary to bring the entire village together to mourn and celebrate this person's passing. Work comes to a complete halt when people die and artisans spend up to three days with their communities to celebrate and mourn. The customs surrounding funerals and death are very important within the villages and are highly regarded and respected.



Children in a village playing hooky from school.

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Conclusion



Potential Limits

It is important to understand that Bolgatangan culture differs greatly from US culture. This difference imposes limits on how well a western model of business can be transitioned to Bolga. There are certain parts of Bolgatangan culture that can be adapted to in order to improve business efficiency, but there are also some that are immobile. An example of an immobile norm is funerals. It is important to respect the customs and priorities set by the artisans, even if it may be disadvantageous for AAA's business efficiency. Some parts of the culture are workable and some are not and this means that there are natural limits to how efficiently a supply chain can run.

Closing Remarks

By understanding the culture of Bolgatanga, AAA will be able to use our recommendations to scale effectively while respecting the norms and lifestyle in Western Africa. The culture is distinct and unique in many ways, differentiating it from Eastern Africa and from the US. Understanding the above categories and the correlating opportunities will help AAA build trust with artisans, raise artisan accountability, cut inefficiencies out of the supply chain, and raise quality control across the board.

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Part 2: Supply Chain Analysis

Summary

AAA faced challenges extending its tacit operations model from Rwanda and Uganda to Ghana. By fully understanding the intricacies of its new supply chain, AAA can effectively continue to scale up. This section serves as a descriptive analysis of Bolgatanga’s supply chain during the summer of 2019. In Part 2a, each step of the supply chain is briefly outlined. Part 2b serves as an analysis of each step of the supply chain. By understanding the supply chain in detail, AAA will be able to effectively implement the recommendations outlined in Part 3.



An artisan group saying farewell to the fellows at the end of their time in Ghana.

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Part 2a. Supply Chain Step Descriptions

This section has been redacted as it contains proprietary information. However, in this section we outlined and described each step of AAA's current supply chain in detail, from sourcing materials to shipping final products. These descriptions funneled into part 2b, which is explained on the following page.

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Part 2b. Supply Chain Analysis

There are four main opportunities for improvement in Bolgatanga.

- Quality Control
- Supply Chain Efficiency and Predictability
- Artisan Accountability
- Trust with Artisans

This section has been redacted due to proprietary information. However, in it we analyzed each opportunity area in the context of specific sections of the supply chain. By doing this we provided a better foundation of understanding. In the private report, this foundational understanding of the areas for improvement is built upon in Part 3, “Operational Scaling Plan for Bolgatanga, Ghana.”

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Conclusion

This analysis details the entire supply chain for AAA in Bolgatanga. It builds on the cultural context report to further develop a foundation of understanding about what is happening in Bolgatanga right now. This snapshot of what's going on, working, and not working serves as an introduction to the eleven recommendations that we will outline in the following section.



Mother and son at weaving village.

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Part 3: Operational Scaling Plan for Ghana



Introduction



In striving to achieve its vision for Sub-Saharan Africa, AAA scaled to Bolgatanga, Ghana. As was illustrated in the cultural context report and the supply chain analysis, AAA has opportunities to be more efficient, build relationships with artisans, improve quality control systems, and grow artisan accountability.

The detailed scaling plan has been redacted due to proprietary information. In it are 11 recommendations that address one or more opportunity areas. These recommendations were developed based on our research in the field and will help AAA continue to scale successfully.



Basket in the process of being woven.

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Conclusion

As mentioned in the cultural context report, it is crucial to understand that while these recommendations work to make AAA's operations in Bolgatanga better and to build relationships with artisans, not every area can run at full capacity. The fundamental differences in cultural identities, values, and norms set limiting factors on what is possible in Bolgatanga. However, by shifting AAA's operations to match a new culture, team, and environment, it can take advantage of our experience in the field to leverage its capacity as a change agent in Bolgatanga.



Fellows intermingle with local people, blending in as best they can.

Prepared by:



Thank You

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