



IPEC

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour



The International Cocoa Initiative

The public and international outcry that followed media reports in 2000 of trafficking of children for labour in slavery-like conditions on cocoa plantations in West Africa led to the drawing up of the Protocol for the Growing and Processing of Cocoa Beans and their Derivative Products in 2001 (Cocoa Industry Protocol). The Protocol was signed by global chocolate industry representatives and witnessed US Senator Tom Harkin and US Congressman Elliot Engel, the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant Catering and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and others.

One of the outcomes of the Protocol has been the creation of the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) Foundation in 2002. The industry-funded ICI is a coalition of the global chocolate industry, the IUF, and NGOs whose mission is "to oversee and sustain efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and forced labour in the growing and processing of cocoa beans and their derivative products." Its governing board consists of representatives of industry, unions and NGOs, as well as a Swiss journalist and a Swiss lawyer. The ILO helped with the setting up of the Foundation and is a member of its Advisory Council.

In 2004, pilot ICI projects with a research focus were launched in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, the world's two largest producers of cocoa. In Côte d'Ivoire, the ICI is supporting the Ivorian government in its efforts to develop laws on trafficking. It is helping a group of experts to develop a workable approach to identifying cases of worst forms of child labour, withdrawing these children from work and providing the support they then need. It has supported three government planning workshops on the worst forms of child labour and one on determining hazardous practices, which led to a detailed elaboration of proscribed practices in the cocoa sector. Civil conflict in the country has made it difficult for the ICI to work on the ground. Nevertheless, in 2006 the ICI began its community-based pilot programme in Côte d'Ivoire focused on increasing awareness and changing child-labour practices, and after an internal evaluation, began scaling up this model in 2007.

In Ghana, the ICI is supporting the efforts of the Cocoa Board to make child labour a mainstream issue in the country. The Board has appointed a desk officer and is liaising closely with the national child labour unit. A research study is being carried out to help determine the best approach to providing sustainable alternatives to child labour when it is detected. In addition to providing funding and technical support for the development of a national action plan and the list of hazardous practices (in partnership with ILO IPEC), the ICI also engaged key actors in the public and private sector in child labour training, and provided training for police and social services in protection services for victims of forced labour and trafficking. As part of their access-to-education component, the ICI collaborated with local education authorities and advocated at the district/prefectural level. The community-based programme in Ghana is also being scaled up, and while in both countries the programme has so far reached only a small percent of the population, it has been achieving encouraging results, especially in the areas of increased awareness and the reduction of hazardous practices.

Note

In 2002, a study of child labour on some 1,500 cocoa-producing farms in Cameroon, the Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria was carried out by the Sustainable Tree Crops Program of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in cooperation with IPEC. The study found that hundreds of thousands of children were engaged in hazardous tasks on cocoa farms. Many child labourers came from impoverished countries in the region like Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo. Parents often sold their children in the belief they would find work and send earnings home. However, once removed from their families, the boys were forced to work in slave-like conditions. In the Côte d'Ivoire alone, nearly 12,000 of the child labourers had no relatives in the area, suggesting they were trafficked. In its 2000 report on human rights the US Department of State observed that children are regularly trafficked into the country from neighbouring countries and sold into forced labour.

This situation in Côte d'Ivoire triggered a public commitment by the companies in the global cocoa/chocolate supply chain to address the problems, as most conspicuously demonstrated by the Cocoa Industry Protocol, the International Cocoa Initiative, and the Cocoa Certification and Verification System.