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WORLD DAY  
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CHILD LABOUR



END CHILD LABOUR IN

**SUPPLY  
CHAINS**



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## ACTION IN THE WEST AFRICAN COCOA SUPPLY CHAIN TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOUR

### BACKGROUND

**T**he cocoa supply chain includes everyone involved in growing, harvesting, and processing cocoa beans to become the chocolate that we eat. At the beginning of the chain, there are close to two million small holder farms globally. After reports of widespread child labour and trafficking abuses in cocoa growing communities in West Africa were made public, the world's major chocolate and cocoa processing companies started to look more carefully at their supply chains. With the supply of cocoa beans coming from many small holder farms spread

out over large geographic areas, operating in a context of entrenched rural poverty and absence of quality education and other basic public services, the companies faced significant challenges to ensure that cocoa is produced without any child labour. The challenge was further exacerbated by aging and diseased cocoa trees and a lack of adult labour to tend and harvest the cocoa and ensure a stable supply of cocoa for the future.



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## ACTION AND RESULTS

**T**he ILO, in close collaboration with its tripartite constituents and companies, has implemented numerous projects in cocoa growing communities in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Benin and Togo to address the challenge of ridding the cocoa supply chain of child labour and trafficking violations.<sup>1</sup>

At the community level, an integrated area-based approach that promotes all four categories of fundamental rights at work: the abolition of forced labour, child labour, and non-discrimination, and freedom of association and collective bargaining, was used to great effect. Guidance and support was provided to communities to organize themselves, formulate Community Action Plans, and present the plans to district authorities for funding for the implementation of the plans. Using this approach, many communities have secured funding for the provision of basic educational services so critical to ensuring that children are in school and not in child labour.

The General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) of Ghana has been supported to extend their outreach into cocoa growing communities and to build capacity among farmers and workers

to promote occupational safety and health, including safe work for children above the minimum age for work. GAWU modified its bylaws to allow the recruitment of farmers, and has recruited some 15,000 new smallholder members. What is more, GAWU has worked with the Government to create changes necessary to allow cocoa farmers to contribute to national social security schemes, thus providing farmers with a social safety net that reduces their reliance on child labour.

The integrated area-based approach also focuses on improving the livelihoods of community members. In the Soubré region of Cote d'Ivoire, ILO partnered with Mars, Inc. to train community members' on how to improve their agronomy skills and to facilitate better access to markets. Support was also provided to develop Community Action Plans and establish robust and sustainable child labour monitoring (CLM) systems, which ensure that adults and not children are used in harvesting cocoa beans.

The CLM system established with the support of the project enables Mars to track the extent of child labour in villages where it sources its cocoa. The CLM system also links children in



<sup>1</sup> Funding support has been provided through public private partnership arrangements with key industry partners and by the US Department of Labour (USDOL).



child labour with appropriate public services on an ongoing basis. The system is an extension of the national CLM system in Cote d'Ivoire, in which inspectors from the Ministry of Labour and other key government officials are integrally involved, thus ensuring sustainability and support for the national policy on child labour.

Improved farmer productivity is a main part of Mars Inc.'s plans to promote better livelihoods for cocoa farmers. This is only one part of the solution however. Better community organization and local child labour monitoring efforts ensure that child labour is prevented, and that education and other critical services are provided.

While the entry point for ILO action is cocoa, the integrated area based approach ensures that children are not simply displaced from cocoa production to other forms of child labour. In parts of West Africa, many child labourers don't work only in cocoa but also in other forms of child labour, such as mining. By applying an integrated area based approach, the ILO is able

to assist communities to address all forms of child labour. In West Africa and globally, efforts to avoid such displacement is central to ILO interventions. It is particularly important in the context of companies' efforts to rid their supply chains of child labour.

The challenge for enterprises at the top of the supply chain include a lack of ability to know what is happening in complex supply chains, associated informality and lack of organization among small holders and workers, and inadequate state enforcement and social protection systems. Much has been learned about what companies can concretely do. Through the industry-funded foundation, the International Cocoa Initiative, and the ILO/UN Global Compact hosted Child Labour Platform, good practices in tackling child labour in cocoa are distilled and shared with member companies. However the challenge of bringing good practices to scale to professionalize the farming base and ensure that decent work prevails remains.

## KEY LEARNING POINTS

- ➡ Improved livelihoods for community members are key to tackling child labour in supply chains. Care must be taken however, to ensure that increased income translates into reduced child labour.
- ➡ Community-based child labour monitoring systems can help enterprises identify and address child labour in their supply chains. For sustainable results, these systems should be embedded in national CLM programmes whenever possible and linked to labour and other inspection services.
- ➡ Union outreach to organize small holding farmers and wage workers can be an effective means to raise awareness of good practice with regard to child labour elimination and occupational safety and health. Such organization can help farmers take steps toward formalization, by enabling access to social protection systems.





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