



International Labour Organization

IPEC

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour

IPEC Evaluation

West Africa Cocoa and Commercial Agriculture Project to combat Hazardous and Exploitative child labour (WACAP)

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**An independent mid-term project evaluation by a team of external
consultants**

Executive Summary

August 2005

1. BACKGROUND

Following extensive media exposure in mid-2000 of the alleged use of slaves as labourers in hazardous conditions on cocoa plantations in West Africa, representatives of the cocoa industry met with international organizations, government officials, trade unions, consumer groups and non-governmental organizations to develop a strategy to address the problem of child Labour. This resulted, in September 2001, in the elaboration of a protocol to eliminate the worst forms of child Labour (WFCL) from the cocoa and chocolate sector in West Africa. The protocol was witnessed by two U.S. Senators, a member of the US House of Representatives, the Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire, ILO-IPEC and other stakeholders. The protocol contains key action elements: (based on ILO convention C.182, *Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the WFCL*, 1999) (1) to establish a joint action program to eliminate the WFCL in the growing and processing of cocoa, (2) to create the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) working towards responsible Labour standards in cocoa growing, and (3) to establish by July 1, 2005 a public certification system, verifying that cocoa has been grown without use of the worst forms of child Labour.

In line with the protocol, ILO/IPEC was invited to design and implement the *West Africa Cocoa and Commercial Agriculture Project to Combat Hazardous and Exploitative Child Labour* (WACAP). WACAP formally started in September 2002 and is to be executed until January 2006. A no-cost extension until April 2006 has been requested by ILO-IPEC. The project is managed by ILO/IPEC and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (USD 5 million), with an additional contribution from the chocolate industry's Global Issues Group, through the International Confectionary Association (USD 1 million). The operation is intended to complement parallel efforts undertaken by the cocoa/chocolate industry in the field of environmental protection, improvement of agricultural production and marketing, and promoting socially, economically and environmentally sound cocoa growing. The most notable of these efforts is the USAID-financed Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP), implemented by the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA). STCP operates in the same countries as WACAP, namely Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria. WACAP equally collaborates with other ILO/IPEC programs to combat child labour and trafficking in the region.

WACAP is rooted in ILO/IPEC's standard model of intervention, which for WACAP, contains five mutually supporting components: (1) Capacity Building, (2) Social Protection, (3) Establishment of a Child Labour Monitoring System, (4) Awareness Raising/Social Mobilization and (5) Establishment of a Knowledge Base and Information System. The project's success will depend on a well coordinated effort to implement these components in a balanced manner. The Social Protection component for WACAP specifies the delivery of direct services to a target of 9,700 children aged below 13 years so that they may be retrieved from labour exploitation and reintegrated into formal or alternative training programs. In addition, a total of 500 families are targeted to receive benefits through programs such as training, income generation and credit. Besides the aforementioned beneficiaries, 70,000 children aged 13 to 18 years, involved in hazardous or exploitative child labour, are targeted to reduce vulnerability to exploitation and dangerous work through occupational safety and health outreach interventions. Action programs are being implemented by public and private institutions (e.g. NGO's, public ministries and universities), and include ILO tripartite constituents (government, trade unions and employers' organizations).

2. FINDINGS

2.1 Problem analysis, project concept and approach

The problem analysis, which draws extensively from baseline estimates of child labour that are of questionable statistical validity and merit, figures importantly in the design of the program. Here we draw attention to the limitations of baseline studies that rely extensively on limited and dated census information in five countries represented in WACAP. Based on information gleaned during the course of the evaluation, estimates of children working in cocoa fields are likely grossly under-reported (source: IPEC/WACAP's rapid assessments), while the extent of child exploitation in dangerous work may be exaggerated (reference: IITA studies and surveys). Despite the acquisition of much information about child labour in the cocoa industry, there remain serious and significant gaps in our understanding to the nature, extent and incidence of the phenomenon.

The project document nevertheless reflects the best information available, is informative and puts the incidence of child labour into its economic and social context. Figures on the incidence of child labour in cocoa are based on

surveys that STCP/IITA conducted in 2002. These surveys highlight that children working in the worst forms of labour in cocoa production are mainly children of migrants, sharecroppers, and children without a family tie to farm owners. Other studies indicate that the overwhelming majority of children work on their own family farms. Figures from the STCP/IITA surveys appear to be incomplete and, at times, contradictory. No clear distinction is made between child workers, unconditional forms of WFCL and other hazardous forms of child labour. These surveys have not demystified the confusion on the nature and the incidence of the problem of child labour, which followed the September 2000 media coverage.

Mostly for economic reasons, millions of children, often below working age, are compelled to work either part-time or full-time, on family cocoa farms. This is done at the expense of their educational development, and physical and mental health. This phenomenon should not be confused with voluntary migration or unconditional WFCL, such as trafficking. Voluntary migration figures prominently in Nigeria (important seasonal in-country migration from the South-East to the cocoa producing areas in Ondo State) and Côte d'Ivoire (where children are drawn to cocoa plantations from neighbouring nations). The incidence of trafficking seems to be restricted (Anti-Slavery International quotes the figures from the IITA surveys), which indicate the presence of some 17.000 children without family ties. The surveys infer, with little validity, that these children are either voluntary workers or victims of trafficking.

Since educational alternatives are at the heart of WACAP's interventions in social protection, it is regrettable that the IITA problem analysis only very roughly reflects on the quality and/or absence of public educational and vocational training services in all five nations. To the extent that children in rural settings lack access to any form of quality primary and life skills training, children have no viable alternative but to work in family endeavours. Where educational programs are provided and are within the budgetary reach of families, children tend to enrol in school and remain out of cocoa production.

A realistic time-frame appears to be missing from the project design. The current project phase appears to be a "stand-alone" operation with little consideration for follow on of activities. There is all but unanimous accord that it is highly unrealistic to assume that in such a short time-span (37 months) such ambitious project objectives can be achieved. Nevertheless, it appears that it has been tacitly assumed that the present phase will be extended, since no exit-strategy has been drawn up. This might complicate the continuation of activities, most of which were initiated very late in the operations, in case WACAP lapses in January 2006.

2.2 Implementation arrangements, administrative, financial and reporting systems

In spite of delays in the project start-up, caused by the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire and the resulting relocation of the sub-regional management unit to Ghana, the project is well on its way. Project staff at sub-regional and national levels is highly committed to the cause of WACAP. Administrative ILO arrangements, however, are exceptionally complex and delaying. The project is technically and administratively centralized. External payment authorizations are authorized by ILO/IPEC Geneva. Area Offices in Dakar (Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire), Abuja (Ghana, Nigeria) and Yaoundé (Cameroon) are actively involved in the administrative procedures. All Action Programs and other proposals are extensively reviewed and commented on from IPEC Geneva. Support has also been provided with reports to donor, and other issues. The CLMS design and consultation process had intensive IPEC HQ involvement, together with that of expert consultants. Synergy with ILO's multidisciplinary teams mainly depends on physical proximity (e.g. excellent in Yaoundé, where WACAP shares the office premises of the ILO Sub-Regional Office).

The workflow for the approval of action programs and external payment authorizations, despite efforts to improve the process, remains unreasonably complex and lengthy. Country Coordinators and project partner NGOs have been required to reformulate action program proposals so they conform to the regulations stated in the IPEC's Program Operations Manual. Changes in the manual have prompted major delays in the execution of programs for beneficiaries.

Project planning, monitoring and reporting absorbs considerable time and energy. From donor-side the demanding reporting requirements are justified due to the "high visibility" of the project. Although WACAP staff perceives reporting requirements to be excessive, donors justifiably feel the flow of information does not provide a comprehensive description of project activities and accomplishments.

Whereas the evaluation team was initially of the impression that delays in the implementation of action programs were caused by budgetary constraints, a budget-expenses comparison shows that funds have been under-spent. This

is the consequence of several factors. In the Cote d'Ivoire, for example, the security situation and lack of fiscal controls have rendered the ILO hesitant to disburse funds in the face of civil instability. Equally, validation of country-specific baseline and OSH studies, which are critical inputs for further action, has been delayed due to the late start of the project and flaws in design and instrumentation. It may well be that the execution capacity of the very small project staff and implementing NGOs has been stretched to the maximum. This is even more so the case if one looks at their time-consuming involvement in program development, preparation and monitoring of action programs and reporting, according to demanding administrative and financial procedures.

There are differences in ownership and commitment of the Project Technical Advisory Committees between the five countries. In all participating nations, ministries of labour have been charged with leadership of PTACs. These ministries possess varying degrees of capacity; where they are strong, WACAP project advisory committees appear to play a dynamic role, and vice versa. Substantive collaborations have been observed between STCP and WACAP, especially at the planning and policy level. The two projects are represented on each other's program advisory boards and have established an excellent cooperation in the training of master trainers of STCP Farmer Field Schools. The project document anticipated that STCP would serve as a link between WACAP project management and producers. Although the evaluation team noted collaboration between WACAP and STCP projects at the policy level, little coordination was observed in linking improved cocoa/cashew production (STCP) to Social Action schemes or Community Child Labour Monitoring Systems (WACAP). STCP management is of the opinion that its members should not get involved in the withdrawal of child labour, since *their task is perceived to be a facilitating one and not a policing one*. The expectation that STCP members would increase the incomes of cocoa farming families from which WACAP would withdraw and rehabilitate child labour (as a compensation of economic loss) has not materialized.

2.3 Achievement and appraisal of project components

Project objectives are *relevant* and consistent with the eradication of child labour in commercial agriculture / cocoa farming as defined by International Labour Conventions C.138, C.182 and C.184. In spite of delayed implementation, funds have been spent in an *efficient* and *cost-effective* manner. Given the scope and breadth of WACAP, good value has been obtained for relatively few resources, especially considering that the project has succeeded in placing a highly complex and daunting subject on the agenda of so many stakeholders.

The *effectiveness* in the implementation of the five project components is as appraised as follows:

(1) *Increased awareness and social mobilization*: The training of labour inspectors, other ministerial staff, trade unions, employers' organizations, FFS master trainers and implementing agencies has substantially contributed to an increased awareness of the problem of child labour. Around project interventions, such as action programs and child labour monitoring systems, a critical mass has been built up through which a social dialogue has been initiated on the elimination of child labour. However modest the changes in these deeply rooted practices, an attitude is developing showing that society at large recognizes the problem and perceives the need for viable alternatives.

(2) *Capacity building*: The project has succeeded in strengthening the partner organization capacities to address the issue of child labour and to plan action. Implementing NGO staff is appreciative of training by ILO/WACAP in the preparation of project proposals. For most of these organizations child labour now belongs to their core-business. WACAP has equally contributed to the preparation or implementation of national action plans for the elimination of child labour and to the furthering of legal measures. The piloting of the CLMS and the Farmer Field School child labour training (in collaboration with STCP); require mention as successful examples of capacity strengthening.

(3) *Social protection*: Overall achievement in this central thrust has been modest. Awaiting the validation of OSH studies, the project has yet to begin extending benefits to the 70.000 children to age 18 years targeted in the project document. It is probable that the modest quantitative target (9,700 children) for withdrawal/ prevention and their integration into education schemes will be met before the end of this phase of the project. It was observed that in social protection action programming, the number of targeted children per village was much lower than demand. In all too many villages, support is offered to the very few children who meet criteria for assistance. A complex selection procedure used by local committees to the exclusion of an important number of children has provoked feelings of resentment, exclusion and consternation on the part of children and parents overlooked for participation in direct services. Whereas in all countries visited this was attributed to budgetary constraints, it was learnt that country budgets for social action remain under-spent.

Social protection schemes are implemented in a standardized manner, following more or less the same template in all countries. Apart from a few positive exceptions, the quality of educational alternatives, primary school or vocational skill training, appears to vary from sub-optimal to marginal. In Nigeria, classes have been reported of 300 children into whom WACAP children were “successfully integrated”. In the field the team observed multi-grade classes that surpass 90 students, with appalling teaching and learning conditions. In vocational skills training, services are mostly provided by so-called “master trainers”, who have committed themselves to accept a few youngsters as an apprentice, for a period of two to four years, without recompense for the children. As an incentive for the master, the project has provided equipment, such as sewing machines and tools. With few exceptions, instructors do not dispose of any industrial training skills. In most nations, WACAP has failed to reintegrate older students into public or NGO sponsored vocational and life skills programs, despite much potential for collaboration.

Education is at the heart of WACAP’s interventions. WACAP has begun to work with the ministries and departments of education to help them develop plans of action for improving educational quality, with a focus on the target sites and districts, but with the aim that interventions might be scaled up. In spite of these inchoate efforts, the project has had little or no impact on educational programming. In spite of multiple opportunities to collaborate with international donors such as Aide et Action, Save the Children, UNICEF and Winrock, WACAP has not advanced the adoption of innovative child-centred education, either in primary, informal/alternative, or vocational education (one notable and positive exception: cooperation with CARE Ghana). Given that most of the children will later join the family farm, and that the present educational system has no capacity for agriculture training, an opportunity is missed to extend variations of Farmer Field Schools to project target villages. A cocoa industry observer noted that WACAP has succeeded in improving opportunities for children to pass from a “bad to a futile situation.” The statement describes conditions that take children from harmful child labour to dismal and ineffective formal schooling.

(4) *Child Labour Monitoring System*: The CLMS, piloted in Ghana, at no small cost, is gaining acceptance in other WACAP nations. The system incorporates latest practices in information technology and has benefited from significant ILO support. The Ghana pilot includes working-place data of some 600 farms, on which working children have been identified. The database contains detailed individual data about working children, whereas data on the remainder are not sufficiently detailed for follow up purposes. According to the database there would be 985 beneficiaries: 544 children have been withdrawn, 277 prevented, 21 reintegrated and 143 adult members have benefited from social protection schemes. The evaluation team noted that the system is complex (far too many questions), cumbersome (too many persons at the community, district and national levels involved in collecting data) and costly to develop and pilot (US\$ 518,000 budgeted for the development of the system). At this pilot stage, the effective cost per beneficiary is in the order of US\$ 525 per person. Of course, as the number of children included in the CLMS increases, costs will diminish. But even if the charges per beneficiary would be reduced by an exponential magnitude, scaling the operation of the system remains costly.

(5) *Knowledge base and information*: There are considerable differences in methodology, concepts and the overall quality of the rapid assessments and studies of the impact of action programs. Country-specific rapid assessments provide interesting background information which can orient future country-wise priorities, but they do not provide a valid assessment of the incidence and nature of child labour in commercial agriculture in West Africa. There has been an absence of sharing of methods and approaches in community development methods among project staff. Technical assistance extended to implementing NGOs has emphasized regulatory orientation (how to prepare proposals and budgets) rather than the more critical learning needed to design and implement innovative interventions and synergies.

(6) *Special concerns*: The project has not only respected the international labour codes, it has been actively promoting a better understanding of the conventions pertaining to child labour. With regards to the respect of the gender-balance, also the working girl has been given due attention, as reflected in their representation in social protection schemes. With regards to a promotion of sustainable development, there is an apparent need for ILO and FAO to work together with the concerned governments on the definition of officially probated agro-chemicals.

(7) *Sustainability and scalability*: The project document indicates that one of the basic mechanisms for sustaining WACAP is its integration into agriculture sector policies. This was expected to be done through linkages with STCP members, where the key for successful cooperation is defined as reducing economic pressure to employ cheap child labour. In the field, this potential for synergy has not been adequately addressed.

Interviewed stakeholders seem to be rather optimistic on their future capacity to sustain the project activities. However, given the incapacity of farmers to pay for school fees, and the modest government resources available for development, there is little cause to expect that project interventions can be sustained upon project closure, or that services are sufficiently attractive to expect a cost-sharing by the community members.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Strategic issues and implementation arrangements

- ◆ Organization of a collaborative regional validation workshop of all child labour surveys and baselines, the result of which should be fed into one sample-based study on the incidence and nature of child labour in commercial agriculture. The proposed approach must take into account the absence of public finance, the paucity of census information, and the extreme isolation of large populations in each of the five nations. The process should be overseen by an organization with broad experience in the region and in social accounting for clandestine populations in resource scarce nations. Concerned institutions such as Anti-Slavery International should participate in this process.
- ◆ With the support of UNICEF and under the guidance of an international expert in education and vocational training, country-wise inventory of the quality of education systems should be undertaken. This inventory should address cost-effective child-centred educational alternatives for the rural areas, especially those approaches being used by international donors and specialized organizations. The expected output is the establishment of a number of joint-partnerships with the later institutions for application in a limited number of model villages.
- ◆ Instead of pursuing the development of a certification system, the cocoa/chocolate industry might consider shifting its support to STCP, with particular reference to increased productivity and the improvement of marketing structure, both aimed at small-farms. Industry should equally be invited to contribute to the development of educational programs for WACAP that aim to prepare children to become responsible and productive farmers. It is expected that this would have more effect on the elimination of child labour than the use of a certification system.
- ◆ ILO and its donors are invited to negotiate and develop a medium-term time-line for project implementation. The expected output is a project-cycle broken down in logical implementation steps, like model testing, monitoring and validation, scaling up, consolidation and phasing out.
- ◆ It is recommended to strengthen the national project staff in all countries with additional staff, which would have the responsibility for networking and the development of joint-partnerships with third parties involved in innovative educational programs, and with STCP members, involved in promoting productive measures.
- ◆ Mechanisms for the coordination of field activities between STCP and WACAP need to be reviewed to gear the activities of both projects to at least a limited number of model villages (see below).
- ◆ The project's financial and program management needs to be streamlined. Where possible, workflows for operational and financial decisions need to be kept at the local level and as simple as possible.
- ◆ In view of the under-spending on action programs, it would not be wise to accelerate the project cycle and encourage implementing agencies to pursue more innovative approaches rather than repeating the same model. To prepare better quality interventions, as suggested in the present recommendations, it would be advisable to opt for a budget-neutral extension of one year.

3.2 Project components

- ◆ In short order, validate all OSH studies and mandate suitable implementing agencies to prepare and implement country-wide OSH outreach programs. These interventions should be implemented in the same communities where social protection schemes are being executed.
- ◆ Prioritize the development of innovative, income generating activities for adult members of the families from which children have been withdrawn/prevented. It is important to aim for good quality training in the production of marketable items. Avoid subsidizing inputs and discourage granting credit unless these services can be availed by a highly experienced credit institution.

- ◆ Fund social protection interventions that support more innovation, collaboration, enterprise and joint-partnerships. Such interventions should offer more applicable designs that, for the sake of increased commitment and local ownership, include sharing costs with communities, integrated development schemes with governments and other funding agencies.
- ◆ Select in each country a number of model villages for the implementation of a more comprehensive and integrated approach, stressing complementarities between project components and inclusiveness of all identified child labour. It is of major importance that the model village will be part of the STCP scheme and disposes of a Farmer Field School (and if not available there should be at least a producers/marketing cooperative, or an institution actively involved in agriculture extension; all should have a permanent presence in the district).

Proposed interventions for a model village

1. For children under working age the project components may include:
 - (a) Identification of **all** child labour, (b) Withdrawal of **all** identified child labour and complement with those of school-age who are not attending school and placement in either formal or informal education scheme, (c) Enrichment of existing formal or informal education schemes with child-centred approaches from joint partners, with elements from FFS training and OSH outreach program. Adopt a flexible curriculum in order to accommodate children doing light field work and older students.
2. For children of legal working age, the project components may include:
 - (a) Referral to IPEC/Trafficking project (if trafficked), (b) Placement in innovative vocational skill training scheme, in joint-partnership with specialized institutions (if at high risk of being exploited), (c) Placement in FFS through technical assistance and OSH outreach program (if subject to health hazards only). Follow flexible timing to accommodate for continued agricultural activity. In principle all adolescents should be part of either (b) and/or (c).
3. For adult family members the project components may include:
 - (a) Identification of all families from which child labour under working age has been permanently withdrawn, (b) Inclusion in FFS/other extension activities, (c) Provision of direct support for income generating activities (particularly geared to sharecroppers/migrants and self-operated small farming family members).
4. All children found working in agriculture, residing in the community up to the age of 18 years of age should be included in a simplified and affordable CLMS, which will be the responsibility of the Community Child Labour Committee, equally supervising the implementation of the social protection activities.

- ◆ The results of the model village approach should be closely coordinated and monitored by the national WACAP offices. In the meantime, the other social protection schemes should continue. A comparison of qualitative results between the approaches should provide valuable insight into the validity of ILO/IPEC's Area-of-Impact Framework (AIF). A better understanding of the AIF's potential to eliminate the WFCL in commercial agriculture, as well as its recurrent costs and opportunities for the establishment of cost-sharing mechanisms, is essential for the development of a replicable model and the further development of national policies for the elimination of WFCL. The model village approach should be the start of a process of systematic sharing of innovative experiences among partners, which aim at the development of more sustainable and pertinent programs.
- ◆ Apart from the comprehensive model village approach ongoing AP's opportunities should be extended through technical assistance to improve their impact and quality. This is particularly important to encourage collaborative actions and partnerships with institutions specialized in innovative educational approaches, or for sharing examples successfully tried out in WACAP projects in e.g. Côte d'Ivoire (*école nouvelle*) or in Guinea (SABOU). A second opportunity for developing joint-partnerships is the development of closer field linkages with STCP members, FFS's and cooperatives, in order to create synergy between increase in productivity and social protection schemes.
- ◆ It is recommended to include the assessment of all child labour in the CLMS, currently piloted in Ghana and replicated in other WACAP nations. The system should not only include rehabilitated (withdrawn/prevented) children but also serve to document broad measures of social development among youth. It will be important to reformulate the CLMS into a sustainable and replicable model, one that can be implemented at minimal

costs that are shared between concerned stakeholders, national and local government, as well as community committees. Whereas ILO/IPEC is of the opinion that, for a successful continuation of the CLMS there should be a “compelling reason”, the evaluators would rather see shared concern for quality basic services provision as the primary incentives for its continuation. From experience it is learned, that villagers are willing to financially contribute to services, provided that these prove to be of good quality. If the CLMS would be part of a development scheme, aiming at improved service provision, it can be expected that villagers share in its cost. This conviction is at the core of the model village approach.

- ◆ From stakeholder comments on the above recommendation it was understood that the model village would be a new approach altogether, and that such a recommendation should not be part of the current evaluation but rather of a new project proposal. By making the above suggestion the evaluators strictly respect the ILO intervention model which stipulates that several project components ought to be implemented in mutual support. This is particularly the case for the relation between increased well-being through improved productivity (a major reason to link to STCP) and social protection schemes supported by WACAP.