



Joint Position Paper



Regional Initiative combating worst forms of child labour on West African cocoa farms

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Co-ordinated by the Secretariat of the Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD
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A joint initiative of:

 <p>Association of chocolate, biscuit and Confectionery industries of the European Union (CAOBISCO)</p>	 <p>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)</p>
 <p>Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)</p>	 <p>European Cocoa Association</p>
 <p>Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN (sub-regional Office West Africa FAO)</p>	 <p>Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation, Belgium</p>
 <p>International Cocoa Initiative (ICI)</p>	 <p>International Labour Organisation regional Office West Africa (ILO)</p>
 <p>Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat / OECD</p>	 <p>Permanent Interstate Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)</p>
 <p>United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF)</p>	 <p>United States Agency for International Development (USAID)</p>
 <p>West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)</p>	 <p>World Cocoa Foundation</p>

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Background

The Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat/OECD¹ is coordinating a regional initiative on combating the worst forms of child labour on West African cocoa farms. This initiative, which is an incentive of the Belgian Government, was launched in 2008 within the framework of the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC).

Over the last 10 years the issue of child labour on West African cocoa farms has generated very strong international and domestic West African mobilisation. The myriad of programmes and initiatives carried out have obtained notable results, which benefited from strong involvement and support of the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, in particular. This joint initiative aims to build upon these existing experiences and best practices and promote a complementary regional child labour approach.

A Task Force bringing together key stakeholders actively involved in programmes and activities combating the worst forms of child labour in West Africa has been set-up to drive forward this initiative. Task Force members joined forces and agreed on coordinated efforts to promote and implement this regional initiative.

This Joint Position Paper presents the common vision of the Task Force members.

Common understanding

▶ *Definition of child labour*

The international definitions of child labour are widely agreed by states, yet their practical application is not without challenges. Development levels, socio-cultural contexts, national legislations, etc., are too heterogeneous to allow for one single detailed interpretation. However, ILO Conventions 138 and 182 set out respectively internationally accepted definitions of child labour and worst forms of child labour. These conventions provide governments with sufficient flexibility in terms of adaptation to local socio-cultural and economic contexts. In broader terms, ILO defines the term “child labour” as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, in addition to being harmful to physical and mental development.

However, it is important to note that not all work done by children is classified as child labour. There are some types of work, mostly in the form of chores, which do not interfere with schooling and are a normal part of growing up in a farming community.

▶ *A universal phenomenon*

Throughout history, child labour has accompanied economic development of each region of the world at one time or another. It was towards the end of the 19th century that the first social movements developed in Europe and North America to combat the exploitation of children. The emerging international conscience of broader labour issues led to the creation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1919 to protect workers from exploitation, and in particular “children,

young persons and women". While embryonic civil society groups were active it was only after the Second World War that other key international actors in the protection of children emerged, such as the specialised UN agencies UNICEF and UNESCO, NGOs and other private and public initiatives. Since then many international and bi-lateral donor agencies have been closely involved.

The ILO estimates the number of working children between 4-15 years of age at 191 million in 2004, of which 50 million (25% of total) are in sub-Saharan Africa². Although, a decline has been observed in recent years, still 74 million of these children are engaged in hazardous activities. The ILO further estimates that the large majority (69%) of children work in agriculture.

► *West Africa, cocoa, child labour*

West Africa's population is still predominantly rural and agriculture accounts for 25% of regional GDP³. Around 60% of employment is in the agricultural sector. West Africa is also one of the last regions of the world still undergoing a demographic transition. A consequence is that, out of a total population of 320 million, the share of youth under 15 years of age is 44%.

West Africa accounts for more than 70 % of world cocoa production (Côte d'Ivoire 38%, Ghana 21%, Cameroon 5% and Nigeria 5%). Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana are the world's two largest producers, representing 80% of total West African production. Cocoa is also produced in Togo, Sierra Leone and Liberia albeit in much smaller quantities. Cocoa is the region's main agricultural export, accounting for nearly half of total earnings (46 %, USD 4 billion in 2006). 90% of West African cocoa is produced by small family holdings with farm sizes averaging 5 hectares and an estimated 7.5 million people engaged in the sector. Today the main production basins are located between Ghana-Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon-Nigeria, overlapping national borders.

Cocoa farming is very labour intensive and producers are facing strong pressures to keep costs down. Labour is the only cost controlled by producers. At peak times all family members, including children, are involved. Children usually work on their parents' or relatives' farms on a regular basis which in itself may not be considered as child labour unless the tasks are hazardous and/or keep the child from school. However, in some areas it is also common for children to work as paid labourers on cocoa farms on a temporary basis⁴. Recent studies in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire show that nearly half of all children living on cocoa farms have been engaged in at least one hazardous activity⁵. These include carrying heavy loads, spraying fertilizers and pesticides or cutting trees. In addition, some children have been trafficked from other regions of the country or neighbouring countries. This practice is one that international conventions recognise as criminal.

The issue of child labour in West Africa is a complex and widespread phenomenon and should be viewed within the general context of economic development, poverty and demography. The analyses and programmes undertaken within the cocoa sector confirm that child labour is not a sectoral problem. Children are engaged in many activities in agriculture (such as pineapple, banana and cotton farming, fisheries), and in industry and services. The socio-economic contexts that encourage the use and abuse of children are very similar across sectors. They range from poverty and lack of profitable income, youth opportunities, community level dynamics and prevailing attitudes, legal aspects and failures in educational systems, to purely economical aspects.

Leading the way: cocoa sector as a driver in combating the worst forms of child labour

Over the last years the programmes and initiatives to combat the worst forms of child labour on West African cocoa farms have obtained significant progress, yet in a wide sector affecting some 5 million smallholders much remains to be done. The advancements and successes achieved have been made possible by host governments' ambitions to eradicate abusive and hazardous practices, the involvement of civil society and NGO's in programmes on the ground, and the strong mobilisation of public and private international partners.

The achievements and experiences of the programmes within the cocoa sector highlight three key aspects:

- ▶ Most successful programmes on the ground are designed in collaboration with partners and stakeholders, notably children, and are based on a community wide approach, integrating aspects of raising awareness, improving revenue generation and targeting both attitudinal change with a provision of necessary social infrastructure such as health and education;
- ▶ An acceleration in the ratification and formulation of international and national laws protecting children's rights with the emergence of international mobilisation around the issue of child labour on West African cocoa farms⁶;
- ▶ Importance of capacity building of local and national organisations to sustain the efforts to promote and support these changes.

The lessons learnt in the cocoa sector show that coherent approaches to combat the worst forms of child labour can not be restricted to any single sector in particular. Focus should be directed at economy and community wide programmes and integrating regional aspects, particularly those practices that cut across boundaries such as child trafficking. The results obtained and the increased awareness on the problem of child labour within the cocoa sector provide an ideal basis and favourable dynamic for promoting broad child labour initiatives at the West African regional level.

Common position

▶ *The need for a complementary regional approach*

The Partners of this initiative stress the importance of a regional approach to complement efforts undertaken at national level. Child labour in West Africa is a regional problem thus a need to develop regional answers. The consensus among key stakeholders is that a regional initiative can accelerate sector wide and national progress in all countries. The region will benefit from lessons learnt in countries which have made most progress and enhanced efficiency of remediation efforts. A coordinated engagement of all stakeholders - governments, regional economic bodies, NGOs, companies, international partners, etc. - in supporting research, policy and programme development and the funding of remediation efforts is a necessary component of the process.

Regional institutions, in particular ECOWAS (and ECCAS⁷), UEMOA and CILSS, have a key role to play in developing, promoting and implementing initiatives addressing in particular the regional dimensions of combating the worst forms of child labour and child trafficking.

A joint initiative at regional level will immediately encourage coordination and collaboration of the main stakeholders involved, promoting an exchange of experiences. It will also allow better integration of the existing regional and cross-border dimensions in designing and implementing programmes. A starting point for a regional approach could include developing a regional reference framework on hazardous child labour activities, addressing the issue of cocoa farming certification⁸ at regional level, developing monitoring and programme evaluation capacity and enhanced regional coordination of programmes fighting child trafficking, in particular between origin and destination countries.

▶ *The need for regional institutional leadership*

To effectively coordinate and lead an initiative at regional level, institutional leadership is crucial. In July 2006 ECOWAS and ECCAS signed a “Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, in particular Woman and Children in Central and West Africa”⁹ and recently adopted an Action Plan in Accra, thus providing an ideal political basis for regional action.

ECOWAS’ institutional mandate and policy objectives provide a framework for national governments and their partners, to collaborate and jointly develop regional policies to combat the worst forms of child labour and child trafficking. In addition, its membership from both labour sending and receiving countries is an important aspect in effective policy formulation.

Hence, the involvement of the regional institutional level is a key element in achieving economy wide regional progress in combating the worst forms of child labour. In particular, it will allow for:

- a) The definition of a common regional framework on child labour, and improved coherence with national legislations;
- b) The preparation and dissemination of a guidebook/manual to combat the worst forms of child labour in the cocoa sector;
- c) A co-ordinated engagement of all stakeholders (governments, regional economic bodies, companies etc.) in supporting the process of research, policy and programme development and the funding of remediation efforts.

▶ *Commitment to intensify and support remediation efforts*

Combating child labour with the aim of its eventual elimination is a continuous process and constant efforts are needed at improving and extending progress. However, there is a need now to concentrate on increasing remediation activities, as well as regular monitoring and evaluation. It is remediation activities providing direct support to communities that will have the strongest impact on the ground in terms of improving livelihoods and ending worst forms of child labour. Continued and coordinated actions are required to increase funding for successful existing and/or new remediation efforts.

▶ *Co-ordination and inclusiveness*

Coordinated efforts can best be encouraged by developing and supporting a common, holistic framework for intervention that builds on emerging best practices and national leadership. Working in partnership and in an inclusive manner, with child/youth organisations and other civil society organisations in both cocoa producing countries and other non-producer countries is vital for success. Promoting coordination of interventions at all levels - local, national, regional and international – should enable improved targeting and efficiency of activities.

¹ The SWAC is a *Club* of several OECD member countries active in West Africa. The SWAC works in close collaboration with West African regional organisations, governments, policy makers and civil society.

² 64% of working children, 122 million, are in the Asia and Pacific region.

³ This share is significantly higher in non-oil exporting West African countries.

⁴ GAWU 2006; General Agricultural Workers' Union Ghana.

⁵ A 2002 study estimated the number of children working in hazardous conditions on West African cocoa farms at 284 000, of which 110 000 in Côte d'Ivoire.

⁶ International mobilisation accelerated in 2001 with the "Harkin-Engel" protocol, a framework for the cocoa industry to do away with the worst forms of child and slave labour in the growing and processing of cocoa beans and their derived products. It was the start of the certification process and diverse initiatives aimed at combating the worst forms of child labour on cocoa farms in West Africa.

⁷ Economic Community of Central African States.

⁸ The term certification refers to a continuous process reporting on labour conditions in the West African cocoa farming sector on a country-by-country basis. It is distinct from product certification.

⁹ Available at: www.ceeac-eccas.org/img/pdf/Multilateral_Agreement_Trafficking-1184251953.doc

Reference documents : > www.oecd.org/swac/cocoa

- ▶ **Desk Study** : "Travail des enfants dans les plantations ouest-africaines de cacao", étude documentaire, SWAC/OECD, February 2009
- ▶ **Conclusions of the Desk Study**: "Child labour on West African cocoa farms", SWAC/OECD, February 2009
- ▶ **Summary Record of the 1st Task Force Meeting, 9th February 2009**: "Regional initiative to combat the worst forms of child labour on West African cocoa farms", March 2009

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