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U.S. International Child Labor Program
United States Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB)

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Comments

International Child Labor Program - Bureau of International Affairs (ILAB)



Summary of Findings from the Child Labor Surveys In the Cocoa Sector of West Africa: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria

July 2002

The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and national research collaborators in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria have completed a study of child labor in the cocoa sector of West Africa, with the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), World Cocoa Foundation, International Labor Organization (ILO), and the participating West African governments. The research was carried out under the framework of IITA's Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP).

West Africa accounts for approximately 70 percent of the world's cocoa production; with an estimated 43 percent produced by Côte d'Ivoire, 15 percent produced by Ghana, 7 percent produced by Nigeria, and 4 percent by Cameroon. Since the adoption of ILO Convention 182 "Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor" on June 17, 1999, and of ILO Convention 184 "Concerning the Safety and Health in Agriculture" on June 5, 2001, there is a growing need to research the extent and nature of children's work in agriculture to determine the types of activities that place children at risk. With a vast majority (70 percent) of the world's working children in agriculture, these two international standards provide important guidance to address the needs of children engaged in hazardous work for this sector.

✓ Purpose of Study

- Recent reports on child labor on cocoa farms in West Africa by foreign governments, international agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the media have increased awareness on child labor practices in the cocoa sector and elicited significant actions by governments and the chocolate industry to address these concerns.
- In response to the need for accurate information to inform policy development and program interventions in accordance with the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, this study was commissioned as part of the "Protocol for the Growing and Processing of Cocoa Beans and their Derivative Products" that was signed between the U.S.

Congress, in particular Senator Harkin and Congressman Engel, and the global chocolate industry on September 19, 2001.

✓ **Research Objectives**

- The primary objectives of the child labor studies were to: (1) collect and analyze information related to children working in the cocoa sector; (2) determine the estimated magnitude of children working on cocoa farms; (3) identify the nature of conditions in which children work; (4) establish the social, demographic, and economic characteristics of working children, their families and communities; and (5) document the migration and work histories of children working in the cocoa sector in the study areas of West Africa.

✓ **Research Methods and Procedures**

- Both quantitative and qualitative approaches using three different types of inter-related surveys were designed to collect data on child labor practices in the cocoa sector of West Africa. The surveys employed in the study were the (1) Baseline Producer Survey (BPS), (2) Producer-Worker Survey (PWS), and (3) Community Survey (CS).
- Households interviewed for the quantitative study were randomly selected in areas with high rates of national cocoa production.

✓ **Study Areas**

- Baseline Producer Surveys (BPS) were conducted in 203 villages in Cameroon, Ghana, and Nigeria. The sample size for these countries included 3,086 respondents. A BPS has just been concluded in Côte d'Ivoire, and data from this survey are currently being analyzed.
- Producer-Worker Surveys (PWS) and Community Surveys (CS) were conducted in Côte d'Ivoire. The PWS covered the entire cocoa producing region visiting 250 localities and interviewing 1,500 producers. The CS included 114 interviews in 15 of the 250 PWS localities.

✓ **Technical Advisory Committee**

- USAID established a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of 16 independent experts drawn from international research institutes, the World Bank, United Nations agencies (FAO, ILO, UNICEF), national research organizations, trade unions, and the NGO community to ensure that the survey instruments and outcomes of the study are credible and scientifically sound.

✓ **On-Going Efforts & Future Actions**

- USAID and USDOL are committed to collaborating with the governments of West Africa, the global chocolate industry, ILO, and other international organizations and NGOs to address the problem of child labor in cocoa production in West Africa.
- During the past year, these stakeholders have focused on developing an action plan to respond to the needs and challenges identified by the study. Planning of pilot phase activities will build on the ongoing USAID-STCP program, USDOL-supported ILO-IPEC project to combat the trafficking of children for labor exploitation in nine countries in West and Central Africa, and the findings from the child labor surveys.

✓ **Key Definitions and Concepts**

- The international definition of *child labor* is derived from ILO Convention 138, which states that child labor is any economic activity performed by a person under the age of 15 years. However, not all work is considered harmful to or exploitative of children. Child labor is defined as work that prevents children from attending and participating effectively in school or is performed by children under hazardous conditions that place their healthy physical, intellectual, or moral development at risk.
- ILO Convention 182 defines *the worst forms of child labor* as the use of any individual under the age of 18 for the purposes of debt bondage, armed conflict, commercial sexual exploitation, drug trafficking, and other types of work identified as hazardous to children by ratifying members.
- *Working children* are those who carried out at least one task/activity in the cocoa farm, i.e., clearing ground; weeding; maintaining cocoa trees; applying pesticides; spreading fertilizer; harvesting; piling/gathering up; pod breaking; fermenting; transporting; drying; and other activities.

✓ **Major Findings**

Child Labor in Cocoa Farming

In West Africa, children in rural areas have traditionally worked in agriculture as part of the family unit. The child labor surveys conducted in the four West African countries studied found the following:

- Overall, family labor is the most used labor type. In Côte d'Ivoire, 87 percent of the permanent labor used in cocoa farming came from the family.
- Some children working in cocoa farms have no family ties to the farmers.
- In cocoa farming, children are engaged in a number of tasks/activities such as clearing fields; weeding; maintaining cocoa trees; applying pesticides, fermenting; transporting; drying; and other tasks.
- Boys are more likely to work in cocoa farming. About 59 percent of children working cocoa farming are boys while girls account for 41 percent.
- The majority of working children (64 percent) in cocoa farming are below the age of 14.

Children in potentially hazardous/exploitative situations

Children work in a variety of tasks which depending on the conditions may or may not be detrimental to the child's well-being. Types of hazardous activities in cocoa farming include spraying of pesticide, use of machetes, and carrying heavy loads. In addition, children with no family ties and those recruited through intermediaries are more likely to be at risk for exploitation. The surveys found that:

- In the four West African countries studied, numerous children were engaged in hazardous activities in cocoa farming. For instance, an estimated 284,000 children were clearing fields in cocoa farms using machetes, and 153,000 children were involved in the application of pesticides (See Table 1).

Table 1. Estimates of Child Labor by Selected Characteristics in Study Areas of West Africa

Characteristic	Côte d'Ivoire	Cameroon	Ghana	Nigeria
Children who carry out all tasks	129,410	–	–	–
Apply pesticides	13,200	5,500	–	4,600
Use dangerous tools (machetes)	71,100	35,200	38,700	9,300
Paid child workers	5,121	0	0	1,220
Children with no family ties	11,994	–	–	–

Sources: Calculations based on data from the Sustainable Tree Crops Program Surveys (STCP).

– Not Available

- Close to 12,000 children had no family relations to the cocoa farmer or local farm workers in Côte d'Ivoire.
- There is an estimated 2,500 working children who were recruited through intermediaries for cocoa farming in Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria.

Table 2. Estimates of Working Children at High Risk by Selected Activities and Characteristics in Study Areas of West Africa

Characteristic	Côte d'Ivoire	Cameroon	Ghana	Nigeria
Application of pesticides	142,610	5,500	–	4,600
Children recruited through intermediaries	2,100	0	0	354
Use of machetes by children (Under 15)	109,299	16,192	18,189	2,325
Children without family ties	11,994	–	–	–

Sources: Calculations based on data from the Sustainable Tree Crops Program Surveys (STCP).

– Not Available

Child Labor and Education

Children that work are less likely to be enrolled or attending school. The type of work that is of greatest concern is that which denies children access to education or that diminishes the benefits that a child could derive from schooling. The surveys found that:

- In Côte d'Ivoire, approximately one-third of school-age children (6 to 17) living in cocoa producing households have never attended school.
- Children working in Côte d'Ivoire involved in all cocoa farming tasks were less likely to be enrolled in school (34 percent school enrollment rate) compared to those children who did not work (64 percent).
- In Côte d'Ivoire, children of immigrant cocoa farmers are also less likely to be enrolled in school compared to children of local cocoa farmers – 33 percent compared to 71 percent, respectively.
- Throughout the survey areas, girls have lower enrollment rates than boys.

Farmers' Income and Child Labor

In West Africa, cocoa production is labor intensive, with little use of mechanized tools. Most of the production is in the hands of small-scale farmers with little resources that often use their entire family unit to contribute to cocoa farming. The surveys found that:

- Average annual cocoa revenues ranged from US\$ 30 to US\$ 110 per household member.
- Cocoa accounts for a large share of total household income among cocoa farmers – ranging from 50 percent in Cameroon, 55 percent in Ghana, 66 percent in Côte d'Ivoire, to 68 percent in Nigeria.
- Even though cocoa farming is the main source of income, the quantity of cocoa production is relatively low making it difficult for families to have sufficient income to meet their needs. In West Africa, the average cocoa yield is in the range of 207 kg/ha in Ghana to 475 kg/ha in Nigeria.

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