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# CHILDREN AT THE HEART

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Assessment of child labour and child slavery in Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa sector and recommendations to Mondelēz International

## Executive Summary

COMMISSIONED BY  
Mondelēz International's Cocoa Life program



# Executive Summary

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The issue of child labour, including the worst forms of child labour, such as child slavery, has been of significant concern to the cocoa industry, particularly in West Africa, over the last two decades.

This report presents an assessment of child labour and child slavery in the cocoa sectors of Côte d'Ivoire as commissioned by Mondelēz International. The methodology was collaboratively agreed by Mondelēz and Embode and consisted of briefings and stakeholder consultations, a literature review and visits to cocoa-growing communities.

Despite efforts, child labour is still largely prevalent in Côte d'Ivoire. In 2013, ILO estimated that a total of 1.42 million children in Côte d'Ivoire were engaged in the worst forms of child labour.<sup>1</sup> According to Tulane University the percentage of children working in cocoa production, and in hazardous work in cocoa production, has increased from 23.1% to 34.9% and from 22.3% to 30.9%, respectively, between 2008/09 and 2012/13.<sup>2</sup> Most evidence highlights the reality that children's work and child labour are prevalent, in different forms, throughout the country. Relatively little evidence is available relating to child slavery, or practices similar to child slavery in the sector. Stakeholder consultations also revealed a general lack of prioritisation of and sufficient attention to these more egregious forms of child exploitation. Police recently identified and recovered 48 alleged 'child slaves' aged 5 to 16 from cocoa farms, and arrested 22 alleged traffickers. This calls urgent attention to the significant concern of child trafficking and slavery in the sector.<sup>3</sup>

Côte d'Ivoire's national laws and regulations prohibit the use of child labour and child slavery, and promote the rights of children. The national mandate for child protection is shared between the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Solidarity, Family, Woman and Child. The Oversight Committee and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Actions to Fight Trafficking, Exploitation and Child Labour oversee and coordinate the national response to child labour across all sectors, with the aim to reduce child labour by 70% by 2020. Meanwhile, industry stakeholders and UN, NGO and civil society sector hold integral roles in providing technical expertise, financial support and other resources to the national response to child labour.

A complex array of causes and conditions, enablers and push factors results in children being exploited in cocoa farms. These include persistent cultural practices, gender inequalities, child vulnerabilities and youth labour migration patterns. Factors include, among others, economic and structural of access to basic services such as education, health, sanitation and justice.

Child labour, in all its forms, including child slavery, is a tenacious problem in Côte d'Ivoire. Even after 15 years of dedicated efforts and millions of dollars of investment, the problem continues, and arguably grows. In understanding why efforts have not the level of

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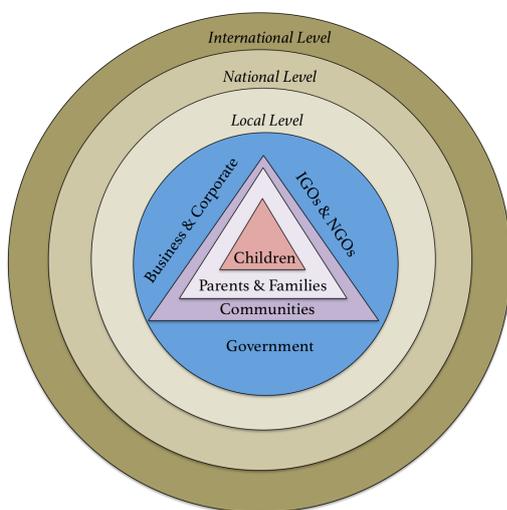
<sup>1</sup> ILO, 2013. 'Etude de base sur le travail des enfants dans le culture du cacao dans les départements de Bouaflé, Mbatto Daoukro, Issia et Soubré'

<sup>2</sup> Tulane University, 2015. 'Survey Research on Child Labour West African Cocoa Growing Areas: Final Report'

<sup>3</sup> Farge, E. and Brice, M. 2015. 'Ivory Coast frees 48 child slaves, arrests traffickers', Reuters, 23 June 2015

effectiveness hoped for, it is important to understand that child labour and child slavery do not exist in a vacuum. Responding to them as if they are unconnected or unrelated to anything else will only result in undermining those very efforts. If it takes a village to raise a child, then stakeholders must step back and see children at the heart of their families and communities.

Achieving cocoa sustainability is a major priority and endeavour in Côte d'Ivoire and it is through the lens of working towards cocoa sustainability that many of the largest stakeholders in both the private and public sector are recognising the importance of community development. Inherent within this paradigm is the reality that although life in communities may revolve around cocoa farming, communities are of course more than just cocoa producers. Communities are their own systems and, relative to their contexts, are dynamic and shifting. To this end, narrowly focused child labour awareness raising in communities should only be a short first step measure, not a long-term endeavour.



A sustainable child-centred approach to child labour and child slavery calls for the integration of the viewpoint of the child and his or her family and community. For a child, she or he needs protection from all forms of exploitation and abuse. Focusing on one type of harm may push children into other more hidden forms of exploitation. Without systemically responding to the root vulnerabilities and enablers of child labour, efforts run the risk of simply plastering over the issue in ways which externalise it to another sector or geographical area. In order to put children at the heart of efforts against child labour in cocoa, the focus must be on the holistic well-being of the child. Every child has the right

to grow up in an environment, conducive to safety from harm and with access to education and care. This also requires all stakeholders to strengthen and build upon existing national support systems and mechanisms, in partnership with the Ivorian government. These include strengthening of basic support services such as education, health, justice, as well as water and sanitation.

Mondelēz International's Cocoa Life provides a comprehensive framework, which sets it apart from most other approaches to cocoa sustainability. The most distinguished feature of the Cocoa Life is its direct work with communities with a broader intention than cocoa farming and child labour. Due to this holistic approach, as well as the significant financial and technical investment being dedicated to the Cocoa Life holds the potential to make a significant difference to hundreds, if not thousands, of communities and their children. The sincere objective to not only develop, but *transform* communities is not too ambitious a task, if done with sustainability in mind, and children at the heart.

# Recommendations

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1. Mondelez International to develop and implement a child protection policy and code, which explicitly includes the reporting and referral of child protection cases, including child labour and child slavery.
2. Cocoa Life to adopt a child well-being approach to child labour and child slavery, starting with adding a formal 'children's access to education' component into Cocoa Life; and actively utilising this as an entry-point for identifying children at risk.
3. Cocoa Life to review its child well-being targets and indicators to ensure impact on child labour and child slavery integrates with sustainability and effectiveness of outcomes.
4. Mondelez International to develop and follow a public engagement stance and strategy at the sector level, which more clearly represents its distinct development approach to cocoa sustainability.
5. Cocoa Life in Côte d'Ivoire to develop a partnership strategy that informs all its dialogues at national and local levels, which explicitly aligns with the Ivorian government's national strategies for cocoa sustainability child well-being agendas.
6. Cocoa Life in Côte d'Ivoire to clearly demarcate the boundaries between the core tasks of its five areas, particularly between the differentiated of supplier and NGO implementing partners, to ensure that each has proportionate resources, time and technical support to deliver all outcomes effectively.
7. Cocoa Life to more explicitly incorporate a 'systems-strengthening' approach, working alongside communities, to support sustainability of its programme outcomes.
8. Mondelez International to set up a broader accountability structure and mechanism to actively engage with its work to respect human rights in its supply chains.