



Forum Nachhaltiger Kakao
German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa



Background and solutions

Child labour in the cocoa sector in West Afrika





The members of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa are committed to abolishing prohibited child labour, forced labour, slavery and human trafficking in cocoa production.

(Specific goal 6 of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa)

Child labour (see definition, page 2) is present in many sectors around the globe and also represents one of the main challenges in the area of cocoa farming. Surveys¹ from the 2018/19 period found that 1.56 million children were involved in child labour in cocoa production in the main producing countries of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana alone. The majority of these children (1.48 million) were involved in hazardous child labour. There are many factors that lead to child labour: the main cause is poverty among cocoa-farming families (see *Info Box 2*). Other major causes are lack of infrastructure and insufficient access to education (for example, children without birth certificates cannot enter secondary education in Côte d'Ivoire) as well as gender inequality and sociocultural factors².

Eliminating child labour³ in accordance with ILO core labour standards in cocoa farming and improving the living conditions of cocoa farmers and their families are central concerns of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa and its members. To this end, the members of the Initiative have set the goal, that by the end of 2025, 100% of households reached by the projects/programmes⁴ of GISCO members will be covered by a strategy or system for the prevention, surveillance, monitoring and elimination of the worst forms of child labour (*also see: Info Box 3*). Development regarding this indicator will be measured annually as part of the new monitoring system of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa.

Based on a holistic understanding of a sustainable cocoa sector (see GISCO [sustainability definition](#)), the Initiative focuses on multiple levels to achieve its goals: In line with specific goal 6, the members of the Initiative are committed to abolishing prohibited child labour, forced labour, slavery and human trafficking in cocoa production. As part of specific goal 1, the members of the Initiative aim to ensure that “better farm-gate prices, minimum pricing and premium systems as well as other revenue-generating measures help to ensure a living income⁵ for cocoa farmers.” Other specific goals⁶ address diversification of cultivation systems, productivity, gender equality and the implementation of human rights and environmentally related due diligence along the cocoa supply chain (see *also: The contribution of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa; p. 8*)

¹ NORC (2020): [Assessing Progress in Reducing Child Labor in Cocoa Production in Cocoa Growing Areas of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana \(norc.org\)](#)

² SWAC/OECD (2011): [Emerging good practice in combating the worst forms of child labour in West African cocoa growing communities, 2011](#)

³ Over the course of this paper, we will refer to child labour as defined in ILO Conventions 138 and 182 (see Definitions Box). Since there is no internationally agreed definition for the term “abusive child labour”, it will only be used in this paper in direct reference to specific goal 6 of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa.

⁴ The cocoa sourced from programmes and projects does not necessarily include all cocoa sourced by the chocolate industry.

⁵ Living Income is the “net annual income, earned under humane working conditions, that is required for a household to afford a decent standard of living for all members of that household.” [The Concept | livingincome \(living-income.com\)](#)

⁶ [Zielsetzung_ForumNachhaltigerKakao_2019.pdf \(kakaoforum.de\)](#)



Info Box 1: What is child labour exactly?

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), we must differentiate between: **children in employment**, **child labour** and the **worst forms of child labour**, of which **hazardous child labour** is a subcategory. The age of the children as well as the type and hours of the work they perform distinguish the terms from one another. The legal frameworks of the individual countries are decisive.

Children in employment

This category refers to all economic activities performed by persons below 18 years of age. This can be formal or informal and paid or unpaid labour in the private or public sphere.⁷ Not all employment is classified as “child labour”.

Child labour

Child labour is more strictly defined than the term “**children in employment**”. Child labour refers to work that is (1) mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or (2) interferes with their schooling.⁸

Whether or not particular forms of child employment can be called “child labour” depends on the child’s age as well as the type and hours of work performed. Children in employment who are over the age of 12 and only carry out a few hours of permitted light work per week are not considered to be child labourers. The term also does not apply to children over the age of 15 whose work is not classified as dangerous.⁹ The term “child labour” is based on ILO Convention 138 on Minimum Age (adopted in 1973) and ILO Convention 182 on Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (adopted in 1999).

The worst forms of child labour

According to **ILO Convention 182, Article 3**, the **worst forms of child labour** include:¹⁰

- a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery;
- b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs;
- d) **Hazardous child labour**: **Hazardous work** carried out by children is any occupation or employment which has or may have a damaging effect on the child’s safety, physical or mental health or moral development. Hazards may also arise from an excessive workload, even if the occupation or employment is not hazardous in and of itself.

The categories (a), (b) and (c) are described as the **unconditional worst forms of child labour**, which means they are prohibited

regardless of the child’s age, the type of work carried out or the conditions and circumstances under which the work is carried out. Category (d) – *hazardous child labour* – is a **conditional** worst form of child labour, which means that it must be defined locally using the list of hazardous occupations established on a national level (see: [Comparative analysis of child labour decrees in Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana](#)).

Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child reifies **Part III Article 10 Clause 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**, which states that children and young people should be protected from economic and social exploitation. **Article 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** further enshrines children’s right to education.¹¹

For a brief summary of the key terms and definitions on the topic of child labour and forced labour, also see

⁷ ILO (n.d.): <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

⁸ ILO (n.d.): <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

⁹ ILO (1973): [ILO Convention No. 138, Minimum Age Convention, 1973](#)

¹⁰ ILO (1999): [ILO Convention No. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999](#)

¹¹ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (n.d.): [Recht auf Bildung • Recht auf Schule | UN-Kinderrechtskonvention](#)



[Glossary-of-Child-Forced-Labour-Definitions-and-Concepts_August-2019.pdf \(cocoainitiative.org\)](#)

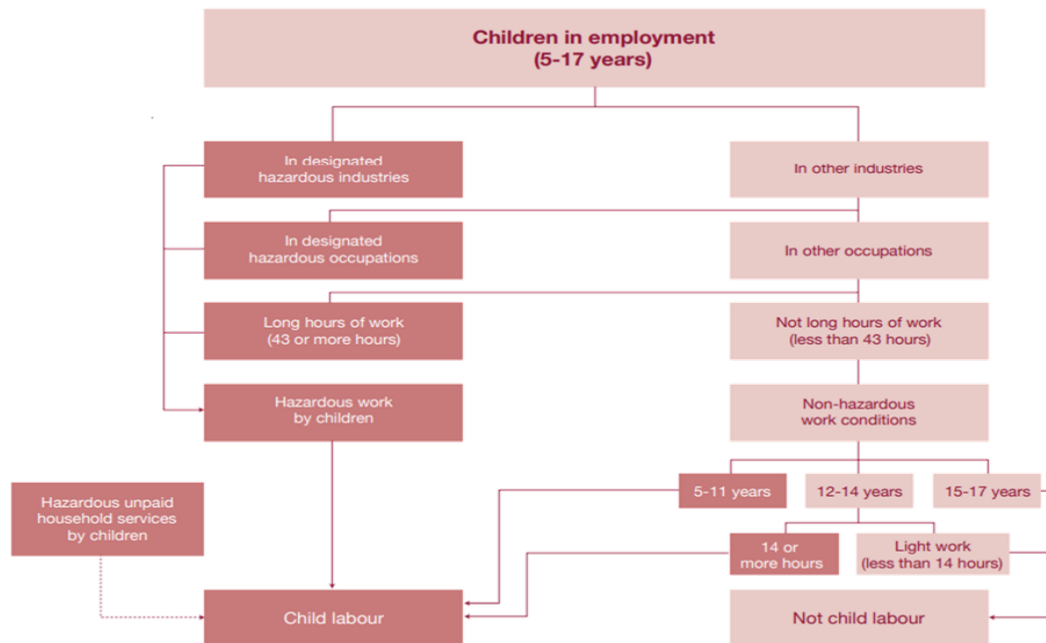


Illustration 1 of: International Labour Office and United Nations Children's Fund, Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward, ILO and UNICEF, Geneva and New York, 2021. Licence: CC BY 4.0.; hours specified are per week

This paper presents the current situation, challenges and existing solution approaches. The initiatives cited are important steps in the elimination of child labour. The figures demonstrate the continued need for all actors in the supply chain to take action, as well as a need for the development of further strategies to reduce poverty and combat child labour. Cooperation with (state) actors in producing countries and raising of awareness among local populations continue to play an indispensable role in these efforts, and collective measures must be taken on a structural level to combat the causes of child labour over the long term. Here, the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa and its members want to assume the role of strengthening national institutions in the fight against child labour and, through increased coordination between the various actors, promote a holistic approach which goes beyond measures in the cocoa sector.

Child labour around the globe – facts and figures

According to the latest data and estimates¹² **160 million children were involved in child labour** worldwide in 2020 (this is equivalent to 9.6% of all children between the ages of 5 and 17) – approximately 63 million girls and 97 million boys (cf. 2016: 152 million children (equivalent to 9.6%); 2000: 246 million children, equivalent to 16.0%). **79 million children, almost half of all children involved in child labour, are subjected to hazardous child labour** (cf. 2016: 73 million children; 2000: 171 million children).

Overall, it is clear that there has been a downward trend in the last 20 years. In 2020, around 88.5 million fewer children were involved in child labour than in 2000. The number of children involved in hazardous child labour also dropped by 91.5 million. This shows that progress has

¹² ILO (2021): [Report: Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward \(ilo.org\)](#)



been made in the fight against child labour. Nonetheless, this positive trend has been interrupted in the last 4 years: the number of children involved in child labour grew by 8.4 million between 2016 and 2020, while the number of children involved in hazardous child labour increased by 6.5 million in the same period. Since 2012, particularly large increases in child labour have been seen in Sub-Saharan Africa. More children are involved in child labour in the African countries south of the Sahara than in the rest of the world put together.

A large proportion of this child labour takes place in **agriculture**. This often constitutes hazardous child labour, for example due to the use of sharp objects, dangerous tools and pesticides, extreme environmental conditions or carrying of excessively heavy loads. According to ILO estimates, 112.1 million of the 160 million children involved in child labour (approx. 70%) work in agriculture, followed by 31.4 million in the service sector (19.6%) and 16.5 million in the industrial sector (10.3%).

Africa is the continent with the highest amount of child labour, in both relative and absolute terms. According to ILO estimates, over 50% of children involved in child labour live in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is equivalent to 86.6 million children between the ages of 5 and 17. 81.5% of these children work in agriculture.

Child labour in the cocoa sector – facts and figures ¹³

Surveys conducted during the 2018/19 harvest season found that 1.56 million children were involved in child labour in cocoa production in the main cocoa-producing countries of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana alone. The majority of these children (1.48 million) were involved in hazardous child labour.

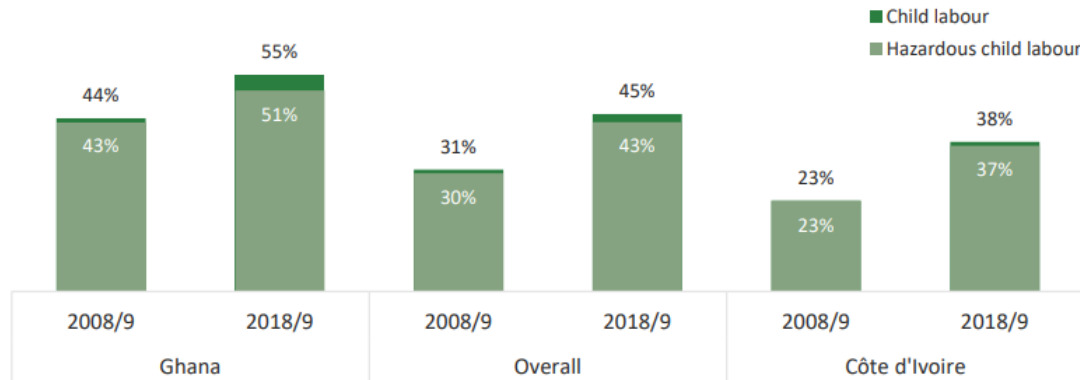
The prevalence of children in employment, children in child labour and children in hazardous child labour in the cocoa-producing regions of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana was assessed by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago in a study published in 2020, which was funded by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). The study compares (to the greatest extent possible on the basis of varying methodologies) figures from 2018/19 with those from previous surveys conducted by Tulane University¹⁴ in 2008/09 and 2014/15 and focuses on child labour and hazardous child labour as defined in the ILO Conventions. However, it does not cover forced child labour, child slavery or child trafficking. Of all the children between the ages of 5 and 17 in agricultural households in the cocoa-producing regions of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, 31% were involved in child labour in 2008/09. This figure rose to 45% in 2018/19. The percentage of children subjected to hazardous child labour in cocoa production rose from 30% to 43% in the same period. However, cocoa production also increased by 62% in both countries during this period, thus increasing the number of cocoa-producing households. Meanwhile, there was positive development in terms of school attendance. In Côte d'Ivoire, school attendance among children from agricultural households in cocoa-producing regions rose from 58% in 2008/09 to 80% in 2018/19. This number also grew in Ghana, from 89% in 2008/09 to 96% ten years later.

¹³ NORC (2020): [Assessing Progress in Reducing Child Labor in Cocoa Production in Cocoa Growing Areas of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana \(norc.org\)](#)

¹⁴ Tulane University (2015): [Final Report: Survey Research on Child Labor in West African Cocoa Growing Areas | U.S. Department of Labor \(dol.gov\)](#)



Proportion of children in cocoa-related child labour and hazardous child labour, all agricultural households in cocoa-growing areas of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana (table 16)



Source: International Cocoa Initiative

In July 2020, the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) published an analysis¹⁵ of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on child labour in cocoa-farming households. The results showed a 21.5% increase in the identification of child labour compared to the previous year.

National statistics on child labour in all economic sectors:

A Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey¹⁶ (Enquête par grappes à indicateurs multiples) conducted by the Ivorian Ministry for Planning and Development in collaboration with UNICEF found that in 2016 **31.3% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 were involved in child labour across all sectors. 21.5%** of children were involved in **hazardous child labour**.

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey¹⁷ Six (MICS 6), conducted in 2017/18 by the Ghana Statistical Service in collaboration with UNICEF, found that **30% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 were involved in child labour. 21% were in hazardous child labour**, with the rate of hazardous child labour in the 15–17 age group lying at 30%. In addition, the **7th Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS 7)**¹⁸ from 2019 found that 78% of all the children in employment between the ages of 5 and 14 in Ghana worked in agriculture, forestry and fishing.

¹⁵ [Hazardous child labour in Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa communities during Covid-19 | ICI Cocoa Initiative](#)

¹⁶ Ministère du plan et du développement – Côte d'Ivoire (2016): [Côte d'Ivoire MICS 2016.pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)

¹⁷ Ghana Statistical Service (2019): [Ghana Multiple Cluster Indicator Survey.pdf \(unicef.org\)](#)

¹⁸ Ghana Statistical Service (2019): [GLSS7 MAIN REPORT FINAL.pdf \(statsghana.gov.gh\)](#)



Info Box 2. Incomes of cocoa farmers

Having a low income is considered to be a leading cause of child labour:

Around 95% of cocoa produced worldwide is grown on smallholdings with an average acreage of 2 to 5 hectares.¹⁹ The International Cocoa Organization (ICCO) estimates that at least 5 million smallholders grow cocoa around the world. According to the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) study [Demystifying the cocoa sector in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana](#),²⁰ cocoa makes up 66% (Côte d'Ivoire) and 60% (Ghana) of the income of cocoa farmers and their families. Many families with 5 to 10 members cannot cover their living costs.

According to the KIT, the **average daily income per head** in cocoa-farming households is **USD 0.92 in Côte d'Ivoire and USD 1.04 in Ghana**, well below the international poverty line of **USD 1.90 per head** defined by the World Bank.²¹ Inadequate and unreliable income causes farmers to stop investing in cultivation and lack the financial means to employ workers.

One consequence of this is that children have to perform activities in the fields which are prohibited under national and international law in conditions inappropriate to their age. What's more, cocoa-producing regions are usually situated in remote locations and are poorly developed or not developed at all. Schools are not present everywhere or not always attended by the children of cocoa farmers despite compulsory school attendance, as they cannot afford learning materials or their parents require their assistance on the farms.

Causes of low income are low farm-gate prices, fluctuating world market prices, low productivity, small cultivated areas and a lack of additional sources of income.

International treaties against child labour

Many national and international treaties, initiatives and projects conducted by private business, civil society and governments in consuming and producing countries have aimed to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in the cocoa sector. Previous initiatives have not been sufficient to lift cocoa-farming families out of poverty and thus fight the leading cause of child labour.

Harkin–Engel Protocol

In September 2001, representatives from the chocolate and cocoa industry signed an agreement on combating child labour in the supply chain, pledging to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2005. The agreement, which was devised in collaboration with the Ivorian, Ghanaian and US governments (in particular US Senator Tom Harkin and Representative Eliot Engel) was named the [Harkin–Engel Protocol](#). It set out a comprehensive, six-article problem-solving approach and a time-bound process to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in cocoa farming. In order to set the endeavours of the protocol in concrete terms and advance the process after the signing of the agreement in 2001, a [Framework of Action to Support Implementation of the Harkin–Engel Protocol](#) was agreed in 2010. In a joint declaration, the industry and the local governments reiterated their commitment to a 70% reduction in the worst forms of child labour by 2020. Both of the main producing countries have adopted national measures to this end (*see below*). Despite the efforts of all actors involved, the 2020 goal was not achieved.

¹⁹ [Cocoa producing countries – Forum Nachhaltiger Kakao \(kakaoforum.de\)](#)

²⁰ Royal Tropical Institute (2018): [Demystifying the Cocoa Sector in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire – KIT Royal Tropical Institute](#)

²¹ Royal Tropical Institute (2018): [Demystifying-complete-file.pdf \(kit.nl\)](#)



2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The international community adopted the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** at the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York on 25 September 2015. Based on this, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were devised with the aim of supporting sustainable development on an ecological, economic and social level. SDG 8, titled “Decent Work and Economic Growth”, aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by means of its subgoals.



SDG 8.7 “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”

This also gave rise to [Alliance 8.7](#), which aims to support national governments in achieving the goal (SDG 8) by 2025.

Initiatives of producing countries

Child labour is officially prohibited in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana.

In Côte d’Ivoire, the legal framework surrounding child labour has been continually improved upon since 2010. The Ivorian National Committee for Monitoring Actions to Combat Trafficking, Exploitation and Child Labour (**Comité National de Surveillance des Action de Lutte contre la Traite, L’Exploitation et le Travail des Enfants – CNS**) and the Ivorian Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Fight against Trafficking, Exploitation and Child Labour (Comité Interministeriel de Lutte contre la Traite, l’exploitation et le Travail des Enfants – CIM) were set up to fight child labour. Since 2012, the CNS and CIM have developed [national action plans to combat child labour](#). These include campaigns to raise awareness among the population as well as campaigns against human trafficking in the cocoa sector and other measures.

In the past ten years, the Ivorian government has drafted [national action plans to fight child labour and child trafficking](#) in three phases. According to an assessment by the USDOL, these have contributed significantly to reducing child labour²². In addition, a law was passed in 2015 making school attendance compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 16²³. Important changes to the education system and increased construction of schools in rural areas of Côte d’Ivoire have also greatly improved school attendance rates. The government also established SOSTECI²⁴, a mechanism for monitoring child labour in the cocoa sector, as well as introducing stricter child labour laws. The government also signed bilateral agreements with neighbouring countries to prevent child trafficking at the borders as early as possible.²⁵

In Ghana, the government approved the **National Plan of Action Phase I (NPA1) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana (2009–2015)** in 2010 in order to boost the technical capacity of duty-bearing agencies, increase public awareness, mobilise partners, strengthen local communities and support the children affected.²⁶ Phase II (2017–2021) builds upon the results and experience gained in the first phase. Here, the focus is on the

²² DOL (2020): [2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Côte d’Ivoire \(dol.gov\)](#) & U.S. Department of State (2021): [Cote d’Ivoire – United States Department of State](#)

²³ NORC (2020): [Assessing Progress in Reducing Child Labor in Cocoa Production in Cocoa Growing Areas of Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana \(norc.org\)](#)

²⁴ ILO (2020): [Cote d’Ivoire: the ILO supports the Ministry of Employment and Social Protection in the fight against child labour in Cocoa and Gold supply chains & CNS \(n.d.\): SOSTECI | CNS \(travaildesenfants.org\)](#)

²⁵ NORC (2020): [Assessing Progress in Reducing Child Labor in Cocoa Production in Cocoa Growing Areas of Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana \(norc.org\)](#)

²⁶ NAP (2009): [National Plan of Action Phase I \(NPA1\) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana \(2009–2015\)](#)



mobilisation of further resources, measures in local communities, improving high-quality education and improving rates of school attendance.²⁷ The government has made institutional agreements for effective implementation of the Plan of Action, including the establishment of the national steering committee for child labour, which is responsible for the management, coordination and implementation of the national programme. The Ghanaian government's initiatives also include the Ghana Cocoa Board (COCOBOD) [Child Education Support](#) programme, which aims to enable children from cocoa-farming families in all seven cocoa-producing regions and districts to attend school. It is also intended to relieve financial burdens on farmers associated with their children's school attendance. Finally, the Ghanaian government has placed a heavy focus on increasing school attendance rates through various schooling initiatives over the last 20 years.

Info-Box 3: Child Labour Free Zones in Ghana

In National Plan of Action Phase II (NPA2) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana, the country has set the target of reducing child labour to an absolute minimum by 2021 (below a threshold of 10%, down from 22% in 2017, when Phase II began). To this end, it founded various initiatives, including the Child Labour Free Zones (CLFZ) initiative, which aims to heavily reduce child labour in regions with high cocoa production. The Child Labor Unit of the Ghanaian Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations is currently in its pilot phase in two districts, working with local, state and community-based organisations and stakeholders to raise awareness around child labour and implement preventative and penal measures against child labour. The Plan of Action includes the promotion of technical and vocational training for young people who do not attend school.²⁸ Working with Japanese organisation Action against Child Exploitation (ACE), Ghana brought in a monitoring system for the evaluation of the Child Labour Free Zones (CLFZ) initiative on 9 March 2020. This system is designed as a monitoring system to ensure that regions have the necessary mechanisms available to them to be able to continue protecting children from hazardous labour while preserving their other basic rights.²⁹

²⁷ NAP (2017): [National Plan of Action, Phase II \(NPA2\), For the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana \(2017–2021\)](#)

²⁸ NAP (2009): [National Plan of Action Phase I \(NPA1\) for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Ghana \(2009–2015\)](#), p. 42

²⁹ ACE (2020): [A Momentous Step toward Ending Child Labour in Ghana \(acejapan.org\)](#)



The contribution of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa and the national platforms for sustainable cocoa in Europe

Fighting child labour in the cocoa sector continues to present major challenges. The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa draws on the experience of its members and works with producer representatives, governments of producing countries and global actors in the cocoa sector to develop strategies and solution approaches.

In the course of developing a new monitoring system to measure progress regarding the [new objectives](#), the initiative created a set of recommended actions for its members to implement the objectives. Of course, this also included [recommended actions](#) regarding child labour.

The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa also agreed on four main challenges with other national platforms for sustainable cocoa in Europe (Beyond Chocolate in Belgium, the Dutch Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa and the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa) as part of a joint [MoU](#). These include greater traceability and transparency in the cocoa supply chain, contribution to a living income for cocoa farmers, halting deforestation and elimination of child labour. To overcome these challenges, the national platforms rely on heightened, close cooperation at European level involving joint action. For this purpose, in 2021, an international working group on child labor at the level of European platforms was established (ISCO Working Group Child Labour), inviting ISCO members for exchange and mutual learning.

The individual member groups of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa, the federal government (represented by the [German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development \(BMZ\)](#) and the [Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture \(BMEL\)](#)), the German confectionery and food retail industries, and civil society are committed to abolishing prohibited child labour, forced labour, slavery and human trafficking in cocoa production, as set out in specific goal 6. Some of the activities carried out by the members can be seen below.

Federal government initiative

On 21 December 2016, the federal government passed the [National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights \(NAP\)](#). As well as the state's duty to protect human rights, the NAP brought to the fore the obligation for private businesses to observe human rights. In passing the Action Plan, the federal government declared its expectation for businesses to carry out human rights due diligence and observe human rights all along their supply and value chains. The due diligence set out in the Action Plan is based on the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#), which were put into place in 2011 after unanimous approval from the Human Rights Council, following a six-year research and consultation process. The aim of the NAP is to drive forward the implementation of the Guiding Principles in Germany and ensure a responsible global economy. The elimination of child labour and cooperation in multi-actor initiatives are mentioned explicitly in the section titled "The state duty and corporate responsibility to protect human rights".

The Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, passed by the Bundestag on June 11, 2021, is aligned with the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights (NAP). The law will come into effect in 2023 for companies with more than 3,000 employees. Starting in 2024, the new legislation will extend to companies with more than 1,000 employees. This enacted law imposes due diligence obligations on affected companies regarding human rights violations within their supply chains, obligations they must ensure compliance with. The Federal Office for Economic Affairs and Export Control (BAFA) oversees compliance with the law through checks on corporate reports and submitted complaints.



Initiatives of multi-actor partnerships

International Cocoa Initiative

The International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) was founded in 2002, in the wake of the Harkin–Engel Protocol. The foundation is a multi-stakeholder platform which works with the cocoa and chocolate industry, civil society, the cocoa-farming community, concerned governments and international organisations. ICI's vision is one of prospering cocoa-farming communities within a dignified, sustainable and responsibly managed cocoa supply chain, in which children's rights and human rights are protected and respected and child labour and forced labour have been eliminated. The ICI 2021–2026 Strategy sets out three strategic goals: 1) A responsible cocoa supply chain; 2) Cooperation with political decision makers on a national and international level with regard to reinforcing policies, capacities and systems to create a supportive enabling environment; 3) Ensuring that all actors and systems are working together as part of an efficient, coherent and coordinated multi-stakeholder effort. In order to achieve these goals, the work of ICI is focussed on three interlinked core functions: 1) Innovation and Learning; 2) Technical Advocacy; 3) Capacity and System Strengthening.



Private business initiatives

Info Box 4: Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation System (CLMRS)

An important tool within the strategy of the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) is the [Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation System \(CLMRS\)](#). This system was developed two decades ago by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and later adapted for application in the cocoa sector³⁰. Ghana has had a Child Labour Monitoring System (GCLMS, which later became a GCLMRS) in place since 2010³¹. CLMRS and similar systems³² are a means of providing targeted support for children affected or threatened by child labour, as well as their families and communities. These systems entail four core activities: (i) Raising awareness around child labour and its consequences; (ii) Identifying children involved in child labour; (iii) Supporting children involved in and threatened by child labour (prevention and remediation); (iv) Tracking children identified as child labourers until it has been ensured that they have satisfactory alternatives available to them. These are in line with the tenets of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. For these activities, the Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems implemented by ICI rely upon local contacts and mobile data. ICI analyses reported cases of child labour in order to provide appropriate remediation measures and provisions and then implement and distribute these in the local community with the help of local institutions. The situation of the child then continues to be tracked to ensure that it has undergone lasting improvement.

Between 2015 and 2020, **over 150,000 children were helped by remediation and prevention measures as part of the CLMRS implemented by ICI**³³. Data on the number of children reached by CLMRS and similar systems is currently being gathered. This included over 36,000 sets of school materials being provided, over 5,000 other services being provided to support education (registration in public schools, tutoring, awarding of apprenticeships, etc.) and over 4,000 households being helped to create alternative sources of income. By the end of 2021³⁴, at least 540,000 cocoa-farming households in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana will be covered by systems which effectively prevent and combat child labour as part of the human rights due diligence of companies. This is equivalent to approximately 30% of the cocoa supply chain in these countries.

In 2021, ICI published a study on the effectiveness of CLMRS³⁵. The study assessed (1) how effectively various CLMRS address cases of child labour and (2) the effectiveness of the remediation measures taken within CLMRS. The review produced various recommendations. These included adapting awareness-raising and monitoring campaigns to match the seasonal patterns of certain tasks on cocoa farms; carrying out active monitoring through a combination of household visits and farm visits; and allowing women to play a more active role in monitoring and awareness raising. The data generated from the CLMRS also demonstrates that around 30% to 40% of children identified as child labourers through a system implemented by ICI stopped performing child labour after receiving remediation support (with varying rates of success depending on the number of follow-up visits). For the full report, see: [ICI-CLMRS-Effectiveness-Review_EN.pdf \(cocoainitiative.org\)](#)

³¹ Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (2010): [CHILD LABOUR MONITORING IN GHANA: A REVIEW \(cocoainitiative.org\)](#)

³² As part of the monitoring system, the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa developed indicators with a view to systems of identifying and eliminating child labour, which are not only covered by the CLMRS of ICI but also by other comparable systems. For more information on this, see: [ICI CLMRS Benchmarking-study.pdf \(cocoainitiative.org\)](#).

³³ ICI (2020): https://cocoainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/ICI-Annual-Report-2020_ENGLISH.pdf

³⁴ A common goal of ICI and its members.

³⁵ ICI (2021): [ICI-CLMRS-Effectiveness-Review_EN.pdf \(cocoainitiative.org\)](#)



Increasing the number of people reached by CLMRS is a priority for the national platforms for sustainable cocoa in Europe (ISCOs) as well as the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) and its members.

In 2021, ICI worked with national initiatives for sustainable cocoa in Europe to conduct a benchmark study³⁶ on behalf of the Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa about the definition and measurability of CLMRS and other comparable systems designed to end child labour. The proposed operational definition of a CLMRS states that it should cover four core activities:

- (1) Raising awareness around child labour and the resulting harm among farmers, children and the wider community.
- (2) Identifying children in child labour through an active monitoring process, using standardised data collection tools.
- (3) Providing support (prevention and remediation) to children in child labour, and other children at risk, and documenting the support provided.
- (4) Tracking children identified in child labour and continuing to monitor their status on a regular basis until they have stopped engaging in child labour.

Indicators were developed in line with these criteria, in particular to enable measurement within the framework of monitoring systems, such as that of the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa.

For the full report, see: [ICI-CLMRS-Effectiveness-Review_EN.pdf \(cocoainitiative.org\)](#)

Cocoa from certified sources

The most important standards in cocoa farming (**Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance**) stipulate **compliance with ILO Conventions 138 and 182**. Therefore, the standards play a key role in raising awareness among cocoa farmers of the problems surrounding child labour. Certification systems may not be able to completely eliminate the worst forms of child labour in West Africa, but they do systematically aid in exposing and preventing them.

The focus here is on education and prevention: the worst forms of child labour must be thwarted before they get the chance to develop. This means that producer organisations are duty-bound to assess the risk of the worst forms of child labour and take precautions where necessary. One example of this could be producer organisations or village communities creating monitoring and remediation systems similar to the Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation System (CLMRS).

Furthermore, all certification organisations place value in producer organisations developing and taking responsibility for measures designed to fight the worst forms of child labour on a local level. They support these measures by providing training and sharing expertise locally, as well as working closely with NGOs and private business.

In addition, certain Sustainability Standards provide targeted support for women in cocoa-farming communities to improve the living conditions of the entire family and strengthen women's standing.^{37,38} Many companies from the German confectionery industry and trading companies, who are involved in the German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa source and process sustainable cocoa, whose share has risen steadily. In this way, they also contribute to the elimination of child labour.

³⁶ ICI (2021): [ICI CLMRS Benchmarking-study.pdf \(cocoainitiative.org\)](#)

³⁷ Fairtrade (2017): [Fairtrade: Stärkung der Frau durch fairen Handel \(Empowering women through fair trade\) \(in German\) / Blog 3/2018: Six ways Fairtrade is empowering women](#)

³⁸ Rainforest (2020): <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/resource-item/whats-in-our-2020-certification-program-gender-equality/>



Civil society initiatives

Civil society organisations use campaigns, public appearances, exhibitions, events and academic studies to raise awareness among consumers around the problem of child labour in cocoa farming. Within the [VOICE Network](#) (Voice of Organizations in Cocoa in Europe), European civil society organisations and trade unions work together to raise awareness of sustainability issues in the global cocoa supply chain. They are committed to goals such as enabling cocoa farmers to have a living income in order to counteract the causes of child labour. They also call for legislation around the observance and enforceability of human rights throughout the global supply chain. Other organisations operate in cocoa-producing countries, where they help children access education.

The outlook

When one considers the various initiatives in place to combat child labour, it becomes clear that it is not easy to bring about change. The German Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa is working with the German and Ivorian governments for the PRO-PLANTEURS project. During the project's duration from 2015 to 2025, PRO-PLANTEURS aims to professionalise 30,000 family farms³⁹ and their cocoa-farming organisations in Côte d'Ivoire. It focuses on improving living conditions by raising income towards the goal of a living income and by promoting a balanced diet among cocoa-farming families. The project places particular focus on offering women opportunities to achieve a higher income and better basic nutrition for their families and thus improve their living conditions. After a successful first phase, which involved working with the first 20,000 family farms, a five-year follow-up phase began in June 2020.

You can find more detailed information on our website, for example in the [Studies & Reports](#) section

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³⁹ For comparison, there are around 2 million cocoa-producing smallholders in the main producing countries of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire ([2017-06 Strengthening the competitiveness of cocoa production and improving the income of cocoa producers in West and Central Africa.pdf \(suedwind-institut.de\)](#))