

# Rooting out child labour from cocoa farms



International  
Labour  
Organization

## Paper No. 1

A synthesis report of  
five rapid assessments





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from cocoa farms*

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## Preface

Of the ILO's estimate of 218 million child labourers from 5-17 years old in the world, about 70 per cent are working in agriculture. These children work on small family farms or large plantations, caring for domestic animals, weeding and harvesting, collecting fodder and fuel. A countless number of these children are missing out on school and many are regularly exposed to serious hazards and exploitation. The extent to which agricultural work is harmful to children depends on a number of factors, including the type of work they do, the hours they work, their age and their access to education. It also depends on whether or not they are separated from their families for long periods, and the degree to which they are exposed to specific hazards. Children who work on family farms – which characterizes most child agricultural workers – are by no means immune to the many hazards associated with agriculture.

The problems related to agricultural child labour are particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa, where nearly 30 per cent of all children under the age of 15 are thought to be working. International media attention at the beginning of the decade on the use of child labour in cocoa farming in West Africa under appalling conditions placed a glaring spotlight on just how harmful and hazardous agricultural work can be for children, particularly in areas of extreme rural poverty. This increased concern about child labour in cocoa and other crops in the region and the urgent need for immediate action to address it at all levels gave rise to the ILO-IPEC technical assistance programme to combat hazardous and exploitative child labour in cocoa and commercial agriculture called WACAP. From 2002 to 2006, WACAP supported projects in five countries: Cameroon,

Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria. Overall, the project was very effective in raising awareness, mobilizing stakeholders, building institutional capacities in the countries and removing several thousand children from hazardous work in agriculture. Most importantly, it demonstrated that working with communities to help them resolve their own problems related to child labour can make a substantial difference in keeping children out of the workforce.

The four papers in this series, *Rooting out child labour from cocoa farms*, synthesize the knowledge and experiences acquired from implementation of the WACAP programme in the individual countries.

- *Paper No. 1: A synthesis report of five rapid assessments*
- *Paper No. 2: Safety and health hazards*
- *Paper No. 3: Sharing experiences*
- *Paper No. 4: Child labour monitoring – A partnership of communities and government*

They are complemented by training manuals for education practitioners and farmers.

- *Rooting out child labour from cocoa farms – A manual for training education practitioners: Ghana*
- *Training resource pack on the elimination of hazardous child labour in agriculture*

These publications were supported under WACAP with funding from the United States Department of Labor and the Cocoa Global Issues Group. Many thanks to these donors and to the numerous implementing agencies and other stakeholders that took part in this important programme.

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## Abbreviations

HCL	Hazardous child labour	STCP	Sustainable Tree Crops Program
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture	UN	United Nations
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNESCO	United National Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour	UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
OSH	Occupational safety and health	WACAP	West African Cocoa and Commercial Agriculture Project to Combat Hazardous and Exploitive Child Labour

## 1. Introduction

Agriculture contributes to food security, rural employment, and non-oil export revenue. For millions of women, men, and children, agriculture is a way of life and the only source of livelihood. At the same time, agriculture is one of the most informal and hazardous industry sectors in the world, and children are often its workers.<sup>1</sup> More child labour is found in agriculture than in all other industry sectors combined.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years the international lens of donors, governments, nongovernmental organizations, industry and labour groups, and many others has focused on the problem of child exploitation in cocoa growing and agriculture in western Africa, particularly Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Agriculture is vital to the economies of this region (table 1) and most of the world's cocoa comes from this part of Africa.

Cocoa growing in West Africa is almost exclusively for export purposes. For the most part, it is family based and small scale. Children working on small cocoa farms are

often related in some way to the smallholder. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, at least 90 per cent of the farms have less than 12 hectares of productive cocoa farmland, with the average size of about 4 hectares. Most of the workers are from Côte d'Ivoire or neighbouring countries (Burkina Faso, Mali).

This report describes the findings of five country-level rapid assessments<sup>3</sup> (box 1) on child labour in agriculture, particularly but not exclusively as they relate cocoa growing in the five countries mentioned. The purpose of these assessments was to expand the knowledge base and make information available for future programmes aiming to improve the situation for children, their families, and communities. Whether these future programmes are for capacity building, social protection, education, child labour monitoring systems, awareness raising, or social mobilization, it is critical for the principal stakeholders in these countries and elsewhere to be aware both of the context in which child labour occurs and the potential partners that for future activities.

**Table 1: Contribution of agriculture to gross domestic product by country**

Country	Value added by agriculture (% GDP)
Cameroon	45
Côte d'Ivoire	28
Ghana	35
Guinea	25
Nigeria	37

Source: <http://www.fao.org/ag/agl/aglw/aquastat/countries/>

<sup>1</sup> IPEC: Facts on child labour in agriculture, fact sheet (Geneva, ILO, 2003); available at [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/publ/download/factsheets/fs\\_agriculture\\_0303.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/publ/download/factsheets/fs_agriculture_0303.pdf) [accessed March 2006].

<sup>2</sup> ILO: *The end of child labour: Within reach* (Geneva, 2006), figure 1.3, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> More detailed information on rapid assessments is available at: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/simpoc/guides/part1-1.htm> [accessed March 2006].

### Box 1: Rapid assessments

The rapid assessment technique was designed by survey methodology, data management/dissemination and child labour research experts from the ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and others to enable organizations to obtain qualitative and quantitative information about child labour problems for the development of action programmes. Such data are not easily or quickly captured by national child labour surveys. Rapid assessments also help locate agencies or organizations that can be mobilized in specific areas.

The intended target audiences for the report include the following:

- donors (governmental development and aid agencies, and private sector entities contributing to poverty alleviation programmes);
- international agencies (including the United Nations);
- governments of countries where child labour on farms is a major concern (focusing on the countries of the project), and
- practitioners (programme implementers) who are developing strategies to address the problem of child labour in agriculture.

The report synthesizes key information collected by the rapid assessments with a goal of generating interest for developing solutions to the problem of agricultural child labour in general. There are many reasons why action should be taken. Child labour not only compromises the present and future welfare of the children involved, it also negatively impacts long-term national development. Ignoring or underestimating the scope and scale of child labour in agriculture is to everyone's detriment. While becoming aware of the situation is a first step, awareness needs to be followed up by advocacy and action. It is hoped that this analysis will contribute to the growing debate on the subject and encourage further sustainable action to eliminate child labour in cocoa growing and other agriculture.

## 1.1 A note on terminology

### 1.1.1 Child labour

Child labour is work that harms children's well-being and hinders their education, development and future livelihoods. Child labour is work which, by its nature and/or by the way it is carried out, harms, abuses, and exploits the child or deprives him/her of an education. Anyone below the age of 18 years is considered a child.

### 1.1.2 Hazard and risk

"Hazard" and "risk" are two terms that are used frequently in documents that discuss hazardous child labour. For clarity, a "hazard" is anything with the potential to do harm. A "risk" is the likelihood of potential harm from that hazard being realized. For example, the hazard associated with power-driven agricultural machinery might be getting trapped or entangled by moving parts. The risk is high if guards are not fitted and workers are in close proximity to the machine. If, however, the machine is properly guarded, regularly maintained and repaired by competent staff, then the risk is lower.

### 1.1.3 Agriculture

Agriculture is a complex and heterogeneous economic sector comprising a number of sub-sectors. It involves agricultural production methods that differ from country to country and between developed and developing countries. It ranges from highly industrialized, commercial production to traditional small-scale, subsistence farming. The distinction that has traditionally been drawn between these two types of farming is slowly eroding, however, with the increasing commercialization and industrialization of agriculture, especially in response to the promotion of export-oriented agriculture by governments and multinational enterprises.

For additional information on the terminology used in this report, please consult Annex I.

## 1.2 Structure of the report

This report is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction. Chapter 2 provides a background on the WACAP project and explains why there has been an international focus on cocoa growing in West Africa. Chapter 3 introduces the rapid assessments and provides the synthesis of these. It presents a framework that was created to summarize in a standardized manner the methods used, main findings, limitations, and recommendations by the five reports.

Chapter 4 highlights the difficulties in developing an accurate and timely knowledge base for child labour – a reality that is often fully recognized – and discusses opportunities for future work in this area. Chapter 5 discusses potential use of the information for connecting future policy decisions with programme considerations. Finally, conclusions are made in Chapter 6.

## 2. IPEC's work to end child labour in cocoa growing

The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is a technical cooperation programme of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The goal of IPEC is the progressive elimination of child labour by strengthening national capacities to address the problem and by promoting a worldwide movement to combat it. The IPEC partner agencies in a country include the ILO's traditional constituents – ministries of labour and employers' and workers' organizations – and other concerned partners in the public and private sectors. IPEC support is given to partner organizations to develop and implement measures that aim to prevent child labour, withdraw children from hazardous work, provide alternatives, and improve the working conditions in non-hazardous and non-exploitative work for older children above the minimum working age.

In late 2000 and early 2001, foreign governments, international agencies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the media reported that children were being trafficked and employed in large numbers and in slavery-like conditions on cocoa farms in West Africa. This heightened concern for these children led to numerous legal and political initiatives and calls to action. For its part, the global chocolate and cocoa industry invited trade unions, nongovernmental organizations and the ILO to start consultations on appropriate action to improve the situation. Since 2001, ILO-IPEC has played an advisory role in the consultative process. It has helped to create partnership structures and it designed and implemented a three-year project: the subregional Programme to Combat Hazardous and Exploitative Child Labour in Cocoa/Commercial Agriculture in West Africa (WACAP).

In 2002, surveys were carried out to clarify the incidence and nature of hazardous child labour in the cocoa sector in the West African countries most directly concerned. These were done by the International Institute for Tropical

Agriculture (IITA) and a report was published in July 2002. IPEC provided advice on these surveys but did not conduct them. The IITA survey results estimated that 284,000 children were engaged in child labour in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria (the four countries researched); with most of them (200,000) in Côte d'Ivoire. The regions and districts with the most significant concentrations of child labour were identified, and as much as possible children in these areas were subsequently targeted for systematic removal from child labour.

In July 2002, the cocoa/chocolate partnership established a foundation in Geneva, Switzerland called the International Cocoa Initiative – Working towards Responsible Labour Standards for Cocoa Growing. Co-presidents, one industry and one non-industry, head the Foundation. Its Board of Directors is composed equally of industry and non-industry representatives. The ILO serves as an advisor to the Foundation.

### 2.1 WACAP

Parallel to the consultative process, in 2002 IPEC launched WACAP. This project had a resource outlay of US\$ 5 million from the United States Department of Labor and an additional US\$ 1 million from the Cocoa Global Issues Group, through the International Confectionery Association. Country-level activities started in 2003 and 2004, and ended in April 2006. WACAP complemented other large-scale, ongoing IPEC programmes to combat child labour and child trafficking in West Africa and in most of the individual countries.

WACAP was based in Accra, Ghana and was implemented in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Nigeria. It combined raising awareness of families and communities; enhancing the capacity of farmers, producers, inspectorates, and workers; removing children



from work and enrolling them in education and training programmes; developing measures to generate income for families; and developing a child labour monitoring and feedback system.

Each of the five countries benefited from a programme aimed at the systematic elimination of hazardous and exploitative child labour in the cocoa/agriculture sector. The programmes all had five principal components:

1. capacity building
2. social protection
3. child labour monitoring
4. awareness raising/social mobilization
5. knowledge base and information

One of the end products under Component 5, “knowledge base and information”, was a series of rapid assessments on child labour in agriculture. In Cameroon, Ghana and Nigeria the focus was exclusively on cocoa. In Guinea, the rapid assessment looked at the agricultural sector in general. For Côte d’Ivoire, a community survey (rapid assessment) on child labour in the cocoa sector had already been

undertaken in 2002 by the IITA. Unfortunately, internal conflict in that country during the project implementation period prevented a repeat assessment by the WACAP partners.

In addition to being documented in each country, the rapid assessments were to be analysed, synthesized, and widely disseminated to the public, the governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations, concerned NGOs, international agencies in the African region, and the donors. The reports provided an exceptionally useful starting point for discussion on the problem in each country. However, not all rapid assessments adhered to the methodology proposed by IPEC, and this has resulted in some difficulties in finding consistent information across the countries.

The purpose of the current report is to review the country-level rapid assessments in a standardized manner and synthesize key characteristics of the methods used, present important results that might help with the design of future action programmes and interventions, and summarize the chief recommendations given.

### 3. The rapid assessments

This report summarizes five documents. It covers three final reports submitted to the ILO that describe rapid assessments on child labour in the cocoa sector (Ghana, Cameroon, and Nigeria) and one final report summarizing child labour in the agriculture sector (Guinea). In addition, one report is included that describes a community survey (rapid assessment) on child labour in the cocoa sector in Côte d'Ivoire. This survey was undertaken in 2002 by the IITA; however, a repeat assessment was not possible. The five main source documents are listed in Table 2.

Because of difficulties encountered in the field and different methods used to conduct the rapid assessments across the five countries, IPEC recognizes that the reports lack validity as a basis for quantitative statistical information

and wide extrapolation. They have nonetheless proved to be extremely valuable within the countries in question for targeting interventions. They have also helped to get key stakeholders to engage in a debate on the issues and focus on child labour in cocoa growing and other agriculture, which are essential steps towards policy action and further quantitative research.

The purpose of this section is to identify key observations, findings, and recommendations made by the five studies in order to shed light on the current state of knowledge of agricultural child labour in West Africa. This chapter also highlights limitations of the studies. Chapter 5 proposes suggestions to overcome problems in future work.

**Table 2: Primary source documents reviewed for the synthesis report**

Country	Document title	Prepared by	Date
Cameroon	<i>Enquête de base sur le travail des enfants dans l'agriculture commerciale/cacao au Cameroun</i>	Etienne Tasse (Jade Cameroon)	Feb. 2004
Côte d'Ivoire	<i>Child Labor in the cocoa sector of West Africa: A synthesis of findings in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP) (with focus on the community surveys conducted in Côte d'Ivoire)</i>	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture	Aug. 2002
Ghana	<i>Report on rapid assessment on child labour in selected cocoa growing communities in Ghana</i>	African Centre for Human Development, Accra, Ghana	Dec. 2003
Guinea	<i>Enquête de base sur le travail des enfants dans l'agriculture commerciale cacao/acajou en Guinée</i>	Bureau d'Etude et Services "CBS"	Dec. 2004
Nigeria	<i>Towards Understanding of Hazardous Child Labour in Cocoa/Commercial Agriculture in Nigeria</i>	Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Federal University of Technology, Akure	Nov. 2004

### 3.1 Synthesis of the rapid assessments

Because the rapid assessment studies and final reports did not follow a consistent format, it was necessary to create a framework to highlight and summarize key aspects of their methods, observations and findings, and explore recommendations in a standardized manner. The synthesis framework is used in this way throughout the remainder of this section, through subsections entitled "Objectives", "Methods", "Observations and Findings", and "Recommendations". Reviewer's comments are brought out in Chapter 4, "Recommendations for future research". Annex II lists the questions that form the template used by the reviewer.

The template questions were asked for each study reviewed. To the extent possible, answers were given based on the information provided in the rapid assessment reports. Where information was not available or was not collected during the rapid assessment, it was noted.

#### 3.1.1 Objectives by individual country

**Cameroon:** The rapid assessment was conducted as a first step towards putting into practice the ILO goals of removing children from abusive working environments and preventing the entry of children who have not yet begun to work into these environments. Specifically, the study sought to define, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the working conditions of hazardous work; the nature and extent of this work; its causes and consequences on the health, education, and psychosocial state of the victims; and to propose alternative solutions that can help put an end to this phenomenon.

**Côte d'Ivoire:** The main aim of the child labour studies carried out by the IITA was to collect and analyse information related to working children and to identify the extent of unacceptable work practices (as defined by the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182) in cocoa production. Two types of investigations were conducted in Côte d'Ivoire: (1) a producers/workers survey for an investigation of labour practices in the cocoa

sector and (2) community surveys to collect qualitative information to supplement the quantitative data obtained through the producers/workers survey. The aim of the community surveys was to get an in-depth understanding of the problem of child labour by probing into its cultural, economic, and social underpinnings through talks with village chiefs, local leaders and other knowledgeable individuals, including farmers and workers.

**Ghana:** The overall objective was twofold: to enhance the understanding of the nature, extent, and causes of child labour and to assess how working conditions affect the development (health, physical, moral, mental) of working children in commercial agriculture in selected cocoa growing areas. The project aimed to determine the size, nature, and gender dimensions of the child labour problem and to provide information about the conditions of work and the nature of hazards and risks to which children are exposed, as well as the impact of these on their health and education. Other stated goals were to determine what alternative economic opportunities or possibilities exist for increasing the family incomes and to identify existing organizations within the districts that can facilitate future interventions.

**Guinea:** The objectives of the rapid assessment were to determine the prevalence of child labour in agriculture and to characterize the conditions in which children work. The study also aspired to identify alternatives and other economic options for families that would allow them to compensate for the income lost by removing a child from work. It also sought to identify organizations and institutions that could participate in solutions for ending child labour.

**Nigeria:** The general objective of the study was to obtain baseline information on the child labour situation by (1) examining the personal characteristics of children being used to accomplish tasks on cocoa farms, (2) determining reasons for the use of child labour in the area and factors that encourage the practice, (3) examining methods of compensation to the child and parents, and (4) estimating the prevalence of the practice of child labour on cocoa farms in the study areas.

### 3.1.2 Methods

This section of the report discusses the methods used to capture information for the rapid assessments. Rather than giving country-by-country summaries, the common features are mentioned together and major differences are highlighted. The discussion covers design issues related to data sources, recruitment procedures, data collection, and major strengths and limitations of the methods employed.

### 3.1.3 Data sources

All the country studies focused on core cocoa producing areas (Guinea also included coffee plantations). Farm owners, farm managers, parents/guardians, sharecroppers, and children were the primary sources of information. Village chiefs, local leaders, school principals and “other knowledgeable individuals” were also cited.

Most of the studies also attempted to capture the views of organizations thought to be particularly knowledgeable about the child labour problem or potential partners for future activities to improve the situation. These included many types of organizations: grass-roots, international, public, private, educational and financial.

### 3.1.4 Recruitment procedures

While some studies mentioned that individuals included in the studies were randomly selected, most people recruited were by convenience sample. For example, one study mentioned that on arrival in their respective villages, investigators asked passers-by and local chiefs for help in locating children and cocoa planters. The study concluded that the choice of an individual is thus random. Another study mentioned that for individuals' interviews, random sampling was used by the researchers who selected four persons for the category of respondents he/she was assigned through the assistance of the opinion leaders. It was done in this manner to ensure that, apart from interviewing the right people (e.g. known to be a parent or a caretaker), there was gender equity and each category of respondent is fairly covered.

Rarely were the recruitment procedures described in sufficient detail to understand how the populations (from which samples were drawn) were constructed. Sometimes old census data were used. Similarly, it was unclear how the difficulties in applying a pre-planned sampling strategy related to the realities on the ground in rural Africa. It was clear, however, that considerable steps were necessary to gain access to and the trust of people to participate (box 2).

As indicated by the experience in Ghana, many time-consuming formalities were necessary to conduct the rapid assessment. The other country-level reports did not go into detail on how the researchers gained access to the selected communities or the individual steps taken to recruit participants, but it is assumed that similar red tape and proper channels exist for studying other rural areas in West Africa.

Most of the recruited people were located near the centre of villages, even though several reports mentioned that many of the plantations were far from the villages and not accessible by road. One report commented that, as soon as the study team arrived in a village, everyone stopped farming and came to see what the outsiders were doing there. This situation made it next to impossible for the study teams to observe work situations for young workers in a typical setting.

### 3.1.5 Data collection

All of the rapid assessments mentioned that both formal and informal methods were used to collect data. Focus group discussion sessions were typically held with different groups such as children, male/female adults, farmers, parents, etc. The sessions were generally reported to be under informal conditions, which made the participants feel relaxed and free to discuss key issues that relate to child labour utilization in the area without being personally threatened. As such, it is possible that findings from the focus group discussions were more objective and characteristic of the broader community and the child labour situation than individual interviews where people were cautious not to say the “wrong things”.

### Box 2: Steps taken to recruit study participants in Ghana

Work commenced at the district level with a visit to the District Assemblies. Officials of the assemblies, such as the District Chief Executive, the District Co-ordinating Director and the Director of Agriculture, were met and briefed on the exercise. They all welcomed the team warmly, expressed their appreciation for the choice of their District for the project, and encouraged the study team to approach them for assistance. The officials also assisted the field supervisors to recruit research assistants, who were trained on the research tools, i.e. the questionnaires. The trips to the selected communities were then scheduled.

With the approval and support of the District Assembly, a two-member team was dispatched to inform the leaders of the selected study communities of the research team's visit and arrival dates and the need for members of their communities to be present and to participate in the study.

At each of the selected communities, the process followed was the same:

- meeting with opinion leaders, who organize members of the community;
- going through the welcome protocol and briefing the community of the mission and the purpose of the survey, as well as the form that it would take;
- breaking the community into three groups of men, women, and children for the focused group discussions (this was done first so that the rest of the community did not lose interest and leave as the individual interviews were done);
- selecting four farm owners, four caretakers, four parents, and four children for individual interviews, conducted after the focused group discussions; and
- thanking the people for their time and contribution and departing from the community.

All the studies included some form of in-person interviews or semi-directed questionnaires. Most were reported to be long, lasting 50 minutes or more per respondent. "Key informant" interviews were also carried out in some studies in order to interact with important people in the communities. It was stated that these people usually gave information on the historical perspectives and trends of child labour in the area, not on the current conditions.

#### 3.1.6 Strengths and limitations

The limitations mentioned above, particularly under recruiting procedures, reflect the difficulty in researching a sensitive and highly publicized subject such as child labour and the fact that many of the plantations are not easily reachable. Thus, it is not clear from any of the studies to what extent they captured the true situation of child labour in cocoa/agriculture, particularly for the most isolated, and possibly most vulnerable, working children. However, these obstacles have been acknowledged in the past by the ILO and others and are the primary reasons why the rapid assessment methodology was developed in the first place – to reach areas where other surveys

and data gathering programmes can not go. In other words, while the research methods are not stringent, given the sensitivities inherent in discussing the topic of child labour, the information is valuable.

The strength of rapid assessments lies in their ability to capture qualitative information that can be used to describe many aspects of the situation of child labour and its relation to other facets of society. The goal is to use the data to design and target interventions to improve the situation. With that said, there are still hurdles to overcome to collect meaningful qualitative information. Some are listed below:

- All of the studies mentioned that the time allotted was too short for real in-depth investigations. It is likely that a lot of unanticipated time and resources were spent going through the proper channels to recruit people, as well as attempting to access remote areas.
- Some of the studies were not conducted during a time of harvest when demand for labour would be greatest; others were silent on the issue.

### Box 3: Difficulty counting child labourers: the experience in Ghana

According to the rapid assessment carried out in Ghana: “In addition, there was difficulty in conducting actual headcount of child labourers, for two main reasons. Firstly, there was always initial denial of the use of children as labourers on the cocoa farms. Most of the respondents indicated that they have biological and familial relationships with the children who assist them on the farm and as such, do not engage them in tasks that jeopardize the children’s development. Secondly, all the hamlets or farmsteads of the selected study communities where the respondents claim some child labourers were living with their employers could not be reached for want of time.”

The rapid assessment made efforts to get an overview of the extent of the problem of children being used as labourers on farms in the communities. Getting an actual count of child labourers in the study communities and surrounding hamlets where some of these children worked was difficult due to time and many other constraints. In addition, no employers would admit having child labourers, even after they were assured that they would not be arrested or charged. In some cases, even children who were clearly working would not admit it. They may have feared they would be punished or sent back to their families if they talked. As a result, the team was compelled to get estimated figures from the focus groups, as respondents gave the impression that they were not directly involved in the practice.

- Researchers in the studies reported not being able to observe tasks conducted by children because the season was wrong or the farms were too far from the villages.
- Cocoa plantations are often very far from villages; researchers sometimes waited entire days for children and planters to return from work.
- Because of nonexistent or poor roads, it was extremely difficult to reach some of the villages in all of the rapid assessments.
- Researchers reported that children and farmers were often reluctant to participate because of the general mistrust of city people (see also box 3).

## 3.2 Observations and findings

This section summarizes relevant observations and findings discussed in the reports. Many of the reports contained numerous pages of text and tables summarizing “quantitative” findings in the form of numbers and percentages. It is not clear, however, what most of these findings represent – the “true” situation of child labour in the study areas or the characteristics of a biased convenience sample of participants. Even with this limitation, some numbers or percentages are mentioned below if they add value to the discussion, particularly if they were generated by focus group discussions. As mentioned earlier, one of the strengths of rapid assessments is their ability to capture qualitative information about a mostly hidden and taboo topic. Important observations and findings that are qualitative in nature make up most of the observations and findings mentioned in this section.

### 3.2.1 The children

*Who are the children included in the studies? Why are they working? What limitations on other activities does work pose for them?*

Most studies attempted to include children from very young (e.g., 6 years) to teens aged 17. One study recruited more girls than boys, but this may have been because it was easier to recruit girls than boys. The IITA survey findings in Côte d’Ivoire indicated that boys are more likely to work in cocoa farming, making up about 60 per cent of the total. The IITA community surveys estimated that four out of ten permanent child workers are recruited through intermediaries. More than one-quarter of them were restricted to staying on the farms.

In Cameroon, the study report mentions various “sources” of child labour and exploitation:

- **Children are mostly native to the region where they are working.** Eighty-eight per cent of farmers interviewed stated that the children working for them were native to that region; other children came with parents who migrated from other regions.

- **Minority ethnic groups are recruited.** In the central region, the report mentions that pygmies are recruited to come and work but it does not state what percentage are children. People from the north-western Bamenda tribe also come to the centre to work.
- **Girls represented a small percentage of the sample of children studied.** In Cameroon, 26 out of a total sample size of 166 children were girls. (The ratios varied greatly by country.)
- **Orphans are particularly vulnerable.** The study mentions that orphans are vulnerable to exploitation because they have no choice. Orphans whose parents owned plantations are obliged to take over the work.
- **Children of older parents are vulnerable.** Children of very old parents are also more likely to work.
- **School enrolment and success are related to working status.** As intuition would suggest, the more hours children worked, the less likely they are to attend or succeed in school.
- **Trafficking was reported.** Trafficked children (those brought from other areas by middlemen) were reported in all of the countries, but constituted a low percentage of the total number of children interviewed. This may be partly because these children are the most hidden and difficult for outsiders to recruit. In Cameroon, 43 per cent of trafficked children interviewed had no day off from work.

Child workers in these studies were predominantly boys.<sup>4</sup> However, the true distribution of girls and boys engaged in cocoa work is not known by these data because the information from the rapid assessments must be limited to the sample itself because they are not representative of the larger population. That is, it is not appropriate to compare the observations by girl/boy across geographical locations or national programmes or to assume that they are in any way representative of the distribution of girls and boys among cocoa farms in the five countries.

On the question of why children work, the high cost of adult labour (which is becoming increasingly scarce because of the migration of adolescents and young men to the urban centres) and poverty are the main factors listed. In Ghana, focus groups also reported that the loss of a parent or both parents, inability of parents to pay children's school fees due to low income as a result of old age, and parents' weakness and inability to work were the main determinants. More than a third of focus groups cited working to gain experience as the reason why children work, and about a quarter of the groups indicated that some of the children work because they are directly or indirectly forced to do so. For example, forced labour appeared to be a major issue in the Amansie West District of Ghana. Other reasons given included lack of parental care, dislike for school, and lack of choice (for those children trafficked from the northern part of the country to cocoa growing areas).

Some male-only focus groups indicated that, "some of the children are orphans who work to cater for themselves, as they have no guardians, while others are bad and stubborn children who work to earn money for themselves." They added that children who are not clever at school are engaged on the farm as they provide cheap labour and get the chance to learn farming as a trade. Responses from the female-only groups added that broken homes and lack of good parenting compel some children to drop out of school to work as labourers. Besides, some children do not want to go to school, and some parents ask their children to work for other people as labourers to earn some income for the family.

Overall, since most farms are family-owned, most child labourers are working on family farms or those belonging to their extended family. Children work mainly for economic reasons and to learn the agricultural trade. The rapid assessment reports stated that children in Africa are expected to help families with household chores (and by extension on family farms).

<sup>4</sup> There is conflicting information in the Nigeria report. Figure 1 in the report shows 65% of children respondents were girls. Table 7 in the same report indicates 68.3% of children respondents were boys.

Because of poverty, families use children instead of hired labour. Also, many owners are aging and less able to work. Because of the cultural respect for age and holdovers from colonial structures, older men are more likely than younger men to own farms. One study mentioned that the children most likely to be exploited on their family farms were from polygamous families. There was no speculation why this happens.

Regarding limited possibilities for other activities – particularly schooling – is discussed in the next section. In some of the studies, most of the children interviewed claimed to have no free time. Distance from homes to farms appears to be an issue, and this situation is exacerbated by the poor condition of the roads between homes and farms. Long work hours probably pose limitations on all activities. Many of the children interviewed reported long working hours, some more than 11 hours per day, but the data did not give a sense of the frequency of long hours of work by location, season, situation of the child, school attendance, etc.

### 3.2.2 Education

*Do working children have access to education? If so, do they attend? How much or how little? Why or why not? What are the limitations? What is the quality of the education they receive?*

Most of the children interviewed by the rapid assessments were registered in school. However, it was noted that their being registered in school does not imply regular school attendance. For example, in the STCP area (Ondo State) of Nigeria, children are encouraged to register in school because of the usual mass mobilization of citizens towards enrolment in school at the beginning of each academic year. During focus group discussions about Ghana, the report authors stated that it was obvious that most of the children who did not attend school or ended at primary school level were female. This is because some of their parents do not believe in sending their female children to school because they said they will later get married and follow their husband.

In Cameroon, it was reported that about a third of working children between 6 and 18 years old in the south-west region attend school and only about a quarter in the centre and south attended. Limitations on school attendance were caused by the inability of families to pay school fees and the fact that there are few schools in some regions, like the south-west. It is not known to what extent the hours required to work cause limited school attendance. However, children who worked full time were less likely than part-time workers to have secondary schooling education and more likely to be illiterate. Most of the illiterate children were girls. For all of Cameroon, it was reported that school attendance for children has recently dropped from 92 per cent to 62 per cent because of the economic crisis. This situation likely reflects greater demand for child labour because children have to work to help their families survive. It was stated that those working on farms not belonging to families can earn between US \$20 and US \$100 per month, but are sometimes only given food or other services.

The IITA surveys found the following:

- 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 per cent school enrolment rate) than children who did not work (64 per cent).
- In Côte d'Ivoire, children of immigrant cocoa farmers were also less likely to be enrolled in school compared with children of local cocoa farmers – 33 per cent and 71 per cent, respectively.
- In all survey areas, girls had lower enrolment rates than boys.

Regarding quality of education, a common concern is the lack of schools available in rural Africa. Many children interviewed said they were not satisfied with their work because they were unable to continue schooling beyond the primary level. Even if working children went to school, they often took a lot of time off during

periods of harvest. Teachers were thus obliged to change their lessons and test schedules to wait for these children to return.

In Ghana, about two-thirds of the focus groups said improvement of school facilities through the posting and maintaining of good, trained teachers and the provision of teaching aids and learning materials would make school attractive and worthwhile in the eyes of parents and children. The point was made that conditions in some of the schools are unimpressive – inadequately trained teachers, insufficient teaching aids and learning materials, and even the use of school children by some teachers as labour on their farm. This issue was also mentioned in Cameroon (box 4).

#### **Box 4: Schoolteachers in Cameroon found to exploit their students for labour**

One shocking situation that the study in Cameroon mentions is that teachers often force students to work on their own plantations or contract out their students for work to local planters during school time. The teachers earn money for the work that the children do. One school director threatened to retire if authorities prohibited this practice. Other local authorities claim not to know about the practice.

### **3.2.3 Employers**

*Who are the family members of children that work and what do they do? Who organizes/negotiates the work? How many entities are there for what types of work? What problems or opportunities does this cause?*

Although this is an important topic of “employment relationships,” little information was provided in the country-level reports other than that most children worked for parents because it was expected of them and their families needed to save money on labour. Although the numbers are not clear, there is consistent evidence that some children also

worked on an “agent’s” and/or a “relation’s” farm. That is, they were brought by an agent or relative to a village from other areas.

The Cameroon report mentioned that families seem to determine mainly what work is done. The report does not make a direct connection, but the children who are working on family farms are probably more likely to feel obligated to their families and less likely to leave the farm to attend school. However, as mentioned specifically in the case of the southern region, children who leave school in the northwest and go to the south to work are more likely to be exploited and abused because they are outsiders.

### **3.2.4 Hazardous work/injuries and illnesses<sup>5</sup>**

*What work do children do? Who does what? What activities are considered “hazardous” work? What are the most common work-related injuries and illnesses?*

According to the IITA study authors, the application of pesticides was the most dangerous task from the standpoint of occupational safety and health of child cocoa workers. It appears that this is a common activity among children. Other hazardous tasks included clearing underbrush with a machete, using a machete to open cocoa pods, and transporting excessively heavy loads.

In the Cameroon report, the authors defined hazardous work by the age of the worker, the type and duration of the activity, compensation, and safety on the job. Thirty per cent of the child workers interviewed were under 14 years old; 49 per cent worked between 6 and 11 hours per day. Children were engaged in activities such as clearing brush, planting seeds, spraying pesticides, pumping well water and transporting the harvest. It was noted that most child labourers who worked on farms during school hours did so when more hands were required to harvest, break the cocoa pods, and transport them home.

<sup>5</sup> Rapid assessments separate from those reviewed in this report, which focused specifically on occupational safety and health (OSH), were recently completed in the same five countries in Africa. See *Paper No. 2: Safety and health hazards* of this series.



The study stated that some tasks are not dangerous if there are protective measures and if children do not work excessive hours, but excessive was not defined. Other tasks affected the health of the children over the long term. Further, since adults have priority in African society, they often wore protective clothing while the children did not.

The most hazardous tasks discussed were as follows:

1. **Mixing and applying pesticides:** Children prepare and spray pesticides that come into contact with their skin, are inhaled, remain on their clothes, etc. The study lists various health effects of pesticides.
2. **Cutting down large trees to clear land and weeding the plantation (every three months):** Children are exposed to snake and insect bites and injuries from use of machetes.
3. **Splitting cocoa pods to extract the beans:** Forty per cent of children interviewed considered this to be the most dangerous activity.

4. **Transporting heavy loads:** Children often walk several kilometres with to carry heavy loads of cocoa beans back to the village.

Because of cultural divisions of labour (men are more likely to do the better remunerated work), the study in Cameroon mentioned that few girls work on cocoa plantations. When they do, they are more likely to do lighter tasks. However, the report highlighted that sometimes girls performed tasks considered to be hazardous, but it was not clear what these tasks were.

According to interviewees in Ghana, cuts to the skin were the major acute (immediate) injury or danger associated with the cultivation of cocoa. This was the first injury or danger that all focus groups (100 per cent) mentioned in Ghana. Snake and insect bites were the next major danger that 65.8 per cent of the groups mentioned. It must be noted however, that while insect bites were common, snakebite was mentioned more as a danger than a frequent occurrence. Other work-related dangers, injuries, or diseases included being pierced by thorns (mentioned by 60.3 per cent), waist and general

body pains (58.5 per cent), and fractures and sprains as a result of slipping and falling (55.7 per cent). Other dangers, injuries, and diseases mentioned were skin diseases, rheumatism, tetanus, and chemicals getting into eyes during the spraying of pesticides.

Most of the studies noted that most farmers have never heard of minimum age requirements or were unaware of the concept of safe working conditions.

Focus group discussions across countries pointed to the most common physical injuries as cuts from machetes or from contact with sharp sticks and twigs on the farm and the sharp edges of harvesting tools. Some children reported sustaining machete injuries while breaking pods, others while weeding the farm, and some reported injuries from machetes during transport from farm to the home.

Among the children respondents, about a third claimed that skin irritation was common. Reports associated this with pesticide use. Many children also complained of body aches arising from long distance trekking and carrying heavy loads. The level of involvement in carrying farm produce, water, or other materials to and from the farm may account for the body aches and sprained neck experiences reported.

### 3.2.5 Social programmes and services

*What other existing social programmes or services do children/families/employers have access to? Do these programmes or services present knowledge useful to them? Do they use them?*

The country-level rapid assessment reports were generally silent on the topic of existing social programmes or services, although the Cameroon report mentioned that AIDS is having a big impact on the adult working population. Regarding safety and health training and professional health care services, it mentions the following:

- Little if any work-safety and first-aid training are available.
- Lack of sterile medical facilities causes injuries to be aggravated.

- Local vegetation/plants are often used to treat wounds, but wounds are often not cleaned before treatment.
- Superstitions often play a part in lack of effective treatment (some children thought that drinking urine can cure a snake bite).

The message from the assessments appears to be that very few social programmes or services are available to rural farmers. Furthermore, when children or adult workers are injured there are few if any options for even basic medical treatment.

### 3.2.6 Regulatory environments

*What enabling environments or regulatory environments are mentioned? Are regulations enforced or effective?*

Many national laws and regulations against child labour exist in all the countries, and some are listed by the reports, but there is no discussion of regulatory enforcement. This is likely because such laws are difficult to enforce or the will to enforce them is lacking. Social security and compensation for injuries are virtually nonexistent. The reports imply that the division between a child's chores and forced labour is unclear and that household duties often extend to the farms and plantations. Students are expected to take part in cleaning and maintaining their schools, and teachers sometimes extend these tasks to plantation work.

The Cameroon report states that the Confederation of Union Workers of Cameroon (CSTC) has made recommendations to the government for better support structures for child cocoa plantation workers and protection against exploitation. The report also states that Synapcao, the association of cocoa producers in Cameroon, does not recognize the problem of exploitation and states that the children on the plantations are being "trained." However, Synapcao does recognize that poverty often forces children to work and recommends improved infrastructure such as free schooling and credit services by local banks.

### 3.2.7 Stakeholders and potential partners

*Who are the stakeholders mentioned? Are there potential partners for future activities to address issues related to child labour in the cocoa/agriculture sector?*

A few of the studies included analysis of stakeholders and potential partners. For example, in Cameroon the report mentioned possible further partnerships with organizations to finance projects already being organized by the Ministry of Agriculture; the African Development Bank; the National Programme of Agricultural Research, and the Professional Agricultural Organization. It also listed possible participation by other partners, including: the World Bank (for the organization of producers), the European Union (for support of infrastructure and professional agricultural organizations), the French Agency for Development, the United States (for funding of community projects), and Germany (for anti-poverty programmes). The study mentioned programmes already underway in various villages of each region, such as financing further education for child labourers, supporting other commercial activities such as fishing, and training in agriculture. Local and national NGOs and other organizations for partnerships in agricultural and infrastructure development were also listed.

A component of the rapid assessment conducted in Ghana specifically targeted officers in relevant institutions and government departments. The activities that the officers indicated their organizations undertake are:

- advising farmers to send their children to school and against using children as labourers;
- advocating for farmers to adopt modern and scientific ways of farming;
- organizing workshops and seminars and conducting social education on children's rights in communities;
- advocating for the increased expenditure of the District Assembly to check child labour practices;

- assisting farmers to fight the swollen shoots disease, which destroys cocoa trees;
- identifying alternative and quick income generating ventures;
- organizing workshops, seminars, and health education on topical issues; and
- meting out severe punishment to offenders who are reported as employing child labourers.

It was not clear from the report how effective any of these services were. Other country-level reports contained tables or appendices listing organizations that may play a role in future child labour programmes.

### 3.2.8 Strengths and limitations

*What are the strengths and limitations of the observations and findings? Are there reliable quantitative data that show how many children are included in what categories? Can the sample and other research issues substantiate the data?*

For the most part, the quantitative summaries given in the reports are not useful for estimating the prevalence of child labour in the communities studied or the broader populations involved in cocoa/agriculture. Readers should use caution when quoting reports of how many or what percentage of children are working, conducting hazardous work, or being trafficked or attending school. The poor definitions of these subjects, inaccurate census data, widespread denial of any problems, the fact that this type of research by its nature is done by outsiders who disrupt normal village life, and the fact that the most vulnerable child labourers are probably the most invisible to outsiders make quantitative estimates questionable. Nevertheless, the qualitative findings described by specific tasks that children do, their satisfaction with their work, and parents' opinions about their children's work do shed light on the magnitude of the problems and may give more insight than quantitative data into designing programmes and promoting policy and enforcement to address the underlying causes of child labour.

### 3.3 Recommendations made by the rapid assessment authors

This section presents some recommendations that were made by the authors of the individual reports to improve the child labour situation in the countries and region surveyed. The purpose of the recommendations in the context of rapid assessments was to give donors, government officials, NGOs, and the many other stakeholders interested in improving the child labour situation starting points to develop action programmes to create conditions that are believed to eventually improve the situation. Examples from the reports include:

- Address the ethnic and socio-cultural background of children and their parents/guardians/employers, in the design of interventions.
- Use radio as a way to reach farmers and children, as it is the main medium through which adults and children get information.
  - Children prefer to listen to the radio in the morning (6.00 a.m.) before they leave for school or the farm and in the evening (6.00 p.m. onwards) when they returned from school and finish their house chores. Children also indicate their desire to listen to the 6.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. news bulletin, so that they can be abreast with ongoing events in the country.
  - Men listen to the radio virtually throughout the day as most have portable sets that they carry along to the farm. Most, like the children, enjoy the morning 6.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. news. Many indicated that 7.30 p.m. (after their evening meals) is the time that they concentrate on listening to radio programmes.
  - Women also listen to programmes throughout the day. The majority of them said they like the 12 noon and 6.30 p.m. programmes. They indicated that with their portable radio sets, which they carry along to the farm, they can listen to programmes of interest, even while weeding or cooking.
- Adopt a “participant observation” research approach to collect data on the true child labour situation. One report noted:
 

*This is because consciously or unconsciously, the perpetrators of the practice are aware of the inappropriateness of the practice and, coupled with the current upsurge of child rights campaigns, they hardly own up to allow counting of children in such situation. The obvious reason may be due to fear of prosecution and/or being denied access to cheap and pliable labour. Nevertheless, with the Participant Observation style of research, a community member who is sympathetic to the plight of the children can be sensitized and trained to collect data on the number of child labourers and other related relevant data, without drawing much attention to himself, thus not altering the normal ways of interacting and farming in these communities. The basis of this recommendation is that it was noticed and probably normal that, with the arrival of “strangers” (research teams), the community members stop farming activities to interact with the team. Normal practices can therefore not be observed. Secondly, in discussing such sensitive issues like child labour, they tend to be extra cautious in what they say to ensure that it is not to their disadvantage and in fact, some of them sounded defensive.*
- Any attempt to improve the situation of child labourers should be viewed concurrently with the improvement of the situation of their parents or guardians. As a starting point, the following were suggested:
  - Credit facilities should be made available and accessible to the farmers to enable them to acquire the relevant resources, such as adult labour, for their farming activities.
  - Scholarships should be provided for needy children in the cocoa growing areas. Even if they decide to go into farming in the future, they would be more likely to approach cocoa farming in a scientific way that would allow them to acquire capital and support their families.
  - Schools in the cocoa farming communities and rural areas in general should be made attractive. This means improving educational facilities (adequate furniture, materials and teaching aids) and ensuring that good teachers are posted and retained.

- Communities should be helped to develop adequate social amenities and economic infrastructure, such as opening rural areas for economic and social development and thus making the place attractive. These improvements should help curb the increasing migration of adult youth (18-35 years) who are needed to provide labour for agriculture.
- Programmes should focus on better use of natural resources, technology transfer, training, improved (inexpensive) protective equipment, and support for and partnerships with local groups of farmers.
- Issues of land tenure and ownership structures are important factors to consider when developing interventions.
- In Ghana, there are two major systems – Abunu and Abusa, which explains how the final seasonal income from a cocoa farm is shared between a farm owner (employer) and a tenant farmer or farm manager (caretaker). Under Abunu, the employer gives land to a tenant farmer who wants to grow mostly food crops and the farmer cultivates the crops. After harvest, he shares the produce with the landowner – half for each of them. Under Abusa, a system usually used in cash crop production, the employer tends the crop until it matures and then gives it to a caretaker who maintains the farm, while the employer continues to provide supplies such as chemicals and other insecticides. The caretaker farmer settles on the farm and grows food crops

that he eats, selling the excess to earn additional income. When the product (e.g., cocoa) is harvested, the produce is shared into three parts. The landowner collects two-thirds while the farmer takes one-third.<sup>6</sup>

- Most women are not supposed to own land, though they form the majority of peasant farmers. They therefore have to use the land belonging to their husbands or go to their families to acquire part of family land. This issue may affect potential interventions targeted to women and girls.

While the design of future activities requires delving deeper into the issues and options available, the above recommendations made by the authors provide a backdrop that can be useful in understanding local conditions and constraints. It is worthwhile also to add a few recommendations that were not made explicitly by the rapid assessment reports, but which were implied frequently in the text. These include the following:

- work with employers/farmers on creating better working conditions for adult workers;
- work with schools to prevent situations that support child labour, including teachers and principals who promote it;
- work with communities to mobilize support against children missing school in order to work and against child trafficking; and
- promote advocacy and media campaigns that work to change the attitudes towards child labour and acceptance of it.

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the two major systems – Abunu and Abusa – exist also in Côte d'Ivoire.

## 4. Recommendations for future research

Because of the high visibility of the child labour problem in West Africa, the remoteness of the villages and farms where children work, and many other factors alluded to above, the rapid assessments reviewed here were challenging endeavours that were conducted under difficult circumstances with high expectations and limited time and resources. Overall, they were a successful exercise and the final reports that described them included useful information. However, there are still many unanswered questions.

There are future opportunities for research to expand the knowledge base and information available to improve the child labour situation. Recommendations are given in this section using the current rapid assessments as the foundation, based on the answers recorded for Questions 25 to 28 (Reviewer's Comments) in the template described in Chapter 3, and the author's opinion. The discussion below highlights some of the gaps in knowledge and suggests how rapid assessment reports could be better structured.

- Future studies should strive to more thoroughly define the working conditions and varying circumstances of children, i.e. those who only assist parents on farms, are hired locally, are recruited by intermediaries from other areas, are non-family members engaged fulltime, can not leave farms on their own, or are from migrant or sharecropping families.
- Information is lacking on the social and economic factors that characterize the organization of agriculture in the communities where cocoa is grown, the organization of work, differences between perceived needs of farmers and children vs. the "real" needs of outsiders, social and health services provided to communities, potential language barriers, living conditions, the organization of the home, the role of girls, and so on.
- Research is needed that links child labour to the quality of educational services (e.g., types and numbers of schools, accessibility, number of children per class, skill level of teachers, teacher absenteeism rates, instructional practices, and costs to attend), as well as the potential outcomes of education. It might also be worthwhile to investigate the level of or delays in teacher pay and the links these issues have to teachers' use of plantations and student labour as supplemental income. The current rapid assessments shed little light on these relevant issues.
- Follow-up research is needed which covers a larger timeframe and more deliberately focuses on working and employment conditions. Interviews and site visits to farms, children's homes, and schools should be conducted during the harvest time as well as non-harvest time.
- Follow-up investigations are needed to understand the relationship between adult deaths due to HIV/AIDS and child labour to determine if child labour is increasing and how this might be addressed. HIV/AIDS is mentioned in some of the rapid assessment reports as a factor in the reduction of the adult workforce and the increase in the number of orphans or single-parent children. Future studies should look at the interrelatedness of this and other diseases and health issues on the demand for child labour. They should provide conclusions or recommendations about how to address the problems.
- Research is needed specifically to give recommendations for policy-makers and project designers on how to improve data collection and research capability and to use the information gathered to make data-driven decisions.
- Assessments are needed which include an in-depth discussion of how grass-roots organizations could work on a local level with individual families and schools. In this effort, existing organizations and programmes can be described by emphasis areas, services provided, knowledge of occupational safety and health, and enforcement of legislation on trafficking of children. They should be examined as potential partners and stakeholders for future activities and their strengths and limitations highlighted.

- Research reports need to be structured to clearly describe the methods and data used. For example, the sample selection process should be thoroughly described. Once individuals are selected, how are they approached? What per cent refuse to participate or are not located? Why did this happen? What problems were encountered in the field and how should original study designs be altered to address realities on the ground? The current rapid assessment reports were generally silent on these important issues.
- Follow-up qualitative research is needed in order to increase the sample size and depth of knowledge. For example, while access to child labourers can be difficult, more children in each region should be interviewed than was done in the current assessments, and samples should be more diverse to represent consistencies and similarities in relationships to work (i.e., children working with their families, children who are trafficked or working on their own, if possible), etc.

Future knowledge-base and information research projects should consider analyzing the child labour situation using approaches and strategies that could be most successful in reaching vulnerable populations, changing working conditions, institutionalizing change within practice and within policy, and sustaining this change over time. That is, what information might be useful to future designers of action programmes and intervention projects? Below are a series of research questions for consideration.

### 4.1 Research questions for programme design

The questions outline some of the information that would be helpful for future programme design and expansion.

1. **Target groups:** For which target groups would future programmes be most successful? Why? For which groups would future programmes be less successful? Why?
2. **Sustained increase in demand for improvements:** How can initiatives result in a sustainable increase in demand for improvements in conditions among working children?
3. **Sustained delivery of services:** How can initiatives result in sustained delivery of services, assistance and/or information that help improve conditions of working children?
4. **Diversification of types of services:** How can initiatives result in a diversification of the types of services, assistance, or information being delivered that help working children improve their conditions?
5. **Expansion of the numbers and types of organizations:** How can initiatives result in expansion of the numbers and types of organizations that are actively promoting improvements in conditions in the formal and informal agriculture sector in a sustainable way?
6. **Sustained improvement among participants:** How can initiatives result in sustained improvement in conditions or productivity among farmers, individuals, or families?
7. **Sustained improvement among non-participants:** How can initiatives result in sustained improvement in conditions or productivity among other enterprises, individuals, or families?
8. **Significant improvement for vulnerable groups:** How can initiatives result in sustained improvement in conditions for particularly vulnerable groups of working children?
9. **Significant impact on the “worst” problems:** How can initiatives make a significant impact on the worst forms of child labour (including providing a rationale for why these conditions are considered the “worst”)?
10. **Changes to policy or regulatory framework:** How can initiatives result in changes to the policy or regulatory framework to improve conditions for child labourers?
11. **Changes to other aspects of the macro environment:** How can initiatives result in changes to other aspects of the environment that affect conditions for children working in the formal and informal agriculture sector?

12. **Achievement of broader social goals:** How can initiatives have an impact on the achievement of broader social goals, including poverty reduction, gender equality, education, and business development?
13. **Participants in programmes acting as change agents:** How can participants in programmes act as change agents, resulting in the spread of conditions improvements to other farms, children or families? What would be the characteristics of these participants and how would the spread of improvements take place?
14. **Design issues for specific target groups:** To what extent can future programmes tailor their strategies or technical content to specific target groups on a gender basis, specific sub-sectors or according to the size of farms? Why or why not? For what types of improvement? Can tailoring increase the effectiveness of these programmes? How?
15. **Roles of institutions:** What types of institutions (government, employers' and workers' organizations and other civil society) can take on which roles in future programme? What would be the strengths and weaknesses of various institutions vis-à-vis the roles they perform?

## 5. Discussion: Connecting policies and programmes

Most countries, including the five studied here, have ratified international conventions and promulgated numerous laws and regulations that address issues related to child labour. This indicates real progress in establishing national support for the elimination of child labour. However, there is still a wide discrepancy between the intentions of governments at the national level represented in new policies and implementation and enforcement on the ground in rural areas where most of the work is conducted in the informal sector. According to the ILO:

*The informal sector consists of small-scale, self-employed activities (with or without hired workers), typically at a low level of organization and technology, with the primary objective of generating employment and incomes. The activities are usually conducted without proper recognition from the authorities, and escape the attention of the administrative machinery responsible for enforcing laws and regulations.<sup>7</sup>*

Some could argue that the cocoa sector, which is a main export crop and source of foreign currency and employment in the region, is not part of the informal sector. Cocoa production in these countries is supported by a large infrastructure of agricultural extension and advisory bodies, marketing boards, cooperatives and so on. Just because many of the production units are small doesn't make it informal.

Nonetheless, based on the country-level reports, the farmers themselves are very poor, mostly smallholders, with little access to the world beyond their villages. There was mention that children often helped carry bags of cocoa to the villages to sell – presumably to buyers connected with the infrastructure to sell on international markets. The “large infrastructure” could be said to end at the common selling points in the villages; while the actual farm work is very informal and unregulated. Even most

sharecroppers on large farms appeared to operate independent of any government (or other) scheme that could be used on a large scale by a child labour organization or programme to reach them. However, the rapid assessments did not discuss this issue directly.

Policies that build support and regulations around the elimination of child labour are important in order to create an enabling environment for social change. However, despite predominance of smallholders in the cocoa-growing areas in West Africa, they appear to escape the enforcement of laws and regulations. Thus new policies and programmes supporting the traditional models of enforcement by governments or international bodies may not be enough. International conventions and government policies and programmes, which are usually top down, are created to set the tone and provide the backdrop for non-traditional approaches to be developed and tested. In the case of child labour in cocoa farming and other agriculture, complementary non-traditional bottom-up approaches are most likely best developed and promoted by grass-roots organizations that know their constituents and can promote local level advocacy and social change.

Similarly, according to the data available, particularly the IITA surveys conducted as part of the Sustainable Tree Crops Program, close to three hundred thousand children are child labourers in cocoa farming in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. It is likely many more work in other agriculture sectors. Because the scale of child labour in agriculture is so high, programmes aimed at removing children from the worst forms of child labour one child at a time (and counting the numbers removed as a measure of success) must be complemented by relevant policies and measures that urgently address the educational needs of working children and the poverty

<sup>7</sup> The Informal Sector, International Labour Organization, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific: Bangkok. Available at [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/feature/inf\\_sect.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/feature/inf_sect.htm). [accessed March 2006].

alleviation and income-generating needs of their parents. Only then is there likely to be sustainable impact on the overall situation.

One of the complicating factors related to eliminating child labour is the apparent low level of demand locally for change or the lack of vision for alternatives without the use of child labour. Rapid assessments such as those summarized here can be used to give insights and to identify ways to generate greater local demand and to create better incentives for participation in the social change process.

Programme designers need to better understand and distinguish the difference between outsiders' interpretations of local needs and the problems of child labour, and what local populations currently experience and interpret as priority needs on the ground. While outsiders may fundamentally be appalled by child labour, local people may not feel that the conditions of eliminating child labour respond to the real needs that they experience in terms of poverty and other social factors. In fact, the two could be interpreted as at odds, as is supported by the rapid assessments. In many places, these reports confirmed a lack of local acceptance for child labour policies, making them incompatible with international expectations for change. Policy reform can set the stage for regulation and elimination, but without local demand and compliance, it will be difficult to make the policies work. In sum, finding locally driven ways to create incentives, build demand, and demonstrate ways that eliminating child labour will not be in opposition with locally felt economic needs is important to build the support for the goals of policies in the long term. A concentration on policies which advocate the rights of the child may not be enough.

Another gap between policy and programmes currently exists in the area of education. Addressing the problems of education quality and access is an important factor for minimizing the child labour problem in agriculture. Much more attention needs to be given in the rapid assessments to the quality and outcomes of education in the areas studied. If the quality of education is extremely poor, strong barriers to access exist, or there are no felt benefits to participate in schooling,

the incentives to sustain participation beyond the life of a project will obviously be low. A programmatic strategy to increase educational quality and links to outcomes in the form of future work and income can be coupled with other strategic methods of changing other behaviours that support hazardous child labour. The international donor community has supported the link between education and the elimination of child labour. This area needs to be further developed and researched in terms of its effectiveness and gaps in quality, local incentives and local demand.

Further connections between policy and programme design are also needed in the area of occupational safety and health. Currently, there are no clear criteria or guidelines for determining which specific tasks or activities (e.g., mixing and spraying pesticides, carrying heavy loads, or breaking cocoa pods open with machetes), or circumstances (e.g., hours worked each week or access to clean food, water and first aid) comprise "hazardous work" for young workers in cocoa/agriculture, particularly in the context of ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182. This is partly because much of the work children do in agriculture is also considered hazardous work for adults by outside experts, but for the people that grow up doing the work as a way of life, the perceived hazards and risks are generally low, or considered to be normal. While there are many reasons to suggest that children are more vulnerable to hazardous work than adults, one of the difficulties lies in identifying and separating the things older youth can do safely from the more hazardous ones and then expecting that dividing lines will be drawn in the farmer's field where no one is looking. Training programmes can be developed to attempt to educate farmers and children on safety and health hazards and other issues related to hazardous work, but if there is no perceived need to change behaviours, the demand for such programmes will be low.

Donors (governmental development and aid agencies, private sector contributing to poverty alleviation programmes), international agencies (including the UN), governments of countries where child labour on farms is a major concern, employers' organizations and trade unions, and practitioners (programme implementers)

developing strategies to address the problem of child labour in agriculture should focus on stimulating creative strategies from grass-roots up to change the situation when developing programs and policies.

Changing behaviours on the farms regarding safe work practices and inappropriate tasks for children need attention. Alternative income generation and access to micro-credit for families of child labourers are areas with widespread support by the development community. All of these actions, and more, are likely helpful and important, but until the farmer perceives the need to prevent children from doing hazardous work (either for economic, ethical, or moral reasons), many interventions with good intentions will fail in the long run.

The WACAP programmes attempted to overcome these barriers by engaging parents and employers, both directly and indirectly, to improve the situation of working children in cocoa and agriculture on their own.

WACAP used the observations and findings from the country-level rapid assessments to do the following:

- undertake targeted awareness-raising for families and communities;
- enhance the capacity of farmers/producers to recognize hazardous work situations and improve it in business-friendly ways;
- intervene in effective ways to remove children from the most hazardous work and facilitate their enrolment in education or training programmes;
- improve the income-generating capacity of families; and
- establish an active community-based child labour monitoring and feedback system to effectively drive new programmes with intelligence.

The process for change is iterative and ongoing, and progress is being made.



## 6. Conclusion

Rapid assessments are intended to provide relevant information quickly and cheaply to form the basis of action programmes and intervention projects. They are not meant to be quantitative research studies that describe child labour across large geographical areas or generalize to the broader population. The rapid assessments reviewed here provide realistic and useful information on selected cocoa growing and agriculture communities in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, and Nigeria. Nevertheless, significant gaps remain in our

understanding of the characteristics of these workers and their circumstances.

The purpose of this paper was to highlight what has been learned by conducting the five rapid assessments. Follow-up research is needed that delves deeper into what we have learned from these assessments and the implementation of child labour projects in these geographic areas. Follow-up research is crucial to understand the situation more thoroughly and find ways to combat child labour and eliminate its worst forms.

## Annex I: Key concepts and terminologies

Key concepts and terminologies related to child labour that are used by the ILO Conventions and throughout this document are defined below.<sup>8</sup>

### 1. Who is “a child”?

Article 2 of the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182) states that “the term ‘child’ shall apply to all persons under the age of 18.” This is the definition that is followed in this document.

### 2. What is “child labour”?

Child labour is work that harms children’s well-being and hinders their education, development and future livelihoods. Child labour is work which, by its nature and/or by the way it is carried out, harms, abuses, and exploits the child or deprives the child of an education.

### 3. What are “the worst forms of child labour”?

While child labour of both boys and girls takes many forms, the elimination of the worst forms of child labour as defined by Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182 is a priority. These are as:

- (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- (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 as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

### 4. What is “hazardous child labour”?

Subparagraph (d) of Article 3 cited above describes what is referred to as hazardous child labour (HCL). HCL is work in dangerous or unhealthy conditions that could result in a child being killed, or injured (often permanently), and/or made ill (often permanently) as a consequence of poor safety and health standards and working arrangements.

Advice for governments on some HCL activities which should be prohibited is given in the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 (No 190), which accompanies Convention No. 182:

Paragraph 3. In determining the types of work referred to under Article 3(d) of the Convention, and in identifying where they exist, consideration should be given, inter alia, to:

- work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse;
- work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces;
- work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads;

<sup>8</sup> Most of the content for this chapter is from the ILO document entitled: *Tackling Hazardous Child Labour in Agriculture: Guidance on Policy and Practice. Guidebook 1: User guide including background and policy information.* [version: Final Draft, 8 Feb. 06].

- work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health;
- work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer.

Under Article 6 of Convention No. 182, governments are required to:

- design and implement programmes of action to eliminate as a priority the worst forms of child labour and
- consult with relevant government institutions and employers' and workers' organizations, taking into consideration the views of other concerned groups as appropriate.

Convention No. 182 calls for international cooperation and assistance for putting an immediate end to the worst forms of child labour through:

- priority action to determine which hazards bring work into the category of the worst forms;
- the establishment of monitoring mechanisms and the implementation of programmes of action;
- the adoption of measures for prevention, rehabilitation, and reintegration; and
- particular attention to children at special risk and the situation of girls.

## 5. Children's rights with regard to work

All adults and children are entitled by international conventions to certain rights by virtue of being human, and it is recognized that children have rights of their own, including the right to work, from a certain age, in a safe and healthful workplace environment where hazards have been identified, risks are assessed and appropriate prevention or control measures are put in place. As with adults, they also have a right to know about the dangers and risks to their own safety and health and the consequences that working may have on their

education and future. They should learn how to protect themselves, know which laws exist specifically for their protection, and know to whom they can turn for help. Young workers should also have the right to refuse dangerous work tasks and conditions and should receive workers' compensation in the event of work injury or illness.

## 6 Other terminology associated with the use of the word "child"

As noted in Section 3.1, Convention No. 182 states that "the term "child" shall apply to all persons under the age of 18." However, there are other subcategories, based on age, that are also relevant to action on child labour.

Young workers are female and male adolescents below age 18 who have attained the minimum legal age for admission to employment and are therefore legally authorised to work under certain conditions. The ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No.138) stipulates that ratifying States fix a minimum age for admission to employment or work. Under this Convention, the minimum age for employment or work should not be less than 15 years, but developing countries may fix it at 14. A number of countries have fixed it at 16.

This stipulation does not mean that young workers should be engaged in work where the OSH hazards and risks are high, and efforts must be made to ensure that young workers are safe. In general, girls and boys aged 13 to 15 are permitted to carry out "light work" under the ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138. Article 7 states that national laws or regulations may permit the employment or work of persons 13 to 15 years of age on light work which is:

- (a) not likely to be harmful to their health or development, and
- (b) not such as to prejudice their attendance at school, their participation in vocational orientation or training programmes approved by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received.

Article 7, Paragraph 4 of the same Convention allows developing countries to substitute the ages of 12 and 14 for 13 and 15 in Paragraph 1 above.

Clearly, child labour does not encompass all work performed by girls and boys under the age of 18. Child labour is not children doing small tasks around the house, nor is it children participating in work appropriate to their level of development that allows them to acquire practical skills. Millions of young people legitimately undertake work, paid or unpaid, that is appropriate for their age and level of maturity. By so doing, they learn to take responsibility, they gain skills, they add to their families' and their own well-being and income, and they contribute to their countries' economies. Rather, child labour is harmful to children and does not contribute to their well-being.

## 7. Relevance to the cocoa and agriculture sectors

The Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184) makes specific reference to young workers and hazardous work which is consistent with the two child labour Conventions No. 138 and No.182. Article 16 of Convention No. 184 states:

*The minimum age for assignment to work in agriculture which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to harm the safety and health of young persons shall not be less than 18 years.*

But Article 16(3) states the following:

*National laws or regulations or the competent authority may, after consultation with the representative organizations of employers and workers concerned, authorise the performance of hazardous work as from 16 years of age on condition that appropriate prior training is given and the safety and health of the young workers are fully protected [i.e., the risks are low].*

## Annex II: Template for the rapid assessments synthesis

The template is based on the following questions:

### Objectives

1. What are the objectives stated in the report?

### Methods

2. How was the rapid assessment designed? (describe in general terms)
3. What geographic areas were chosen for the study and why? (briefly summarize if mentioned)
4. What are the data sources or targeted groups?
5. How did the study select and recruit children, parents, farm owners, local organizations, or other participants?
6. How were data gathered? (surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc.)
7. What are the strengths/limitations of the methods used?

### Observations and Findings

8. Who are the children included in the study? (orphans, migrants, girls/boys, ages, minority tribes, etc.)
9. Why are the children working? (family work, trafficked, hired locally to non-family members, recruited by intermediaries from other areas, etc.)
10. What limitations on other activities does the work pose for children? (can't leave premises, can't go to school, etc.)

11. Do working children have access to education?
  - a. If so, do they attend? How much or how little? Why or why not? What are the limitations?
  - b. What is the quality of the education they receive?
12. For whom do the children work? (large plantations, smallholders, parents, relatives, etc.)
13. What work do children do? Who does what? What activities are considered "hazardous" work?
14. To what other existing social programmes or services do children/families/employers have access? Do these programmes or services present knowledge useful to them? Do they use the services?
15. Who are the family members of children that work and what do they do?
16. Who organizes/negotiates the work? (crew leaders, parents, large farm owners, etc.) How many entities are there for what types of work? What problems or opportunities does this cause?
17. What enabling or regulatory environments are mentioned? Are regulations enforced and/or effective?
18. Who are the stakeholders? Are there potential partners for future activities to address issues related to child labour in the cocoa / agriculture sector?
19. What are the strengths/limitations of the observations and findings? (Are there reliable quantitative data that show how many children are included in what categories? Can the sample and other research issues substantiate the data?)

## Recommendations

20. What recommendations are made by the report? Are there specific recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, or donors on how to address the problem of child labour in cocoa growing/agriculture?
21. Did the report discuss the types and feasibility of potential interventions to improve the situation of young workers?
22. Are there potential partners for future activities to address issues related to child labour?
23. What gaps in knowledge and opportunities for future research did the report mention?
24. What are the strengths/limitations of the recommendations?

## Reviewer's Comments

25. What are the key lessons learned by this Rapid Assessment that could be potentially helpful to the design of future interventions/studies?
26. How could the assessment be improved to gather more complete or more useful information?
27. What are the major gaps in knowledge and opportunities for future research?
28. Do you have any other comments or observations?

Answers to questions 25 to 28 (Reviewer's comments) were used to complete Chapters 5 and 6 of this report, "Recommendations for future research" and "Discussion: connecting policies and programmes," respectively.



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