



# Impact Brief

S U S T A I N A B L E T R E E C R O P S P R O G R A M

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## CHILD LABOUR INVESTIGATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS IN THE COCOA SECTOR

Field studies conducted by the Sustainable Tree Crops Program (STCP) of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), in 2001/2002, explored labour practices and institutions in the cocoa sector of West Africa, with special attention to child labour issues following media allegations of child labour trafficking and slavery on cocoa farms in Côte d'Ivoire. Annually, about two million tons of cocoa beans is produced in West Africa, primarily through the toils and travails of small family farms using labour-intensive production technologies. From 1980 to 2000, output more than doubled, led principally by six percent annual growth of the industry in Côte d'Ivoire where production grew from 400,000 tons to 1,400,000 tons. The increased labour demanded by this rapid expansion, which occurred during a period of historically low world cocoa prices in the 1990s, put a strain on labour institutions and practices as producers were forced to reduce production costs.

Contrary to some media reports of widespread forced child labour, the surveys conducted in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Cameroon and Nigeria found that adult family labour was the most frequently reported source of labour (see synthesis report at [www.treecrops.org](http://www.treecrops.org)). Family children made a significant contribution to this labour pool, particularly in Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon. However on larger farms, the study found that an increasing proportion of producers contracted seasonal and casual labour and employed sharecroppers to meet additional labour demands. The vast majority of producers, who engaged contract labour, hired adult workers. A small minority of producers hired adolescent teen workers mainly from Burkina Faso, who all claimed when interviewed to have voluntarily chosen to work in order to help their poverty-stricken families.

Instead of human trafficking or slavery, the study did reveal issues related to: (i) the employment of family children in potentially hazardous tasks; and (ii) potentially negative consequences when education is foregone in order to help on the family farm. While recognizing the biases generated by the high media

### Cocoa Farm Facts:

- The large majority of labour on a cocoa farm is provided by the family household
- Less than 1% of cocoa farms employ paid adolescent teen workers
- Child slavery and trafficking in the cocoa sector are uncommon criminal offences
- Family children are exposed to potentially hazardous tasks on cocoa farms
- For every 1,000 farmers sensitized on child labour in Farmer Field Schools, 210 children are voluntarily removed from hazardous work on cocoa farms
- The more children work, the less likely they go to school
- Cocoa producing households have higher school enrolment rates than non-cocoa producing rural households.

exposure, the study concluded that child slavery and trafficking in the cocoa sector were relatively uncommon criminal offences in the cocoa sector of West Africa that required criminal investigative solutions and not trade-distorting measures such as cocoa import restrictions or consumer boycotts that would unfairly penalize the innocent majority of small family farms in West Africa struggling to earn their livelihoods.

### FFS Sensitisation Reduces Hazardous Child Labour

Regarding the employment of family children in potentially hazardous tasks, three have been highlighted by the International Labour Organization, which under improper supervision could pose unacceptable hazards for children. These are:

- The carrying of heavy loads (usually sacks of cocoa beans)
- Assisting in pesticide application (including water

fetching, mixing, spraying and clean up) and

- Field clearing using machetes.

In order to sensitize farmers on these issues, learning exercises were developed and incorporated into the STCP farmer field school (FFS) curriculum. Ghana was the first country to include this messaging in the FFS curriculum, with farmers sensitized in 2003 field schools. To assess the effectiveness of the sensitization approach, surveys of 2003 participants on their practices in 2004 were conducted.

The study revealed statistically significant declines in the proportion of children undertaking field clearing with machetes, pesticide application, and heavy load transport following the participation of a household member in the FFS extension program (as compared to control farmers, see Table 1).

Sensitization efforts appear to have had their most significant effect on the participation of children in the oldest (12 to 14 years) cohort. For the youngest

(6-8 years) and middle (9-11 years) cohorts, there were no statistical differences between FFS-trained households and control households in the participation rates of children for any task. This is mainly attributable to the small sample size and the low participation of younger children in cocoa farming.

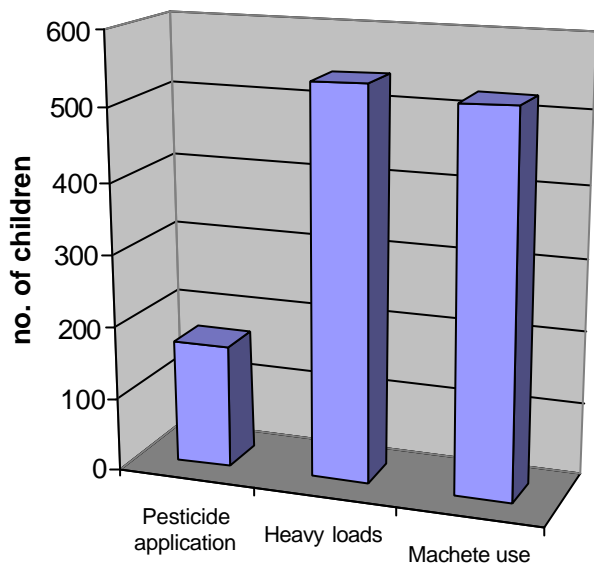
The FFS sensitisation efforts in Ghana on child labour have been conducted with over 2,800 cocoa producers caring for an estimated 4,800 children (aged 6 to 14 years). Extrapolating from the survey findings, the estimated number of hazardous tasks undertaken by children between the ages of 6 and 14 has been reduced by over 1,100 on a voluntary basis (Figure 1). The largest absolute declines were in heavy load transport and the use of machetes, while in relative terms, the number of children participating in the application of pesticides was half again as frequent among FFS farmers as among control farmers. On average, there is a reduction of about 11 children employed in hazardous tasks per field school.

**Table 1.** Participation of children (ages 6 to 14) in hazardous labour tasks by Farmer Field School (FFS) participant households (no. of children = 375) and control households (no. of children =181) in Atwima District, Ghana.

<b>Participation rates of children living in household of:</b>			
<b>Task by age cohort</b>	<b>FFS-trained farmer</b>	<b>Control farmer</b>	<b>Prob*</b>
<i>Machete clearing</i>			
6 to 8 years	8.9%	3.9%	0.252
9 to 11 years	17.3%	21.2%	0.596
12 to 14 years	29.3%	47.7%	0.013
All cohorts	17.3%	26.5%	0.012
<i>Pesticide application</i>			
6 to 8 years	3.7%	2.0%	0.548
9 to 11 years	4.5%	9.1%	0.283
12 to 14 years	3.4%	10.8%	0.048
All cohorts	3.7%	7.2%	0.076
<i>Heavy load transport</i>			
6 to 8 years	14.1%	13.7%	0.951
9 to 11 years	33.3%	33.3%	1.000
12 to 14 years	47.4%	67.7%	0.009
All cohorts	30.1%	41.4%	0.008
<i>No participation in tasks</i>			
6 to 8 years	83.7%	82.4%	0.825
9 to 11 years	62.8%	54.5%	0.375
12 to 14 years	44.8%	27.7%	0.023
All cohorts	65.3%	53.0%	0.005

\*Probability that child labour participation is independent of farmer field school sensitization (Chi-square test of independence, 1 df); i.e. there is no significant difference where there is a probability greater than 0.05.

*Source: STCP FFS adoption survey 2005.*



**Figure 1.** Estimated reduction in children employed in hazardous tasks among Ghanaian Farmer Field School participants, 2003 to 2005.

Source: 2005 STCP FFS adoption surveys.

### Children Living on Cocoa Farms with Higher School Enrolment Rates

Besides the issue of hazardous tasks, the other major child labor concern was the negative association found between child labour and school enrolment. In a survey of 1,500 cocoa producing households in Côte d'Ivoire, among school age children not employed by their parents, 64 percent were enrolled in school versus only 34 percent enrolment rate among children who assisted their parents with all aspects of cocoa production.

While the negative impact of participation in cocoa farming on children's school enrolment is a cause for concern, it is balanced by the positive association found between children living on cocoa farms and school enrolment. In another survey which interviewed both cocoa and non-cocoa rural households, children living in cocoa households had significantly higher school enrolment rates than the non-cocoa households (42% of school age children enrolled among cocoa households versus 36% among non-cocoa producing households) (Kouadjo *et al.* 2002).

Clearly, increasing school enrolment rates in rural areas requires a multi-sector focus and should not be viewed as a problem unique to the cocoa sector.

Issues to be addressed include accessibility, school calendar harmonization with the agricultural calendar, and on the demand side, the development of job skills needed for stimulating and supporting rural economic growth.

#### Reference cited:

Kouadjo, Jean Marc, Yaya Keho, Rosine Addy Mossine, Kobéhi Guillaume Toutou. (2002). Production et offre du cacao et du café en Côte d'Ivoire. Rapport d'enquête. Sustainable Tree Crops Program, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture. (<http://www.treecrops.org>).

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