



Results of ICI's Member Reporting Exercise – 2023

September 2024



International
COCOA
Initiative

Background

Child labour in cocoa is a complex issue, linked to the realities of rural poverty. Most of the cocoa in West Africa is grown by smallholder farmers, who face issues such as land scarcity, food insecurity, limited access to quality education, lack of access to drinking water and inadequate health services. Because of these multiple root causes, no one actor alone can solve child labour. All parties, including governments, the cocoa industry, civil society organizations, and farmers themselves have a role to play. (For more information on the definition of child labour and how it differs from forced labour please see the box below.)

The **International Cocoa Initiative (ICI)** is a non-profit organization, tackling child labour and forced labour by uniting the forces of the cocoa and chocolate industry, civil society, farming communities, governments, international organisations and donors. ICI innovates, catalyses and supports the development, implementation and scale-up of effective policies and practices that promote child rights and that prevent or remediate child labour and forced labour.

The implementation of Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS) is one approach that has been found to be effective in tackling child labour in cocoa¹. Originally developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), these systems were adapted for the cocoa sector by the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) and its members beginning in 2012. Since then, they have been put in place by many companies and organisations working in the cocoa sector and have been significantly scaled up in recent years. These systems are designed to identify, address, and prevent child labour. They are built around trained CLMRS agents who visit households, raise awareness on the dangers of child labour, and identify children engaged in child labour. If a child is found in child labour, they are recorded in the system and support is provided. Support can include help to access quality education, support for farmer livelihoods, or women's empowerment and is targeted to the needs of the child, the family and/or the community.

Child Labour: Child labour is defined by the International Labour Organization as “work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development”. (ILO Conventions 138 and 182 refer to child labour.) Not all work done by children is classified as child labour. For instance, children carrying out light, non-hazardous tasks on the family farm for a limited period of time, under supervision, and without compromising their schooling, is considered as acceptable child work.

However, when activities are hazardous, such as carrying heavy loads or using sharp tools, working too many hours, or the work interferes with a child's schooling, this is considered child labour.

Forced labour: Forced labour is defined by the International Labour Organization as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily.” Cases can often involve deception and manipulation, such as workers doing work they did not originally agree to, having their identity papers taken from them, or their wages withheld, in addition to physical violence or its threat.

For children, forced labour is defined as working because of a penalty (or the threat of one) from someone other than the parent. This could be a threat to the child or to the parent. At times children are forced to work because their parents themselves are in forced labour.

The reporting exercise

Each year, ICI members report details of their activities to tackle child labour in cocoa. This exercise has been designed to support the drive for rigour and transparency in the sector, recognize efforts currently being made and motivate further action. Reporting includes elements such as the coverage of CLMRS or equivalent systems within supply chains in which they are active, the number of children found in child labour, the support being provided, and the work being done to strengthen local and national systems in cocoa-producing countries.

The following results are from the reporting season October 2022 – September 2023². They are aggregate figures and reflect the collective efforts of [ICI members](#) to date on a selection of activities. All ICI members who support activities in the field are reporting. Please note, this report is based on figures provided to ICI by its members.

These figures should not be taken as a reflection of the work of the sector as a whole, as they do not include data from organizations that are not part of ICI (or are not supplying an ICI member).

Main results

Over 1 million households in West Africa are covered

Thanks to the collective efforts of ICI civil society and industry members, over 1 million households and 1.4 million children were covered by Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems by the end of September 2023. These systems raise awareness about child labour; actively identify children at-risk; provide support to children and families; and follow up with children to understand their changing needs and measure impact.

“Covered” by a CLMRS means that the risk of child labour in each household has been assessed, either through an in-person monitoring visit or systematic analysis of the household’s risks based on recently collected data. This compares to just over 700,000 households in the previous year (the 2021/2022 cocoa season). The scale up of such systems is in line with ICI’s strategy and key strategic objectives. These systems are a key part of companies’ human rights due diligence approaches and help identify, address and prevent child labour in their supply chains. In Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana, systems currently cover just over half of the estimated 1.8m cocoa-growing households (total number of cocoa-growing households based on CCC and COCOBOD data³⁴). Building on this strong foundation, it will be important to continue progress and accelerate scale up.

Such systems cannot solve child labour alone, but they play an important role; and complement other efforts such as investment in social protection, quality education and healthcare, led by governments with support from other stakeholders including the private sector, international donors and civil society organizations. We must therefore continue our collective efforts to support the development of an enabling environment in cocoa-producing countries and ensure all stakeholders continue to work in a collaborative manner.

2 Independent external auditor, PwC, has provided limited assurance on the International Cocoa Initiative’s member reporting process for 2024 (covering the previous cocoa season ending 30 September 2023). This assurance covers the suitability of the design of the reporting process and of the related controls implemented by International Cocoa Initiative.

3 [Côte d’Ivoire-AIP/ “Le système national de traçabilité permet de retrouver l’historique des fèves de cacao et cerises de café, depuis la plantation jusqu’à l’usine” \(Conseil du café-cacao\) - AIP - Agence Ivoirienne de Presse](#)

4 [COCOBOD ON COURSE TO ACHIEVE GOALS OF GHANA COCOA TRACEABILITY SYSTEM \(GCTS\)](#)

Over 540,000 children received support

Through these systems, over 540,000 children have received support to help prevent or remediate child labour. This is significantly higher than the number of children found in child labour (around 215,000 – see details below) as support activities are often preventative (they are not only put in place in response to identified cases), and can be provided at community level (such as the construction of a new school) thereby benefiting many more children than only those identified in child labour.

Over 180,000 children identified in child labour received support, representing about 85% of children identified in child labour. This percentage is up from the previous year (the 2021/2022 cocoa season), in which 61% of children identified in child labour had received support. The systems aim to support all children identified in child labour, but in some cases the delivery of support can occur after the close of the annual reporting period.

Examples of support that can be provided to help children in vulnerable situations includes targeted awareness raising and counselling, helping to cover school costs (uniforms and books), supporting children to get birth certificates (required to access secondary education in Côte d'Ivoire), investing in education infrastructure, cash transfers, and the development of alternative income generating activities for cocoa farming households. Some children and families receive multiple forms of support.

15% of children covered by these systems were identified in child labour

Within these systems around 215,000 children were identified in child labour, representing about 15% of children covered. Once identified, support can be provided to help these children stop engaging in child labour and improve their situation.

As systems mature, they get better at identifying children at risk as monitors become more experienced. The identification rate has increased when compared to last year (cocoa season 2021/2022), reflecting greater visibility into labour conditions and allowing more children to receive support. Therefore, it is important to continue to invest in training monitors and improving monitoring techniques particularly in newer or rapidly expanding systems, to ensure they are identifying children in child labour correctly. This may lead to an increase in identification rates in the future. Finding child labour is the first step in tackling it.

38% of children no longer in child labour after two follow-up visits

Even after receiving support, it is not always easy for a child to stop working definitively, and sometimes children who have stopped working may start again. This is why it is important to conduct regular follow-up visits to check how children are getting on and determine whether further support is needed. Data suggests that looking at results from two consecutive follow-up visits is a better measure of whether a child is “out” of child labour, than just one.

Based on a sample of systems where data on two-follow up visits was available, we see that systems implemented by ICI members helped about 38% of children found in child labour to stop working.

While these results suggest that ICI members’ efforts are having a meaningful impact on children, they also underline that no one approach can eliminate child labour alone. Changing behaviour and social norms is challenging, takes time and can only be sustainable in an enabling environment. Efforts by ICI members to implement systems to prevent and address child labour are one part of this but will never be enough alone. These efforts must be accompanied by government policies and investment that help protect children and their families, including access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and social protection.

As members have been focusing much of their efforts on scaling the systems to cover and support more children, not all systems have been able to perform two follow-up visits at this time. The calculation of children “no longer in child labour” is based on a smaller set of data that includes only those systems for which reliable data on two follow up visits is already available – a sample of 47,000 children identified in child labour.

ICI members are supporting local and national stakeholders to strengthen child labour prevention and response

Data from the 2022-2023 Members Reporting exercise show that 71% of systems to prevent and address child labour had operational links with local or national authorities, and 49% of systems reported data on child labour to national authorities. 62% of ICI members invested in, or conducted activities to support, local NGOs, community or farmer organisations to prevent and address child labour, and 48% invested in, or conducted activities to support, local or national authorities to tackle this issue.

All parties, the cocoa and chocolate industry, governments, civil society organizations and cocoa farmers themselves have a role to play to tackle child labour. It is vital that all stakeholders work together.



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