



2008

Cocoa Labour Study in Ghana (2007/2008) June 2008

Policy Brief

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

MINISTRY OF MANPOWER YOUTH AND
EMPLOYMENT (MMYE)

NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE
ELIMINATION OF WORST FORMS OF
CHILD LABOUR IN COCOA (NPECLC)

Within the past decade, the issue of unacceptable labour practices has become a growing concern within cocoa-producing countries, cocoa-consuming countries, and international organizations. Concern over the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) and Forced Adult Labour (FAL) on cocoa farms led to the signing of the “Harkin-Engel Protocol” in 2001. The agreement calls for governments of West African cocoa-producing countries, the chocolate industry and other major stakeholders to establish a “public certification” program that will document the state of the worst forms of

child labour in their particular cocoa sectors.

In response, in 2006 the Republic of Ghana established the National Programme for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour in Cocoa (NPECLC), which seeks to reduce the worst forms of child labor to the barest minimum in the cocoa sector by 2011. The 2007 Cocoa Labour Study in Ghana is a significant step in this process.

The objectives of the 2007 survey are to: identify sources, types and periods of labour needs in Ghana’s cocoa production; to document incidence or otherwise of the unconditional worst forms of child labour in this sector; and to document incidence or otherwise of forced adult labour in Ghana’s cocoa sector.

The research represents six regions and 15 administrative districts in Ghana in which 60 percent of the country’s cocoa is produced.¹ It was preceded by a pilot study in 2006. The protocols for this research are improved versions of those used for the pilot study.

What are the Worst Forms of Child Labour?

The unconditional worst forms of child labour include practices such as slavery, compulsory labour, bondage, prostitution, and pornography. Also included in WFCL is work that is hazardous or harmful or interferes with a child’s education. Opinions differ on what constitutes hazardous work on a cocoa farm. To address this concern, NPECLC has developed a Hazardous Activity Framework which spells out the hazardous conditions of some cocoa related activities, including the relationship of the duration that a task is performed. This highlights activities which children should not perform and suggests a framework of acceptable work.

Just as important is an understanding of **child work**. This includes activities performed by a child which is not harmful and does not interfere with schooling. Such work includes helping parents care for their home and business in a way that contributes positively to their development and the well-being of society. In Ghana, working on family farms and with family enterprises is seen as part of the process by which children traditionally are trained for adulthood.

¹ The research summary focuses on the conditions under which children work on Ghana’s cocoa farms. The face-to-face interviewing started in December of 2007. Probability sampling procedures were used to select the areas and households to be sampled. Much of the analysis is based on interviews with 3,452 children (age 5 to 17 years) who are part of the family of a cocoa grower. The study team also interviewed over 1,700 household heads who operate a cocoa farm and 1,391 adult cocoa farm workers

To enhance its credibility, the research was conducted under the general supervision of the Technical Working Group on Child Labour in Ghana's cocoa sector. It was sponsored by NPECLC, which is a programme of the Government of Ghana's Ministry of Manpower, Youth, and Employment. The research findings provide important, relevant and timely information along with policy recommendations.

The following sections highlight the key findings of this study. The complete report, which follows this executive summary, contains considerable detail on the history of cocoa farming in Ghana, findings from the pilot study, research methods used for this study, and analyses on various research themes. The scope of the 2007 study is much larger than the pilot study. The 2007 study represents more regions (six versus four for the pilot study) and is based on more interviews (6,716 versus 1,555 interviews for the pilot study). On comparable questions, the findings of the 2007 study were consistently comparable to the 2006 pilot study.

Key Findings:

Cocoa farming is largely a family enterprise in Ghana.

Most of the producers surveyed are owner-operators (84%) as opposed to tenant farmers or caretakers. Cocoa family farms in Ghana average six acres in size and cocoa farmers own or operate an average of two farms. These are small family holdings and children commonly help out. High labour cost of adult farm labour in the cocoa farming communities often necessitates the use of children to complement adult labour on the farm.

Children living on cocoa farms are living with their parents and going to school.

Children on cocoa farms live with one or both parents (90%). Socially acceptable reasons are given for those who are not living with a parent. Among the ten percent who are not living with a parent, most live with a relative. The reasons for living away from parents are likely to be for convenience to school (22 %), better schooling or upbringing (17 %), a family disruption (16%), or to assist with chores (16 %).

Children living on cocoa farms attended school in the past two weeks (92%). On Schooling is reported as the primary occupation of 90 percent of the children living on cocoa farms.

While involvement in school is high, over half of the children are judged to be non-literate (54%). Even though this figure is high and needs to be improved, it reflects the national average literacy rate of 57.9% (www.ghana.gov.gh/cia world fact book). There

in those households. An additional 104 community level interviews were completed. The survey work was supplemented by 66 focus group discussions with children, adults, and community leaders.

are challenges with a lack of school buildings, availability of teachers, adequate furnishings, and supplies of textbooks.

Less than half of children in cocoa farm households currently do cocoa farm work.

Children Involvement in cocoa farm work is not universal. The question was asked in several ways about participation in cocoa farm work. When asked about participation in cocoa farm work during the past two weeks, slightly fewer than half (48 percent) say they did. Participation increases with age (from 39% for 5 to 12 year olds, to 64% for 13 to 14 year olds, and 71% for 15 to 17 year-old children).

When children were asked to indicate the specific cocoa farm activities they did during the 2006-2007 season, 29% said they did one or more of the tasks (1,013 out of 3,448 respondents).

A large majority of working children are engaged in acceptable work.

When and how long children work is important in determining whether or not work interferes with schooling. According to the survey, 23 percent of all children living on cocoa farms do some type of farm work or other work after school hours every school day, 1 percent of all children do this for four or more hours every school day. While half of all children work on weekends (on the farm or elsewhere), nearly one out of four children (23 percent) reported working four or more hours on weekends. In addition, 2% reported working four or more hours every day of the week.

Acceptable work intensity levels, as defined by the NPECLC Hazardous Child Labour Activity Framework (HAF), allow a child to combine cocoa farm activities with other work (i.e., household chores) without negative impact on schooling or undue health risks.² The study shows that 81 percent of the reports of cocoa farming activities during the 2007-2008 season were at an acceptable work intensity level; 14 percent were at a medium work intensity level, which has the potential to have a negative impact; 5 percent of the reported cocoa farm activities last season were done at high intensity, which could be described as hazardous cocoa work for children without respect for the nature of the work..

² As part of the survey, 998 children reported the number of hours and days they worked per week on specific cocoa farm activities during the 2007-2008 season, reporting on a collective total of 28 cocoa-related farm activities. This information helped identify instances of acceptable, medium, and high work intensity.

- Acceptable work intensity: Working 1-3 hours daily for 1-5 days per week, or 4-6 hours daily for 1-2 days per week.
- Medium work intensity: Working 1-3 hours daily for 6-7 days per week or working 4-6 hours daily for 3-5 days per week.
- High work intensity: Working 4-6 hours daily for 6-7 days per week, or 7 or more hours per day for any number of days.

Restrictions on personal freedom or abuse of children who live in cocoa farming households.

A variety of questions probed for instances of servitude or abuse. Few cases were found. In 3,452 interviews no children were identified who were in debt bondage.

In 12 cases, teachers were beneficiaries of work, a potential abuse of position. One case was confirmed of a girl working in commercial sex activities. Upon further investigation, this child was found to be pregnant and her boyfriend has accepted responsibility.

One-sixth (17 percent) of children have experienced spanking, which was typically administered by parents (83 percent) at home (94 percent) for not performing household chores (64 percent). Few reports of spanking were related to cocoa farm work (5 percent).

Some children living apart from their parents felt they were not free to visit them (18 percent), primarily due to financial or travel reasons. Children living apart from a living parent typically received visits from them (74 percent).

Children who work on cocoa farms can be involved in hazardous activities.

Community surveys and focus groups acknowledge that some children engage in hazardous activities including handling agrochemicals and using cutlasses.

For example, spraying of insecticides is clearly a hazardous activity. Among the 1,013 children reporting that they engaged in cocoa farming activities during the 2006/2007 season, 15 individuals said they sprayed insecticide (less than 2 percent of children working). The children were more likely to fetch water for spraying (81 percent).

Generally speaking, the survey found that the cocoa farm activities with high involvement of children are of the non-hazardous variety. These activities include gathering and heaping of pods (83 percent participation), scooping of beans (51 percent), carting fermented beans (45 percent), weeding and thinning (39 percent), and holing and planting of suckers (31 percent). This accounts for most of the involvement of children on the cocoa farm.

Working without adequate basic protective clothing is the most common hazardous condition, reported by 29 percent of children working on cocoa farms last season. The other most common hazardous activities include using a cutlass for weeding (13 percent), being present during spraying (9 percent), breaking cocoa pods (8 percent), carrying heavy weights (7 percent), harvesting overhead cocoa pods with harvesting hooks (5 percent), and a child working alone in isolation (4 percent).

Involvement in potentially hazardous work typically increases significantly with the age of the child. The exception is working without protective clothing which shows minimal variation across the age groups, indicating this is a universal problem.

In terms of actual injuries, most of the 234 injuries reported by all children surveyed over the previous two weeks occurred at home (33 percent), at school (20 percent) or in transit to school, home or farm (11 percent) while 16 percent occurred while working on the cocoa farm. The remainder occurred while working on another crop farm or in some other places.

Cocoa Farm Adult Workers

Among adult cocoa farm workers, forty-four alleged during interviews that they are working against their will. Follow-up investigations however proved otherwise (see below).

This number includes family members who feel a social responsibility to work (spouse/child/ relative), even if they would prefer to not work on a cocoa farm. However, the research did identify 23 workers (out of 1,391 adult workers) who indicate they have to work to redeem a family debt owed to the farm owner. In addition, three respondents indicated they are in a forced marriage (2 women) or ritual servitude (1 man).

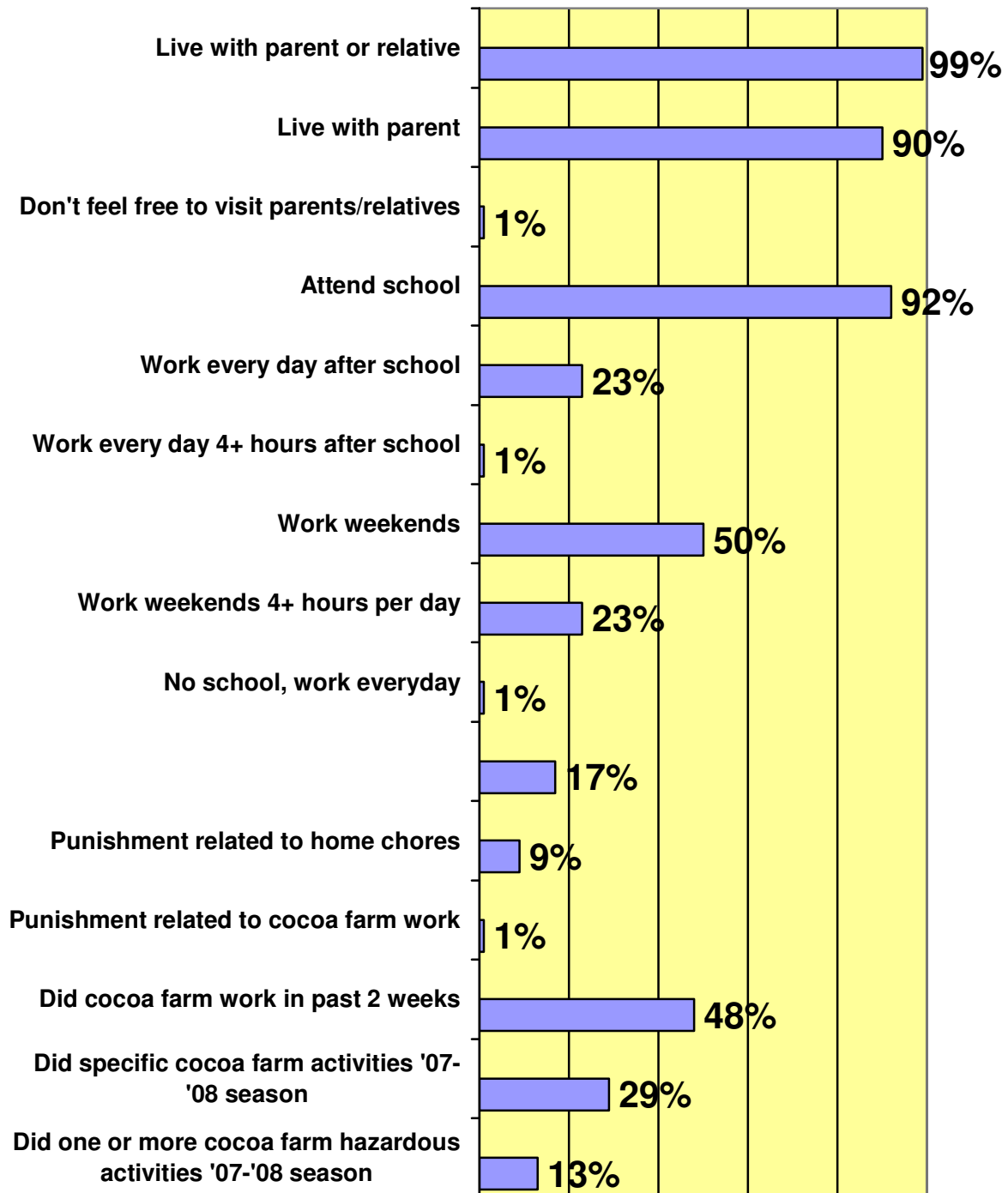
Eleven percent of adult workers felt they would have some difficulty leaving their jobs. Most of this difficulty is attributable to external factors or family commitments. However, 2 percent of all adult workers indicated they are bound by an agreement or contract.

Forced Labor Follow-Up Research

The response team did extensive additional research to clarify the status of the 46 survey respondents (44 adults, 2 children) identified by the original interviews as being in forced labour situations. Their conclusion is that the alleged cases of adult workers working against their will were not substantiated.

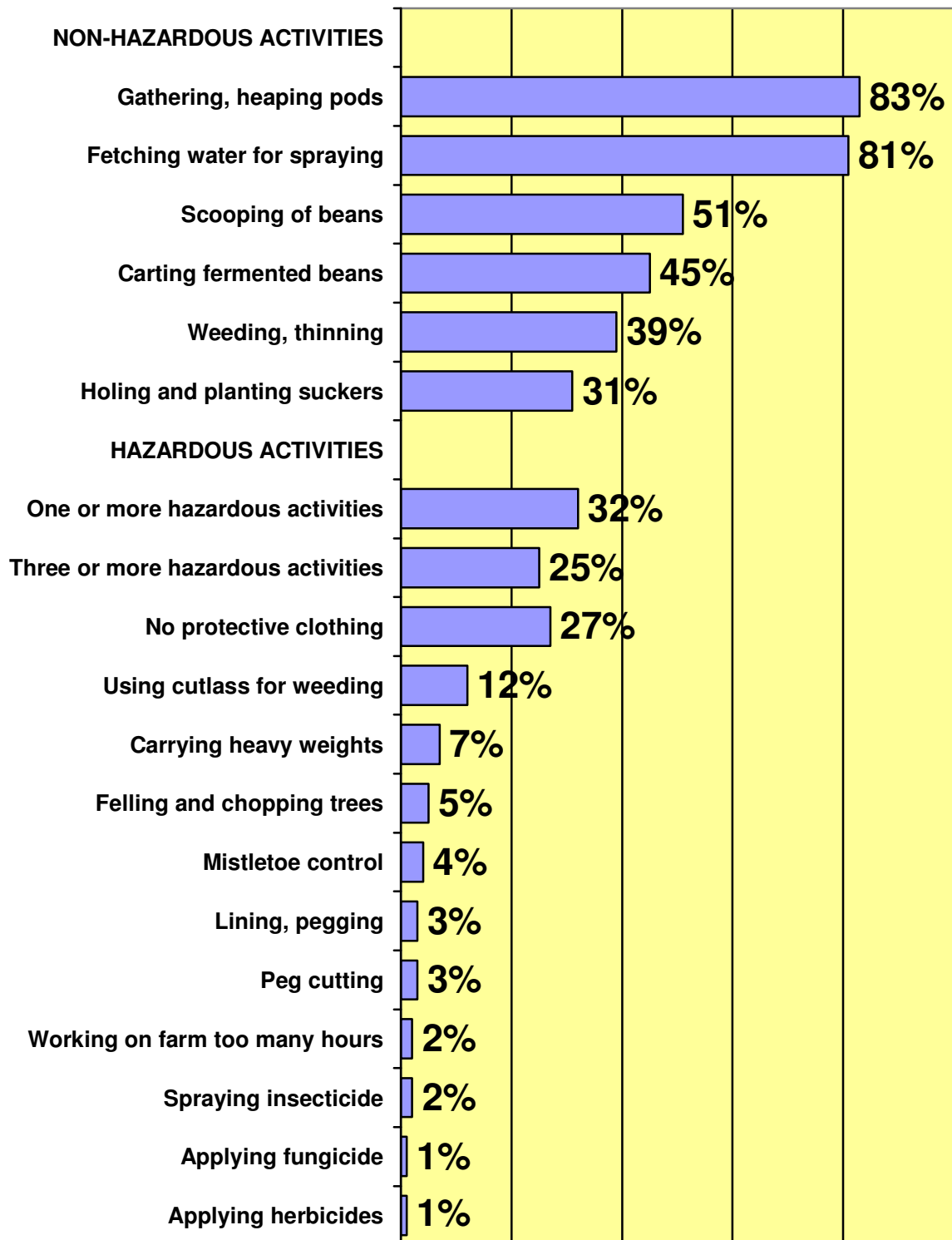


Profile of Children who Live in Cocoa Farm Households



2007 percentages are based on results of a survey of 3,452 children (5 to 17 years of age) who live in cocoa farm households in Ghana. In-person interviews were conducted in December 2007 on behalf of the Ghana Ministry of Manpower, Youth, and Employment.

**Selected Activities of Children who Engaged in Cocoa Farm
Activities in 2006-2007 Season**



Percentages based on 1,013 children who said they engaged in specific cocoa farm activities during the 2006-2007 cocoa season (29% of all children living in cocoa farm households).

Policy Recommendations

Further steps need to be taken that protect children from hazardous work on cocoa farms in Ghana.

The findings of the study have implications for policy makers in terms of dealing with child labour.

The data from this study shows clearly that a small proportion of children are engaged in hazardous cocoa farm activities. Ignorance on the part of parents may be the reason for these problems. There is, therefore, the need for a comprehensive sensitization of cocoa communities on occupational safety and health as well as national laws against the use of children.

In the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP), modules could be developed on cocoa cultivation to encourage youth into cocoa farming and provide them with employable skills and a livelihood.

Children who work on Ghana's cocoa farms are part of a sociocultural phenomenon, with children commonly working on weekends and holidays. A worrying development however, is the extent to which they are involved in work that may be considered hazardous. The circumstances that lead to this include the difficulty of finding affordable adult labourers to get the work done during busy seasons and cultural traditions of having children work on the family farm. Policies and resources are needed to address each of these areas.

To address the adult labour shortage, programs are needed that provide credit facilities to help farmers fund increased mechanization of the most hazardous work, reducing reliance on manual labour.

To address the activities that are hazardous to child workers, stakeholders have reached a better common understanding of what are acceptable and tolerable risk standards for intervention as determined in the Hazardous Child Labour Framework (HAF). It is recommended that the process of national legal endorsement should be expedited.

The socioeconomic situation of the farmers suggests the need for the involvement of children in farming, sometimes even to levels that may be hazardous. Any intervention therefore must look at the broader socioeconomic conditions and include measures such as providing credit to farmers, improving schools, increasing road access, and improving community level infrastructure (water, electricity, and housing).

Education of community leaders and farmers is also needed on safety topics, how to reduce the risk of hazardous activities, the need for schooling, and help in securing protective devices (as well as education on the importance of using them).