

# OLDER CHILDREN AT RISK OF HAZARDOUS CHILD LABOUR IN GHANA'S COCOA-GROWING COMMUNITIES<sup>1</sup>

## SUMMARY

In Ghana's cocoa-growing communities, older children aged 15 to 17 are most at risk of hazardous child labour. Limited opportunities to attend senior secondary school<sup>2</sup> or Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) mean that older children instead engage in cocoa farming, where they are at risk of hazardous child labour involvement. Higher levels of educational attainment play a critical role in reducing both child labour and household poverty.

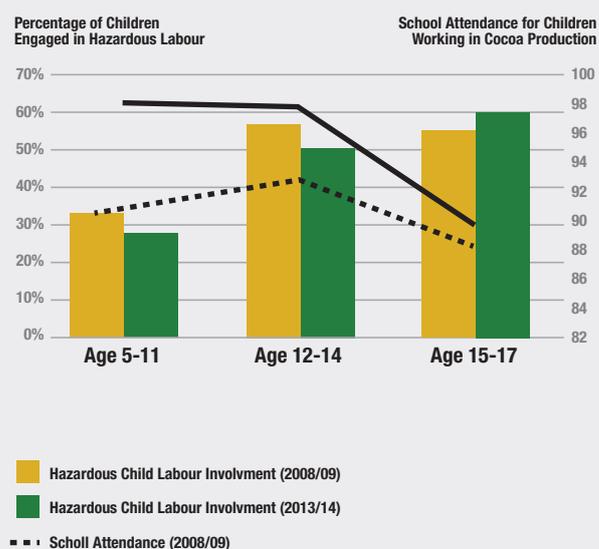
## OLDER CHILDREN MOST AT RISK OF HAZARDOUS CHILD LABOUR

Child labour intensifies with age in Ghana's cocoa-growing communities; older children are most at risk of, and more likely to be engaged in, hazardous child labour. **59.8% of children aged 15 to 17 working in cocoa production are engaged in hazardous child labour**, compared to 50.7% of children aged 11 to 14 and 27.5% of children aged 5 to 11. Children aged 15 to 17 were the only age group that experienced an increase in hazardous child labour involvement between 2008/09 and 2013/14 (Tulane University, 2015).

## OLDER CHILDREN LEAST LIKELY TO ATTEND SCHOOL

While hazardous child labour increases with age, school attendance diminishes. **Children aged 15 to 17 have the lowest school attendance rates of all age groups.** They are also the only age group which experienced a minimal increase in school attendance rates between 2008/09 and 2013/14. School attendance for children aged 15 to 17 only increased by 1.9% while increasing 6.8% for children aged 5 to 11 and 5.2% for children aged 12 to 14 (Tulane University, 2015).

**Percentage of Children Engaged in Hazardous Child Labour and School Attendance Rates of Children in Cocoa Production in Cocoa-Growing Communities, Ghana 2008/09 and 2013/14**



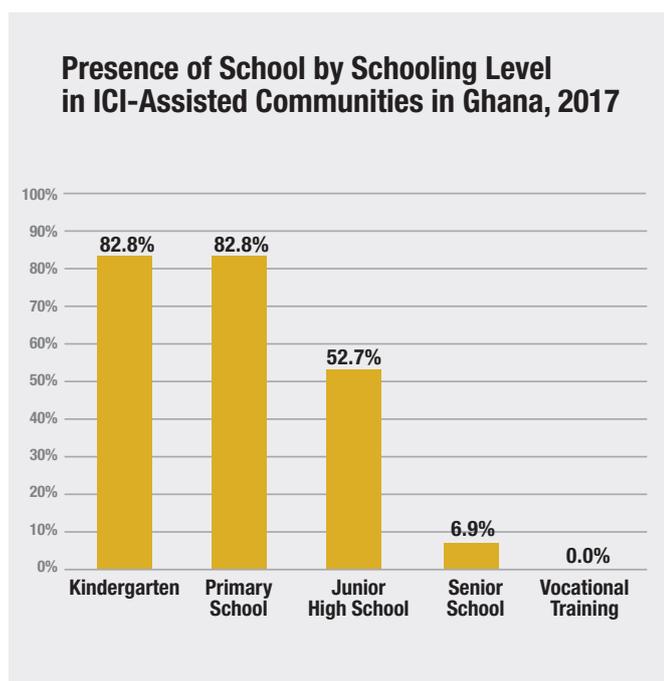
(Source: Tulane University, 2015)

<sup>1</sup> This policy brief was written by Tatiana Wugalter, October 2017

<sup>2</sup> Senior secondary school refers to Senior High School while junior secondary school refers to Junior High School.

## REASONS FOR HAZARDOUS CHILD LABOUR INVOLVEMENT AND LOW SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The main reason that older children stop attending school, and thus become engaged in hazardous child labour, is the lack of educational infrastructure in co-coa-growing communities. None of the 76 communities that ICI operated in from 2012-2015 have senior secondary schools or TVET centres (International Cocoa Initiative, 2016). **Out of the 29 communities assisted by ICI in 2016, only 7% have senior secondary schools and none have TVET centres.** Children travel a median distance of 18km to access senior secondary school and 22km to access TVET, with the longest distance traveled being 54km (International Cocoa Initiative, 2017). As the distance travelled to and from school increases, so does the likelihood of children engaging in child labour (Krauss, 2013).



(Source: International Cocoa Initiative, 2017)

### School related expenses are a barrier to accessing senior secondary school and TVET (Kapoor, 2017).

In September 2017, Ghana abolished fees for senior secondary school and agreed to cover the cost of tuition, textbooks, meals and uniforms as well as agricultural training and TVET (Adogla-Bessa, 2017). The new policy does not fund apprenticeships and may lead to crowded boarding houses, meaning students will be required to pay for alternative accommodation. Persistent financial barriers such as these are a significant deterrent to school attendance. **Poor quality junior secondary school also prevents children from achieving academic success** and gaining acceptance into senior secondary school or TVET.

Given the inaccessibility of senior secondary and TVET opportunities, **there is little incentive for older children, who have reached the compulsory schooling limit of age 15, to continue their education.**

Most TVET programs are not located in rural areas so children must travel far from their homes to reach them. Once there, children live in sometimes insecure boarding homes and may be susceptible to abuse from their trainers or to labour exploitation without any recourse to family or community support. In this context of low incentive and poor access, older children typically turn to farming or farm-labouring to bolster household income or strengthen their own skills (Tulane University, 2015; International Cocoa Initiative, 2016). These decisions are compounded by high labour costs which weaken cocoa farmers' capacity to hire labourers, consequently influencing the household labour of women and children in cocoa production (International Cocoa Initiative, 2016).

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## HYPOTHETICAL COST OF TVET FOR CHILD LABOURERS

The total cost of TVET per pupil was GHS 5'707 (USD 1'303) in 2015 (Ministry of Education, 2016). Considering that there are roughly 411'562 child labourers aged 15-17 in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014), it would cost over USD 535 million to cover the cost of TVET programmes for all of them.

## LIMITED INCOME EARNING OPPORTUNITIES

In cocoa-growing communities, cocoa farming is one of the only economically viable activities (International Cocoa Initiative, 2016). Older children's limited education prevents them from obtaining economic alternatives when they do exist (Understanding Children's Work, 2016). **Despite the high likelihood that older children involved in cocoa production will engage in hazardous labour, they turn to cocoa work because they have few income-earning alternatives** (Kapoor, 2017). There is a great need to ensure that hazardous work activities are taken out of the workload of older children involved in cocoa production.

## EDUCATION IS KEY TO CHILD LABOUR REDUCTION

When quality education is available, and returns to education are high, there is a strong incentive for families to delay their children's entry into work and instead invest in their education (International Labour Organization, 2015). Educational attainment assists in breaking intergenerational cycles of child labour; **the level of education an individual receives is a predictor of whether their children will engage in child labour** (Krauss, 2016).

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT FUELS POVERTY REDUCTION

Obtaining higher levels of education also strengthens income earning potential, in turn fuelling poverty reduction (Understanding Children's Work, 2016). **Throughout Ghana, poverty declines as the educational level of household heads increases** (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). With enhanced educational opportunities, families are more likely to prioritize the long-term gains of educational attainment, such as increased household income and poverty reduction, rather than the short term gains of child labour (International Labour Organization, 2015).

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Efforts to combat hazardous child labour for older children in cocoa production must recognize the connections between education and hazardous child labour involvement.

- Improve educational infrastructure by **investing in senior secondary schools and TVET centres** in or near cocoa-growing communities.
  - Include **financial coverage of apprenticeships** in the new Free Senior High School policy.
  - **Strengthen educational quality** at the junior secondary school level to ensure children are passing Basic Education Certificate Examinations and qualifying for senior secondary education or TVET.
  - Establish **remedial education programmes for older children** currently engaged in hazardous child labour such as bridging classes or effective school reintegration.
  - Promote awareness on hazardous child labour and **take out hazardous tasks from the workload of older children in cocoa production.**
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