

# COMMUNITY SERVICE GROUPS IN COCOA- GROWING COMMUNITIES: AFFORDABLE ADULT LABOUR AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CHILD LABOUR

Child labour is prevalent in cocoa-producing regions of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. In most cases, the children are working within the family unit and not earning an income. Poverty, lack of affordable labour and lack of post-primary educational opportunities are among the main reasons why children are engaged in child labour.

## A STRATEGY FOR REDUCING CHILD LABOUR

By providing labour services at an affordable rate below market price, Community Service Groups are providing cocoa farmers with an alternative to child labour.



### HOW IT WORKS

A Community Service Groups (**CSG**) is a group of adults that provides labour services in cocoa-producing communities in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Each CSG is based in a cocoa-producing community and is operated by members from that community (the majority of whom are men, although there are a few women that participate). The members are themselves cocoa farmers and are between 19 and 45 years old. The number of members per CSG varies depending on the size of the community – 10 to 15 members in Côte d'Ivoire and 15 to 30 members in Ghana.

The CSGs are **trained in good agricultural practices**, in **equipment management**, in **debt recovery** and receive all the necessary **farming equipment** (i.e. pesticide sprayers, pruning blade, personal protective clothing, etc.) so that they can provide high quality services.

In Ghana, CSG members benefit from technical and agronomic training from the Cocoa Health and Extension Division of COCOBOD extension agents. The labour services provided by CSGs include spraying of pesticides, application of fertilizer, weeding, cocoa harvesting, shelling, etc.

The key element of the CSG scheme is that their **services are at a reduced price as compared to the market price**, making them affordable and accessible to a greater number of farmers and of particular importance in those communities where hired adult labour is not available.

### BENEFITS AND ADVANTAGES

There are **five groups of beneficiaries** of the CSGs:

- 1. Children of cocoa farmers** are spared from engaging in child labour and hazardous work. They will have more time for other activities, including schooling.
- 2. Cocoa farmers** gain access to labour services that are both affordable and higher quality than the child labour they formerly employed.
- 3. The CSG members** gain from formal technical training on cocoa production and the proper usage of equipment, at no charge. CSG members also receive training on group dynamism, conflict management, occupational health and safety, record keeping, financial management and accountability. It also provides them with an opportunity to gain extra income that they can invest in individual income-generating activities. Additionally, CSG members can also benefit by soliciting the services of the group for work on their own farms, more often at a reduced cost.
- 4. Local youth** with experience in cocoa farming and seeking employment can find meaningful work by joining a CSG.
- 5. Women** engaging in agricultural income-generating activity groups supported by ICI, are often supported by the CSG for land clearing, application of pesticides and harvesting of their produce (at a subsidised cost as compared to the other community members).

CSG efforts to reduce child labour extend beyond the provision of affordable labour services. In Côte d'Ivoire, some CSGs work closely with community Child Protection Committees (CPC) to identify and report cases of child labour. **Since the CSG members are cocoa farmers themselves, they have an influential voice when it comes to raising awareness around the issue of child labour among other farmers.** There are also numerous CSGs in Côte d'Ivoire that invest some of their revenues in community projects, typically in education. Other community members have also requested to join the group, indicating that it is attractive to member of the community and has advantages.

### CHALLENGES

Certain challenges related to the operations of CSGs have been identified.

- In some of the communities in which CSGs are based, their services are not highly solicited. Meanwhile, in other communities the CSGs are unable to meet the demand for their services.
- One significant challenge faced by CSGs is collecting debts for their services after having already provided these services on credit.
- In Ghana, one challenge that has come up results from the lack of commitment of certain members. These members do not regularly show up to contribute their labour services, which then complicates the even distribution of revenues.
- In Côte d'Ivoire, management of farming equipment has been an issue for a few communities. Some members take the group's farming equipment to use it in their own fields. Cases of improper usage of farming equipment have also been reported and have led to broken equipment. These cases have highlight the need for additional training in proper usage of equipment.