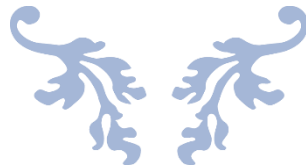


**CHILD LABOUR KNOWLEDGE,
RATIONALE AND PERCEIVED EFFECT IN
SELECTED COCOA GROWING
COMMUNITIES IN GHANA**



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Executive Summary

Child labour in the cocoa sector has been one of the topical issues and a development concern in recent times. To this end, the current study in 4 communities in 2 cocoa growing districts in Central and Eastern regions of Ghana sought to understand cocoa farmer's knowledge, the rationale, and the perceived effects of child labour.

The findings reveal that farmers were generally aware and understand child labour. However, their knowledge on some specific provisions were limited, especially in respect of the minimum age for children's engagement in farming activities. This points to the need to educate cocoa farming communities about the specific provisions of the age for engaging children and also deepen their understanding of the child labour laws.

Cocoa farmers see the involvement of children in farming as a form of training /apprenticeship and mentoring, as means to enhance farm succession. Therefore, appropriate apprenticeship interventions should be rolled out to introduce children to cocoa farming in a way that will keep their interest in farming, while at the same time not going against child labour laws.

It is important to harmonize and strengthen existing child labour monitoring and remediation systems implemented by different actors in the cocoa sector with the view to engaging farmers to desist from sending children to work on cocoa farms.

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1.1 Background

The ILO defines child labour as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development¹. Child labour has been criticized by society as it causes harm to children's health, dignity, and rights. The situation is more disturbing as many children around the ages of four and five are spotted on the streets hawking daily. The agricultural sector accounts for the largest share of child labour worldwide². Child labour is high in cocoa farming communities, as many reports including findings on the Worst Forms of Child labour in Ghana by the International Labor Affairs have noted incidence of child labor or children engaging in hazardous farm practice³. It is estimated that about 1.56 million children are engaged in child labor on cocoa farms in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, with 45 percent engaged in hazardous work on cocoa farms. The study estimates that the number of children in hazardous work – classified as WFCL – in cocoa production in Ghana is declining, although the report estimates there were still around 880,000 children involved in the WFCL in 2013/2014 in the cocoa growing areas (a decrease of six percent from 930,000 in 2008/2009)⁴. Child labourers, in the cocoa sector are exposed to chemicals, long working hours, and the denial of a decent education.⁵ Children typically perform the same arduous tasks and work the same hours as adults but receive less pay to no pay. Tasks include transporting heavy loads, pesticide and fertilizer application, and the use of machetes.

Ghana has progressive child labour laws, policies, strategies and/or plans to prevent child labour and has also signed on to various conventions for combatting child labour,

¹ "What is Child Labor?" The International Labor Organization. <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm> (assessed on 10th December, 2023)

² chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_800278.pdf

³ Bureau of International Labor Affairs (2017) 'Findings on the Worst Forms of Child labour in Ghana'

⁴ Survey Research on Child Labor in West African Cocoa Growing Areas" Tulane University. Available: https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/research_file_attachment/Tulane%20University%20-%20Survey%20Research%20Cocoa%20Sector%20-%2030%20July%202015.pdf

⁵ <https://laborrights.org/industries/cocoa>

including the Children's Act (1998), the Labor Act (2003), and the Human Trafficking Act (2005), the ILO conventions 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (WFCL), among others. Ghana's Children's Act (1998) stipulates that children younger than 15 years of age are not authorized to be employed but can do light work if they are 13 years of age and older. The act also indicates the age of 18 years as the minimum age for engagement in hazardous work. The child labour Act clearly defines light work, hazardous work and exploitative labour. Light work constitutes work which is not likely to be harmful to the health or development of the child and does not affect the child's attendance at school or the capacity of the child to benefit from schoolwork. The Act 560 also indicates work is hazardous when it poses a danger to the health, safety, or morals of a person, portorage of heavy loads, work in where chemicals and machines are used, among others. The Act prohibits the engagement of a child in exploitative labour, and it defines exploitative labour to be any work that deprives the child of its health, education or development, including night work e.g., work between the hours of eight o'clock in the evening and six o'clock in the morning. Sections 80 and 90 of the Ghana's child labour Act, 1998 (Act 560), stipulates that the minimum age for engaging a child in "light work" is 13 years, for regular work is 15 years, and hazardous work is 18 years. The National Plan of Action phase II (NPA II) for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in Ghana (2017 – 2021) is one of government's policy on curbing the menace of child labor in Ghana. The NPA II hinges on regional and global frameworks such as the West Africa Regional Action Plan (RAP) on child labor and the Sustainable Development Goals and targets (SDGs), particularly Goal 8 and Target 8.7. However, enforcement mechanisms are weak, and most citizens, especially small holder farmers are largely unaware of the requirements of the children Act, the NPA 2 and other such policies/plans/strategies to curbing child labour.

In the fight against child labour in Ghana, particularly the worst forms, there have been many government initiatives, development partners and civil society interventions for over decades. While farmers are empowered and sensitised to end child labour in Ghana, the practice still thrives. Studies show that most of the children who work on cocoa farms do so within their household or extended family. Children of school going age are seen in

most cocoa farming communities engaging in farm activities either for their immediate families or for non-relatives mostly at little wages or no wages at all. Families usually defend their position of engaging their children in farm work on the grounds that they care much for their wards and will not endanger their lives to hazardous farm practices. Other farmers also note that their wards could only take over their business (cocoa farming) if they engage or are being involved at the workplace. Other reasons also include expanding the family income base with support of children and continuation of family business.

It is an undeniable fact that there are quite a number of studies on child labour in Ghana's cocoa sector. It is worth noting however that to our knowledge very little, if any of such studies, has sought to focus on finding answers to questions such as, how do individuals living in cocoa farming communities (including the small holder adult and youth farmers and children) understand child labour? ; why do they use children in the cocoa farming despite the numerous campaigns against the practice? ; and what do they consider as the benefits and adverse effect of using children on the cocoa farms? Finding answers to these questions from individuals in cocoa farming communities (including the small holder adult and youth farmers and children) will to a large extent provide insights in designing interventions to minimise the thriving incidence of child labour in Ghana's cocoa sector. It is on this premise that SEND Ghana in partnership with DKA Austria commissioned this study, with the view to provide evidence to inform advocacy to influence policy for a child labour free cocoa sector in Ghana.

1.2 Objectives

The study generally sought to assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of child labour in the cocoa sector of Ghana. Specifically, the study sought to:

- I. Assess cocoa farmers knowledge and/or perception of child labour.
- II. Understand the rationale and the level of engagement of children in cocoa farming activities.

- III. Understand cocoa farmers perspectives on the perceived benefit and adverse effect of Child labour.

2.0 Methodology

The study adopted a purposive sampling technique to select cocoa farmers in cocoa growing communities in the Central and Eastern regions of Ghana. The study locations were selected based on cocoa production activity, accessibility to research team, previous work and knowledge of area.

The study was qualitative and mainly used Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to elicit information using an interview guide. A total of eight (8) Focus Group Discussions were held in four (4) communities in 2 cocoa growing districts in Central and Eastern regions of Ghana. These were Nyameanni and Watreso at Twifo Praso in the Central region and Adiembra and Kwaboanta at Odumase in the Eastern region. In all 106 individuals comprising of 94 adults/young people (62 females, 32 males)) and 12 children (4 girls, 8 boys) were interviewed as clearly depicted in table 1 below.

Table 1: Respondents per Community

Region	Cocoa District	Communities	Number of Adult/youth Participants		Number of children Participants		TOTAL
			Male	Female	Boys	Girls	
Central	Twifo Praso	Nyameanni	4	17	7	0	28
		Watreso	7	32	0	0	39
Eastern	Odumase	Adiembra	10	7	0	0	17
		Kwaboanta	11	6	1	4	22
TOTAL			32	62	8	4	106

Informed consent was sought from all study participants before they participated in the interviews. For the children, consent was sought from parents/guardians before recruiting the children for the interviews. Once parental/guardian consent was sought, the researchers then went ahead to seek consent from the child before s/he is interviewed. Thus, a two stepwise approach/condition to seeking consent for children participation was adopted: 1. the necessary condition (parental/guardian consent) and 2. the sufficient condition (child consent). It was only when both conditions were met that the researchers included the child in the study. Once consent was sought, the children were separated from their parents/guardians in the FGDs to allow the children speak freely in order to avoid response bias due to presence of their parents/guardians or any adult.

3.0 Findings

3.1 Knowledge and Perception on Child Labour

Generally, cocoa farmers interviewed are aware of child labour and the activities that constitute it. It is refreshing to note that the small holder farmers had good knowledge about issues of child labour, in particular their understanding of light work, exploitative labour and hazardous work is not different from the provisions in the Ghana Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560). This can be inferred from their general responses to questions that were asked in respect of their awareness and/or understanding of child labour in general, and in particular light work, hazardous work and exploitative work.

Light Work: Cocoa farmers defined light work as the little things that children can do that does not harm their health. Some listed examples include cracking and removal of cocoa pods, collection of cocoa fruits/pods/beans, fetching of water.

“Light work is for a child to fetch water, when someone is going to spray the farm, the child follows to fetch water and also when the cocoa has been plucked, they can assist me in collecting the cocoa beans/fruit/pods”.

“Light work is a work within the capacity of a child.”

Some farmers were however of the view that there is no light work in cocoa farming, since farming is generally tedious.

“There is no light work in cocoa farming. From the beginning to the end is hard. Cocoa related work is the most difficult in the farming sector. For instance, cassava as soon as you weed around it you do not have to apply chemicals”.

Hazardous work: The Cocoa farmers consider hazardous work as any activity that is harmful to a child’s health and wellbeing. Examples cited during the interview include pruning, weeding, spraying of agrochemicals, plucking of cocoa pods etc. as captured in the quotes below:

“Let’s say you tell the child to do pruning, the child’s strength isn’t enough, but some parents force them to climb the tree when they climb and fall, they can hurt themselves”.

“Spraying of agro chemicals can be very harmful to the health of the child”.

“Children below 15years who are given cutlass to weed can also hurt themselves.”

Exploitative work: Cocoa farmers see exploitative work as any work that deprive children of income deserved for the performance of a job or any adult related job given to a child to perform.

“When you take the child to the farm with the agreement to give about GHS1000, but when you return you don’t pay the child, that is exploitative.”

“Convincing the child to do the work for you and saying they will be paid later. For instance, one weeds a one-acre land is given 50 cedis as pay, which is way smaller than what you will pay an adult labourer for the same work. Because the person is a child you cheat the person because s/he cannot object to it”.

“Making the child overwork. For instance, when I give the child a plot of land to weed that is exploitative”.

Cocoa farmers shared different views on the minimum age that children are supposed to start working on the farms. Generally, farmers were of the view that children aged 5 years and above can accompany their parents to the farm, particularly in situations where there is no one to take care of them in the house when the parents leave for the farm. However, according to the respondents, the minimum age for regular work should be between 8 to 15 years, since at this age, the child can engage in some work on the farm. They were however quick to add that boys should start work at age 15 years and girls at 18 years because of the relative strength of boys. Farmers are also of the firm belief that children 15 years are fully mentally and physically matured to start working on the farms as long as it's done in the right way to avoid any problems for the child. According to one farmer

“With my two boys when they turned 15, they could assist us in the farm”. Another farmer also had this to say: “one of my children is 13 and I allow him work on cocoa farm”

It is worth noting that the farmers perspectives on the minimum age at which children should begin to engage in regular work (8 years) does not align with Ghana's child labour Act, 1998 (Act 560). The perceived minimum age of 8 years for regular work as suggested by farmers is not only way below the Ghana child labour Act, 1998 (Act 560) stipulated age of 15 years for regular work, but also the stipulated 13 years for light work.

3.2 Rationale and the level of engagement of children in cocoa farming

In order to propose appropriate interventions to combat child labour, the research also sought to find out why cocoa farmers engage children in farming activities. The farmers who participated in the interviews mentioned that children who are seen on their farms are immediate or extended family members they leave in the same house with. Respondents mentioned that they take their children to the farm to teach them how to farm. They see it as a form of training or apprenticeship and/or knowledge transfer.

According to the farmers, the current crop of cocoa farmers are ageing and already there are no incentives for the youth in cocoa growing communities who are now engaging in galamsey and other trades. The only way they can pass on their farms to the next generation is to train their children through learning by doing and hence, engaging them in farming activities.

“If not for school, we know that for children they are taken to the farm right from the beginning. By law it is 18years. That is why the Bible says train up a child in the way he should go and when he grows, he would not depart from it.”

“As a child is growing up, I must teach him/her farming; even if the child will go to school, he/she will be able to have knowledge on farming too. In, particular, when children are shown the farm that this is cocoa and taught how to plant it”, when they grow, they will be interested in cultivating cocoa.

“The child can learn a lot by going to farm with the parents/guardian. It helps the child have knowledge on what is in the farm.”

“The reason why it is good is that when I’m pruning too he would know how I go about it but it is not the child that is doing it. The child is watching me when I harvest the cocoa too, he would see how it is done. When I dry the cocoa too he would see how to do it; so it is good that I take the child to the cocoa farm. I have a role to teach the child so that in the future when I am not around he could go about it this way.

“My grandchild that is less than 10 years follows us to the farm, then you see the child picking the cocoa beans. When the child sees something, she will inform me so I can act. She saw a snake and prompted me; truly too when I went it was a snake and we killed it”.

Closely related to the training/apprenticeship, farmers interviewed were of the view that, when children are engaged in farming activities it helps them to acquire knowledge about family properties/assets and family income sources., It contributes in no small way to develop children’s passion for farming and encourage them to continue what their parents

started. Thus, cocoa farmers interviewed see farming as a family heritage and hence, the only way they could pass on the skill or knowledge to their children is by introducing them to farming activities at an early stage. Some children and young respondents expressed fond memories of spending time with their parents/guardians on the farm; and hence keeping their interest in cocoa farming.

“if parents allow their children to go to the farm with them, they will know the boundary of the parent’s farm land for future use, so that when they inherit the land in future they will know the location and boundary, so that they make good use of the land in future.

“Children will know the source of income for the family”.

“They are aware that this is the work we do to take care of them, so if they do not help me how do I work to get money to take care of them.

I’m growing so I am not as strong as before, and I cannot do much work. So, my children need to help; but if you must go to school, I will not force you to go to the farm.”

“It is not every time we take them to the farm, usually we take them along with us on weekends to come and assist us, so that it can motivate them to also venture into farming when they are of age”.

Respondents expressed misgivings about the fact that the negative public perception and blaming of farmers for breaking child labour laws had prevented most of them from training their children in cocoa farming. The adverse effect is that most of their children are not interested in cocoa farming. Generally, cocoa farmers expressed concern about how to keep their children’s interest in cocoa farming when they grow up and were thus worried who would take over their farms in the future.

“ ...If a teacher or nurse takes his/her child to their workplace (school or hospital), everyone will say they have done well for sending their children to see their workplace and also as a form of training their children to become teachers or

nurses in future. Let a cocoa farmer take his/her child to the farm even on a Saturday, and even if the child did only accompany the parents and did not do anything there, people will say it is child labour.”

Also, the farmers cited instances where they have no choice than to send their little children to the farm because it is difficult sometimes to leave the children at home, because they have no one to take care of them, especially in communities where they do not have nursery/basic school. According to the farmers, it becomes more challenging when the children are on vacation, and they do not have a relatively older sibling or any elderly person to take care of them while their parents go to the farm.

“Because leaving the children at home- they cannot take care of themselves. They will play and get hurt in the process so by sending them to the farm you can supervise and take care of them”.

Again, the farmers indicated that because most farmers are poor and receive low income from their farming activities as a result of low farm gate prices and high labour and other input costs, they are better off asking their children to help them on the farm to reduce the cost of labour.

“It is because of poverty, we cannot afford the cost of hiring labourers, hence, we take them to the farm, so they assist us; and this helps to cut down cost”.

Discussions with cocoa farmers became evident that farm activities children are engaged in include gathering of cocoa pods, collection of cocoa beans, fetching of water, watering seedlings, carrying of farm equipment’s like pan/baskets and knapsack sprayers to the farm and weeding. According to one farmer:

“They help me with fetching water into the knapsack sprayer, and the older ones also assist when it comes to clearing of the land”.

A female farmer also mentioned that:

“me the children I have don’t have a father, so I take them to the farm to work. They help with harvesting cocoa pods.”.

The cocoa farmers alluded to the fact that even though children are mostly seen carrying knapsack sprayers and cutlasses to the farms, they are not allowed to use them because it is harmful to them. It is only in rare cases that older children are allowed to use cutlasses for weeding. Even in that situation, they are given blunt (not sharpened) cutlasses.

“the knapsack sprayer is for adults to use and not children”

“I give them a cutlass that is blunt to work with as a form of the training. The children need to have the skill and develop interest in farming, so that can full take over from us when they are of age”.

3.3 Perceived adverse effect of Child labour

Although farmers highlighted very good reasons for using children, they acknowledged the adverse effect of engaging children on the farm. Farmers are aware of the dangers/hazards associated with sending children to work on the cocoa farms. Farmers generally agreed that activities such as pruning, spraying, weeding, and plugging of cocoa pods were harmful to the children. They believed that agro-chemicals posed a major health hazard to their health, cutlasses could injure the children, load maybe too much and hinder children's physical growth; and cocoa pod may inadvertently fall or hit the head of the children whiles using a sickle.

“When cracking cocoa pods, the cutlass can cut the child and carrying cocoa pods/beans can break the neck or affect his back when it is too heavy.”

“Spraying of agro chemicals is even harmful to us as adults, so it will also be very harmful to the children as well.”

“For me what I see as too difficult would be the weeding, when we weed, we get tired, so we do not force our children to weed”.

According to the study participants, overly engaging children in farming activities is likely to result in the children losing interest in school as a result of too much exposure to work.

Some also mentioned that exposure to hazardous work will have adverse effects on the health and well-being of the child.

“It makes them loose interest in learning because some parents take their children to farm even on weekdays.”

“Because of the distance of the farm it makes the child very tired and may not be able to go to school the following day.”

“Too much exposure to the farm work does not encourage them to go to school.”

Some farmers, however, argued that children are not at a loss as far as schooling is concerned because they mostly send their children to the farm only on weekends, and holidays.

There’s no loss as far as schooling is concerned because, we don’t take our children to the farm on a weekday but rather on weekends and on holidays, so that it doesn’t affect their learning.

4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions:

- Whiles the study findings clearly shows that farmers were generally aware and understand child labour, their knowledge about some specific provisions were limited. There is a mismatch between study participants perceived minimum age for children’s engagement in farming activities and the proscribed age according to the child labour Act. Respondents were also aware of the adverse effect of child labour in the cocoa sector.
- According to the cocoa farmers, the current narrative about child labour in cocoa has culminated in a situation where their own children and the younger generation in general are not showing interest in farming. Thus, cocoa farmers ran the risk of not having farm succession.

- Although farmers generally indicated that they engage children as a form of training or mentoring in order to keep the children's interest in farming when they grow up, some of the responses from the farmers points to the fact that they know some farmers engage children in child labour.
- Lastly, respondents cited the need to use children as a source of cheap labour in order to reduce cost of production.

4.2 Recommendations

- ✓ *Cocoa farming communities should be educated on the children's Act and other policies and strategies for elimination of child labour:* It is critical education to educate cocoa farming communities about the specific provisions of the minimum age for engaging children in cocoa farms and also deepen their understanding of the child labour laws. This education could be extended to all other sectors, including food crop farming, fishing, trading etc. The education/training should not be limited to adults alone, but, should also involve children so that they will also be in the know as to when they are legally allowed to work.
- ✓ *Appropriate apprenticeship interventions should be rolled out to introduce children to cocoa farming in a way that will keep their interest in farming, while at the same time not going against child labour laws:* It is important to change the narrative of child labour by appreciating the farmers' perspective that involving their children in farming is a form of apprenticeship. In this respect appropriate interventions should be carried out to intentionally introduce children in cocoa farming communities to cocoa farming in a way that will keep their interest in farming, while at the same time not going against child labour laws.
- ✓ *Strengthen existing Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS) implemented by different actors in the cocoa sector with the view to engage farmers to desist from sending children to work on cocoa farms:* it is suggested that the government through the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection should as a matter of priority

strengthen collaboration with civil society organizations, development partners and cocoa buying companies, as well as certification bodies to mutually support comprehensive policy responses to provide prevention, mitigation and remediation assistance to children involved in or at-risk of child labour, as well as to their families and communities. Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems should be relevant to the local context. Hence, it is important to include context specific farmer priorities and concerns farmers in the design, creation, and management of child labour reduction programs.

- ✓ *Government should increase the prices of cocoa to allow farmers to meet their basics needs as poverty is a key driver of child labour:* Considering that respondents cited the need to use children as a source of cheap labour in order to reduce cost of production, it is suggested that enhancing farm gate prices will contribute in no small way to help farmers earn enough income to hire adult labour and thus desist from using children.

5.0 Appendix: Data Collection in Pictures



Picture 1: A Focus Group Discussion with some children.



Picture 2: A Focus Group Discussion with men cocoa farmers in the central region of Ghana



Picture 3: A Focus Group Discussion with some women cocoa farmers in the central region of Ghana



Picture 4: A Focus Group Discussion with a mixed group in the central region of Ghana



Picture 5: A Focus Group Discussion with some youth in in the eastern region of Ghana



Picture 6: A Focus Group Discussion with a mixed group in the eastern region