

Child Labour, basic facts

The ILO estimates that **132 million children aged 5-14 work in agriculture** around the world (more than 70% of child labour worldwide). Nine out of ten working children in rural areas are engaged in agricultural activities. It is estimated that in **Africa**, between **56 and 72 millions children** work in agriculture. Agriculture, together with mining and construction, is **one of the more dangerous** activity sectors, and children often work in hazardous conditions, while spraying pesticides and fertilizers, sowing and harvesting crops, etc. Children are usually working on their parents' or relatives' farms, often on a regular basis, detrimental to their schooling.



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Defining concepts

Not all work done by children is classified as child labour. Children's involvement in tasks that do not affect their health and personal development, or interfere with their schooling, is not prohibited. The **ILO** defines child labour as "*work that deprives children of their **childhood**, their **potential** and their **dignity**, and that is **harmful** to physical and mental development*".

Child Labour refers to work that:

- Is mentally, physically, socially or morally **dangerous and harmful** to children; and
- Interferes with their **schooling** by:
 - ✓ Depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
 - ✓ Obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
 - ✓ Requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Worst Forms of Child Labour are:

- All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and **trafficking of children**, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

The International Response

[ILO convention No. 182](#) helped to focus the international spotlight on the urgency of action to eliminate as a priority, the worst forms of child labour without losing the long term goal of the effective elimination of all child labour. This convention is complemented by the [Convention 138](#), on minimum age.



International Cocoa Initiative Fact sheet

Children in the cocoa growing areas face the **realities of rural poverty** (scarcity of land, food insecurity, lack of education infrastructure, access to potable water, communities implemented in remote areas, etc.). The regular practice of **children working on cocoa farms** is often a natural way of life for cocoa farmers, who, for a variety of reasons, want to train their children and at the same time use them in order to reduce labour costs on the family's farm.

An **ICI Report**, in 2004, highlighted some of the **underlying reasons** for child labour, especially in cocoa growing areas. These reasons include:

- Underlying poverty;
- Lack of income, and of profitable sustainable livelihood practices (both cash cropping and food cropping practices);
- Lack of alternative forms of livelihood;
- Poor parental care and break-up of family;
- loss of parent due to death /stress in the family;
- Poor quality of services (i.e. education and health);
- Socio-cultural norms;
- Land tenure contracting practices.



Classroom, Ivory Coast ©ICI

Most of the **cocoa-growing families are poor**, often with **little or no education**, and their cocoa crop is the main source of income. Children can be exposed to hazards unwittingly or through a lack of awareness - as their parents were when they were children. **Children can be caught in the cycle of poverty** which requires they assist their family survive and at the same time attempt to use formal education as a means to break out of the cycle. **The poverty pattern prevents children from attending school** on a regular basis and often engages them in activities, which may be defined as *hazardous* by international standards. However, expectations are often low and therefore children's labour can be part of the **family livelihood and survival strategy** and the current reality faced by children in cocoa growing communities.

The 2004 ICI Report highlights that that **cocoa farmers are among the most vulnerable occupational groups** (in Ghana, a large proportion of cocoa farmers are below the poverty line due to small farm sizes and large family sizes resulting in a high dependency ratio).

Moreover, cocoa farmers engaged in export promotion are **vulnerable** due to fact that they are **not farming enough food crops** to sustain the family nor are they using sustainable agriculture practices to secure their future livelihood.



Cocoa-growing family, Ghana © ICI