

# Overview: Behaviour change training on how cocoa-growing households can better protect children from exposure to pesticides

## Background and rationale

In cocoa-growing communities in West Africa, children are exposed to pesticides not only when they help their parents on farms, but also in their everyday home environment, especially when playing outside. Even small doses of pesticides can be harmful to children's health. Exposure can occur through vapours from pesticides stored within homes or on newly treated fields. Toxic particles can stay in the air for several days after spraying or can be found as residue in empty packaging or on protective equipment. Toxic substances can also pass from mothers to their unborn or breastfed babies. Protecting children from exposure to pesticides is therefore not only the responsibility of those who spray pesticides, but of all members of cocoa-growing communities.

Training community members who are less likely to participate in agronomical training programmes and who may be less well informed about pesticide-related health risks is key to better protecting children from pesticides. With this in mind, ICI has developed a training module on protecting children from pesticide exposure in their everyday environment, at home and when they move around their community. It thereby aims to fill a gap in existing programmes and is complementary to other efforts promoting the responsible application of pesticides.

This document presents the objectives, curriculum and methodology of the training module and includes additional resources for those interested in delivering this training.

## Objectives

This training module:

- Informs about the short-term and long-term health risks for children who are exposed to pesticides, even in small doses
- Raises awareness of the different possible contact points at which children may be exposed in their everyday lives
- Helps participants adopt practical measures to protect children

## Who is the training for?

The training module is designed for Village Savings and Loans Associations with female and male members and has been pilot-tested in cocoa-growing communities in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

These associations are groups of people who meet regularly to save together and take small loans from those savings. They are often made up of a diverse mix of community members who may not have received training on pesticides before, which makes them an important target group for this initiative.

However, the training module can be used for training of any other community-based group. It is recommended to encourage both partners in a couple to participate, to ensure that both parents have a common understanding of health risks and agree on priority measures to be implemented in their household.



## Who can facilitate the training?

The training can be facilitated by professionals with experience in community development, such as mobilizing and training VSLA groups. Before delivering the training, facilitators must:

- Participate in a 1–2-day Training of Trainers based on the Training Manual, which contains full guidance on the training methodology
- Acquire basic background knowledge on pesticides and health risks for children; a minimum curriculum is provided as an appendix to the Manual; further background reading following the resources provided is recommended.

## How is the training structured?

The full training consists of 4 sessions of 2-3 hours each, with the following contents:

 Duration and timing	 Contents
<b>Session 1:</b> <b>What everyone should know about pesticides, and why we must handle them with special care</b>	<div data-bbox="379 792 523 824">220 minutes</div> <div data-bbox="742 719 1401 902"> <p>Which pesticides are commonly used in cocoa-growing communities?</p> <p>What is toxicity? What are pesticides residues?</p> <p>How can pesticides enter the human body?</p> </div>
<b>Session 2: How to protect children from harm through pesticides</b>	<div data-bbox="379 1158 574 1189">150 min minutes</div> <div data-bbox="742 1001 1425 1346"> <p>What are the short-term and long-term health hazards for children exposed to pesticides?</p> <p>Through which contact points are children exposed to pesticides?</p> <p>What measures can be taken to better protect children?</p> <p><i>At the end of this session, participants will jointly adopt a group resolution of 5 “golden rules” they promise to implement in their homes.</i></p> </div>
<b>Session 3:</b> <b>Consolidating participants’ competences related to pesticides</b>	<div data-bbox="379 1464 523 1496">120 minutes</div> <div data-bbox="742 1420 1441 1547"> <p>How to educate your children effectively on safe behaviour related to pesticides (and other toxic substances)?</p> <p>How to respond to a situation of acute poisoning?</p> </div>
<b>Session 4 :</b> <b>Follow-up session: Have you implemented the 5 Golden Rules?</b>	<div data-bbox="379 1659 703 1758">To be held 2-3 weeks after the completion of sessions 1-3</div> <div data-bbox="379 1787 523 1818">120 minutes</div> <div data-bbox="742 1673 1425 1809"> <p>How have participants managed to put into practice the 5 “golden rules” to better protect their children? What obstacles have they faced? What additional efforts are needed to change practices in the longer term?</p> </div>

## What is the methodology?

The training uses a participatory approach that encourages participants to engage in a dialogue and bring in their own knowledge and experience. By taking participants’ own experience and knowledge as a point of departure, the training raises their genuine interest and motivation to learn more about pesticides and the

related risks. Participants reflect about the situation in their own households and how children may be exposed and jointly set an agenda for changing behaviour. Hence, the training generates calls to action which are relevant, reflect participants' priorities, and feasible to achieve.

Recognizing participants as experts of their own context fosters mutual respect, keeps the training relevant and engaging, and creates space for shared learning and peer-to-peer exchange. This approach helps strengthen participants' confidence and ownership of the solutions identified during the sessions.

### **Support materials**

Training Manual to guide the Training of Trainers (ToT)

To deliver the training in community settings, the following materials are recommended:

- Printed posters and / or handout leaflets – find pdf versions [here](#):
- Flip chart with a blank flip book or blank posters to collect and organize participants' contributions
- Marker pens