

Tackling child labour in cocoa: Results of ICI's Member Reporting Exercise 2024

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International
COCOA
Initiative

Collective action to solve complex challenges

Most of the world's cocoa comes from West Africa, grown by smallholders on family farms. Farming families face multiple challenges, including land scarcity, food insecurity and limited access to quality services, like education and healthcare. These are complex problems that can only be solved through coordinated action: no one actor alone can solve child labour.

Governments in cocoa-producing countries are responsible for protecting their citizens and providing essential services. Cocoa and chocolate companies must respect human rights across their supply chains, while governments in cocoa-consuming countries should promote responsible business conduct by creating and enforcing regulations. In addition, cocoa-growing communities play a critical role in protecting children; and civil society organizations can help people to claim their rights, as well as provide support.

ICI is a multistakeholder organization, uniting the forces of the cocoa and chocolate industry, civil society, farming communities, governments, international organizations and donors. This unique ability to bring these different stakeholders together makes us a powerful actor for change, within the cocoa sector and beyond. We research effective methods to tackle child and forced labour. We create evidence-based strategies to prevent and address human rights risks in cocoa communities. We support our members and partners to implement these strategies at scale.

The reporting exercise

Every year, ICI members report on their efforts to tackle child labour in the cocoa sector. This allows us to track progress over time, highlight areas for improvement and drive transparency in the sector.

The results presented here are from the reporting season October 2023 – September 2024, and cover activities in four countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Cameroun and Nigeria). The period covered by this report was especially challenging. Many farmers in West Africa experienced decreasing yields, due to crop disease, weather and climate change. While the price of cocoa on international markets hit record highs, farmers in West Africa have only partially benefitted from these, and many have had less cocoa to sell. Added to this were other challenges, for example, continued high inflation in Ghana that drove up the cost of living. Families in cocoa-growing communities continue to face challenges and need ongoing support so that these external challenges don't lead to child labour.

This report is based on figures provided to ICI by its members. The figures presented are aggregate and reflect the collective efforts of ICI members to date on a selection of activities. These figures should not be taken as a reflection of the work of the sector as a whole, as they do not include data from organizations that are not part of ICI (or are not supplying an ICI member).¹

¹ Independent external auditor, PwC, has provided limited assurance on the International Cocoa Initiative's member reporting process for 2025 (covering the previous cocoa season ending 30 September 2024). This assurance covers the suitability of the design of the reporting process and of the related controls implemented by International Cocoa Initiative

Measures to tackle child labour in cocoa now reach more households than ever before

By September 2024, ICI members covered approximately 1.17m households with Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS), an increase of 11% on the previous year, and of 65% since the first year of reporting (707,925 households were covered by September 2022.)

Total number of households covered by Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems:



These systems cover approximately 55% of the estimated 1.85m cocoa-growing households in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in 2024.² This is a significant achievement towards our ambition to cover all households with effective measures to tackle child labour.

In Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, ICI members now cover more than half of cocoa households with Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems.

What is a Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation System?

Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS) are child-centred support systems. They identify children in, or at risk of, child labour, provide ongoing support to improve their situation and follow children's progress over time.

Today, many cocoa and chocolate companies are using CLMRS as part of their efforts to tackle child labour in supply chains in West Africa, as part of their efforts to conduct Human Rights Due Diligence.

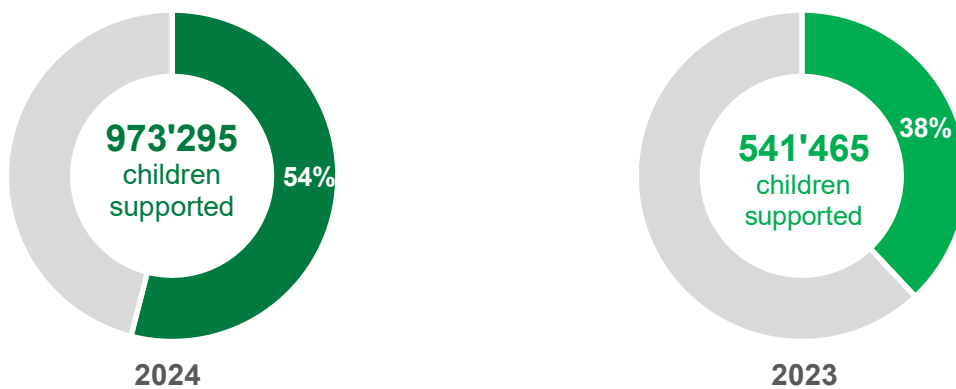
² Based on estimates for the total number of producers from COCOBOD and the CCC.



More children received support and guidance

Over 970,000 children in cocoa-growing households received support to help prevent or remediate child labour, corresponding to approximately 54% of all children registered in these systems. This represents a significant increase compared to 2023, when approximately 540,000 children received support. Most of these children received preventative support, as early intervention is important to help protect children from harm. One of the most effective support measures is targeted awareness raising, which helps households to better understand the dangers of certain hazardous tasks and the alternatives available.

Number and proportion of children registered in the system that received support:



In 2024, ICI members provided support to more than 970,000 children.



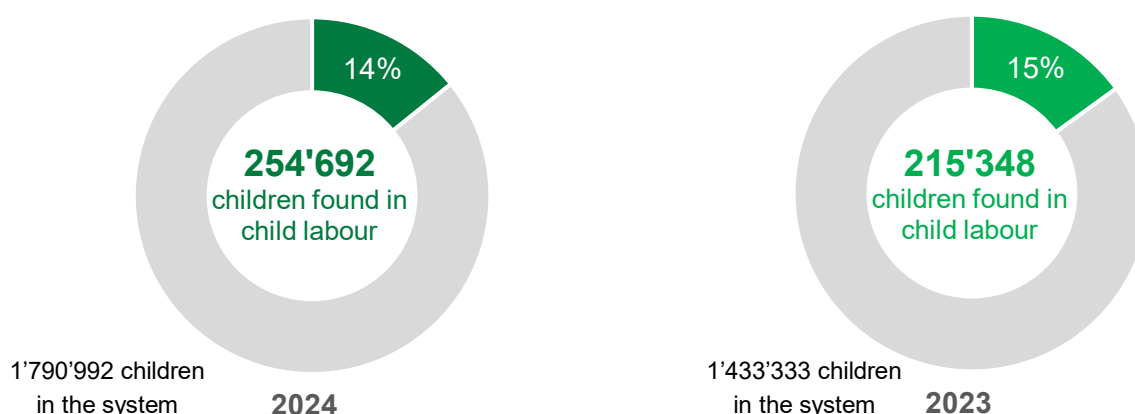
Approximately 220,000 children found in child labour were supported with targeted assistance to help them stop engaging in child labour. Support can take multiple forms, including help for individual children, their families, and for whole communities. It includes targeted awareness raising and guidance, accelerated education to get children back to school, school uniforms and books, assistance obtaining a birth certificate, cash transfers to help families meet their needs, as well as investments in quality education, such as classroom renovations, school meals, or teacher training.

Further improvement in identification is needed so that more children and families benefit

ICI members have identified around 250,000 children in child labour, representing about 14% of those covered by the systems. Most children in child labour in cocoa work on the family farm, doing hazardous tasks like carrying heavy loads or using sharp tools, and are combining work and school. In cocoa-growing communities, many children are also involved in child labour not linked to cocoa production.

Identifying these children is challenging but crucial to provide targeted support. Effective identification requires time, training and skilled monitors. Child labour is a sensitive issue, and it's likely that some cases still go undetected. Continued investment in training and supporting monitors will help identify and assist more children over time.

Total number of children identified in child labour:



(The number of children identified in child labour has gone up from 2023-2024, linked to an increase in coverage of systems.)

When a child is identified in child labour, monitors should conduct regular visits to follow up on the child's progress and determine when additional support is needed. These follow-up visits are crucial for monitoring impact, enabling us to verify if children have stopped engaging in child labour and if out-of-school children have returned to school.

Results show that not all systems are yet able to consistently perform and record results from follow-up visits, making it difficult to assess their impact. This area requires improvement moving forward, and as systems mature we expect their ability to perform follow-up visits to improve. Continued investment in follow-up visits and good data management is crucial, as this will ensure that children and families receive adequate support for as long as necessary and enable accurate reporting on impact.

A lot has been achieved, but more remains to be done

ICI members' efforts show that a great deal can be achieved when actors commit to scaling up evidence-based approaches. The coverage of Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems has expanded year on year, identifying more children at risk and providing more support to prevent and remediate child labour. While continued improvements are necessary, the scale-up of these systems and the support provided by them is an important achievement.

While these efforts are essential, they represent only one part of what is needed to combat child labour in cocoa-producing countries. Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation in supply chains cannot solve child labour alone and must be complemented by investments to tackle the multiple root causes of child labour such as low farmer incomes, gender inequality and limited access to essential services. Governments must lead on efforts to improve access to social protection, quality education, and healthcare with support from the private sector, international donors, and civil society organizations.

Increased collaboration among all stakeholders is also fundamental. This includes increased data sharing between private sector actors and governments, in addition to improved collaboration in identifying child labour, providing support, and following up on cases. Action is also needed to further strengthen national systems for traceability and child protection. This is underway. Over half of systems (54%) already share data with national authorities, and the majority have operational links with local or national authorities, but this remains a focus moving forward.

Percentage of ICI members that reported operational links with local or national authorities:



Percentage of ICI members that shared data with national authorities:



We call on all actors that derive revenue, profit or pleasure from cocoa or chocolate to support us on this collective journey to a more dignified and sustainable supply chain.