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The United States of America*

**TESTIMONY AT THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S PUBLIC HEARING
TO COLLECT INFORMATION TO ASSIST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LIST
OF GOODS FROM COUNTRIES PRODUCED BY CHILD LABOR
OR FORCED LABOR**

MAY 28, 2008



**Systeme de Suivi du
Travail des Enfants**



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STATUS OF CHILD LABOR IN COTE D'IVOIRE

Child labor is a phenomenon that seems to increasingly affect more and more developing countries. In Côte d'Ivoire, it is observed in cocoa farming, the first national cash crop.

As a matter of fact, the production of cocoa in Côte d'Ivoire (1,200.000 tons – First world producer) employs more than 900.000 small producers still using traditional, even manual, methods, in areas covering 2 to 4 hectares of land, with a limited yielding of 400kg/ha. Within such family-type manpower, children play a role of learners or hands.

The schooling difficulties due to economic constraints, more particularly a lack of infrastructure, as well as the matter of teaching children the family trade, are at stake.

In view of this situation, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire undertook several initiatives in order to fight the phenomenon.

GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS AND INITIATIVES

From the moment the government realized the scope of the problem, it immediately decided to create awareness at national level and, among neighboring countries about the danger, the illegality and the wrongness of child labor. In this respect, meetings, seminars and workshops were organized.

The Government designed the Oumé pilot project, which was completed on December 31, 2005.

The system tends to be spreading and ten (ten) administrative regions producing cocoa are covered at the rate of three (3) villages within a sub-prefecture. Committees were also set up with the assistance of G.T.Z. (German cooperation Agency) and they are operating fairly well.

The project, drawn up jointly with the World Cocoa Foundation, defines the problem in order to make a diagnosis.

The International Organization of Cocoa provided a week-training seminar on "child labor" to three hundred (300) producers from Eastern Côte d'Ivoire. Managerial and promotion agencies such as Anader and the Coffee and Cocoa Exchange (BCC) participated in the training.

In the field, preventive as well as curative actions are undertaken by the State and the technical and institutional partners, local or international.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- The STCP (Sustainable Tree Crop Program), established in 2003, aims at making farmers more aware of child labor. The partners involved are the State of Côte d'Ivoire, the Cocoa Industry, IITA (International Institute for Tropical Agriculture) and the World Cocoa Foundation.
- The SERAP Project, initiated by the local cocoa industry in 2006, aimed at making producers more aware of the need to comply with social and environmental standards.
- ICI (International Cocoa Initiative) has been provided for several years an institutional support to Côte d'Ivoire by training administrative officers and journalists.
- IFESH since it was set up in Côte d'Ivoire in 2005, this organization has contributed to eliminate child labor through formal and informal education, training for training officers and an awareness campaign on the problem.
- The LTTE Project (Fight against slave trade and trafficking of children) set up by GTZ, is also involved in increasing population and village committees awareness and training.

CURATIVE ACTIONS

As its commitment to resolve this issue, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire adopted more than 25 laws and ratified ILO Conventions N° 182, 138, 98, 87. Besides it signed a bilateral agreement with Mali in September 2000 on fighting across border child trafficking

The Ivorian State, through the Ministries of Security, of Territorial Administration and of Social Affairs, arrests and tries individuals who practice child trafficking.

Once the victims are intercepted, local and international organizations like UNICEF and NGO's assist them and help with their repatriation.

Given the importance of children in the development of a country, and aware that child labor is a consequence of poverty, the State created an investment fund estimated to 60 million U.S. Dollars for cocoa producing areas in order to finance different rural projects such as upgrading rural pathways, building schools, community health centers and drilling wells. In the light of the end of the conflict, considerable resources might be needed.

Moreover, the Ivorian government, through the Harkin-Engel Protocol, which was signed in September 2001, undertook the certification process of a child labor free cocoa.

According to the terms of this protocol implemented by an inter ministerial unit chaired by the Prime Minister, the certification process should be carried out in 50% of cocoa producing areas by July 2008. The process is a **continuous improvement cycle** of living and working conditions of farmers. It involves four stages:

- Initial diagnosis surveying,
- Survey reporting,
- Implementing social protection programs (as a response to the results of the survey) ; and
- Independent monitoring.

On July 1st 2008, a partial assessment of the certification cycle should read as follows:

- **Initial Diagnosis Surveying:** a pilot project was realized in three administrative regions, during the 2006-2007 harvest cycles (the report was published on November 30, 2007) as well as a standard nationwide survey, carried out in 18 administrative regions all selected at random from mid-November to March 2008.
- **Reporting:** a group of three experts is in charge of drafting the report which should be published by the end of May 2008.
- **Actions:** financing child protection and/or prevention measures is underway as well as basic investment in schools, health care centers, roads and drinking water. Following the conclusions drawn by the different stakeholders on the field, a workshop was organized, enabling the government to create the institutional framework conducive to the implementation of new programs of social protection or prevention involving both the private and public sectors. Additional financing is required from the private sector. The report of a field visit organized on April 2008 will be available on June 3, 2008.
- **Independent Monitoring:** a Committee including the cocoa sector, the civil society and the government was created. The group of auditors was short listed during the meeting of the monitoring committee held in London in April.

The first meeting of the Committee on the instruments used to realize both pilot and national surveys is to be held in May 2008.

The government did highly appreciate the two American Congressmen's visit in Abidjan on 8-9 January 2008. The mission allowed them to better understand the sociological environment of the phenomenon as well as to create awareness among Ivorian decision makers and stakeholders of the cocoa chain.

Besides, the government commends the initiative by the Bill and Belinda Gates Foundation to be involved in improving the working and living conditions of children involved cocoa farmers.

To conclude, Côte d'Ivoire remains actively committed and mobilized on child labor in cocoa farming. Therefore, the Government requests that the sector be not depicted as depending on child labor. We request not to be on the list of countries where such practices prevail. Such a move could be tantamount to economic and social chaos for a country which draws 40% of its GDP from the sector and which is just emerging from a long socio political crisis.