

Tool 2: Multi-Stakeholder Approaches to Tackling Forced Labor in West African Cocoa

Following high-profile advocacy from civil society groups and several media reports alleging the use of child labor in cocoa production in West Africa, the international confectionary industry and the Governments of Ghana, Côte D'Ivoire (CDI) and the United States signed the Harkin-Engel Protocol in 2001. The Protocol committed industry groups to identifying and eliminating labor abuses in the cocoa industry supply chain. As part of this agreement, the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) was established in 2002.

The ICI is a multi-stakeholder initiative that includes both private industry (brands and cocoa processors) with civil society (trade unions and NGOs). The ICI's Board of Directors includes industry representatives such as Kraft, Nestle, Mars and Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) alongside anti-slavery and labor organizations such as Free the Slaves and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). The ICI works at the national, industry and community levels to strengthen each stakeholders work through awareness raising, policy advocacy, and capacity building.

The results of the ICI since its founding have resulted in large scale outcomes from the original investment. For example, the ICI has held 7,000 community mobilization meetings, reaching out to over 250,000 community members and trained more than 1,600 involved citizens on forced labor and human trafficking. Further, it worked with local governments and communities to implement Community Action Plans designed to sustainably reduce to vulnerability of children to the worst forms of child labor.

None of these tasks could have been accomplished by any one stakeholder working in isolation. The partnership approach allowed the brands involved to impact cocoa communities in a more meaningful, comprehensive way than a series of uncoordinated, possibly duplicated efforts, from individual companies.

A multi-stakeholder approach also characterized the International Cocoa Verification Board (ICVB), which was convened by Verité in December 2007. This non-profit Board faced the task of overseeing the third party independent verification of data concerning the extent of forced and child labor in Ghana and CDI. Prior to the formation of the multi-stakeholder board, discussions around verification were characterized by conflict and heated debate. Bringing stakeholders from industry, civil society and government to the same table allowed for open and transparent engagement between all parties, and the Board successfully tackled complex issues in the verification process. Without this forum for dialogue, verification efforts may have been defeated by lack of communication. Instead, the Board succeeded in keeping the well-being of cocoa farmers and their families at the forefront of all efforts.

Groups such as the ICI and the ICVB played critical a role in advancing the goals of the Harkin Engel protocol, and paved the way for the follow-up 2010 Framework of Action, by bringing stakeholders together rather than maintaining the status quo of isolated stakeholders working in opposition.

Further Resources:

- <http://www.verite.org/Commodities/Cocoa>
- <http://www.cocoainitiative.org>

