



INTERIM EVALUATION BRIEF | JULY 2024

COOPERATIVES ADDRESSING CHILD LABOR ACCOUNTABILITY OUTCOMES (CACAO)

An image book displayed by a Committee for Child Protection member in Petit-Paris. Photo Credit: Alexis Koffi

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Côte d'Ivoire is the world's leading producer of cocoa beans, but the exploitation of child labor in the cocoa supply chain persists. To support the Ivorian Government and cocoa-producing communities in addressing this issue, USDOL is financing CACAO. This five-year project, implemented by Save the Children in partnership with the NGO 2A, engages cocoa cooperatives in the departments of Daloa and Vavoua in the Haut-Sassandra region. The goal is to increase the number of cocoa cooperatives showing a reduction in child labor. To reach that goal, CACAO is pursuing two objectives: to improve the capacity of cocoa cooperatives to monitor child labor in the cocoa supply chain, and to increase support for vulnerable households within cocoa cooperative societies.

To assess progress and determine potential opportunities for adjustment, USDOL commissioned The Mitchell Group, Inc. (TMG) to conduct an independent interim performance evaluation of CACAO. Full report results and learning: [\[Link\]](#).

KEY RESULTS

OUTCOME 1: Improve the capacity of cocoa cooperatives to monitor child labor in the cocoa supply chain.

- The CACAO awareness campaigns have been very effective at informing households, producers, and cooperatives about the worst forms of child labor that are forbidden by law. These are now well known in the project region.
- Cocoa cooperatives have gained accounting, recordkeeping, and planning tools that improve their functioning and management. This can indirectly mitigate the child labor problem, despite low participation among the cooperatives in the child labor programming activities.
- The best tool for both raising awareness and monitoring cases is the Committee for Child Protection (CPEs). However, the current structure requires revenue generating activities for sustainability.
- Trainings for social service workers and resources to help them protect children have effectively improved capacity and allowed them to address select at-risk cases, despite their limited capacity to reach rural communities.

OUTCOME 2: Increase support for vulnerable households within cocoa cooperative societies.

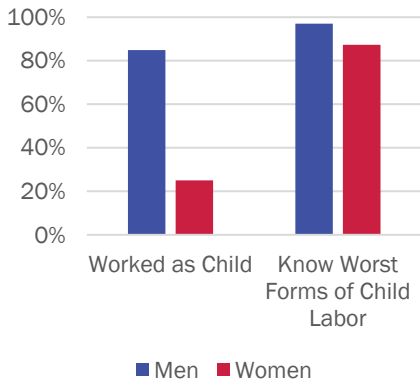
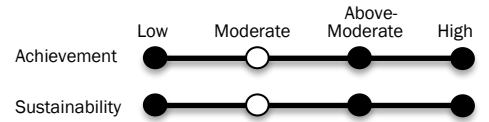
- Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLAs) programs have been very effective at raising household incomes. Some are even supporting public services, such as school construction.
- Farmer field schools are teaching agroforestry techniques to farmers, which is boosting their productivity and also providing environmental benefits.
- Households are increasingly interested in sending their children to school as an alternative to working in cocoa fields. However, this requires robust Self-Help Farmer Groups (SHFGs) to replace the labor, as well as available schools

DETAILED RESULTS

OUTCOME 1

While child labor remains widespread in Daloa and Vavoua, few cases are reported through official channels. The finding is attributable to several factors, including the limited resource capacity of social service workers and challenges with community-level oversight of child labor.

CACAO’s robust awareness campaigns, particularly through the Committees for Child Protection, have been effective: overall, 92% of survey respondents are familiar with the prohibited forms of child labor. Yet, the team found little impact from the “Core of Champions” individuals meant to promote anti-child labor compliance at the community level; community members expressed rarely seeing them, and cooperatives have yet to fully embrace the Champions’ role in the project.



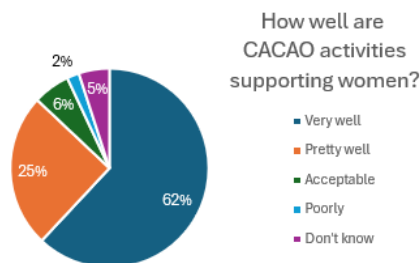
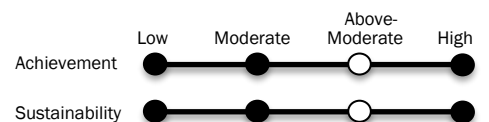
While discrete activities are improving the monitoring of child labor, a gap exists between the cooperatives and the local efforts to stem the problem. Cooperatives are benefitting from CACAO management trainings, which help their bottom line. However, they show little active engagement with communities beyond the buying of crops. Local producer-members speak of the cooperatives in the third person. CACAO has supported steering committee meetings, but the cooperatives have not been regular participants, and the *relais communautaires* – meant to monitor child labor on behalf of the cooperatives – have not been active enough. Working with cooperatives to promote the government’s traceability standards may be one way to enhance their engagement on child labor.

Committees for Child Protection, established by Côte d’Ivoire’s Child Labor Monitoring System (the System of Observation and Oversight of Child Labor in Côte d’Ivoire - SOSTECI) with support from CACAO, are instrumental in raising awareness and monitoring cases. Yet, they have little connection to the cooperatives and are not yet sustainable: members report working too much and receiving little in return. Planned revenue-generating activities will be important for their continued success.

Trainings for social service workers have been effective and appreciated. Their reach, and the overall effectiveness of the project, could be enhanced if they had improved resources for reaching project locations. CACAO must therefore remain ardent advocates for related social service funding from the Ivoirian government. Better CACAO project marketing would also enhance project intake, both in local communities and among supporting structures.

OUTCOME 2

CACAO has supported state agricultural agencies to implement farmer field schools, which have improved the productivity of planters. Farmers now practice regular brush clearing, weeding, and interspersing trees among their crops, leading to increased outputs. The practices also provide environmental benefits, such as erosion protection.



The local VLSAs that CACAO has supported have had an impressive impact on the capacity of vulnerable households to raise revenue, and thus decrease their reliance on child labor. Primarily serving women members, the associations succeed by assigning facilitators who are compensated and who keep the associations well-organized. VSLAs and facilitators should remain effective even after the compensation mechanism is removed, because members recognize their value. Both men and women touted the benefits, such as providing seed capital for household businesses, fortifying community cohesion, and generating funds for public goods activities.

CACAO promotes two complementary messages among households in the targeted communities – that children should not perform dangerous and illegal work in cocoa fields, and that they should instead be in school. The message is spreading, but two complications arise: 1) not all communities have suitable schools, and 2) vulnerable households may face a shortage of farm labor. The Government of Côte d’Ivoire aims to construct more schools, while local SHFGs – with support from CACAO – address the labor shortage by tending to others’ fields. The SHFGs receive informal payments from landowners upon harvest and sale, but their contributions to resolving the collective need for labor could be reinforced with consistent compensation rates, improved organization, and perhaps the addition of regular revenue generation through other farming-related activities.

PROMISING PRACTICES

This interim performance evaluation identified the following promising practices:

1. Project-funded facilitators to guide VSLAs are effective and help professionalize these groups. VSLAs are likely to continue funding facilitators post-project given their demonstrated benefit.
2. Locally embedded project/partner staff and community leaders reinforce messaging against socio-economic norms perpetuating child labor.
3. Providing training/support to local government and CSO stakeholders to regularly conduct activities and reinforce project messaging allows for greater impact in target communities.
4. Using visual tools in low-literacy communities allows everyone to benefit from project awareness raising and training materials.

LESSONS LEARNED

This interim performance evaluation identified the following lessons learned:

1. While civil servant trainings are needed, their impact will still be limited without government financial capacity to travel and conduct activities.
2. While CPEs are motivated and effective in addressing child labor, they will require a funding mechanism long-term to be sustainable.
3. Staff turnover was disruptive to project activities, so promptly addressing staff and implementing partner concerns/workload is critical.
4. While project marketing is important to push community commitment to outcomes, CACAO messaging was not prominent in targeted communities, potentially reducing impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This interim performance evaluation identified the following recommendations, organized by intended audience:

GRANTEE

1. Continue, diversify, and expand capacity building trainings.
2. Incentivize cooperatives' investment in fighting child labor by collaborating with the government on traceability requirements.
3. Support increased visibility and leverage of the local Child Labor Monitoring System, SOSTECI.
4. Develop plans to implement revenue generating activities for CPEs.
5. Address the administrative relationship with local partner 2A, including resource provision.
6. Improve the visibility and reporting responsibility of child labor champions.
7. Expand the marketing of CACAO activities to improve community knowledge of project.
8. Expand the number of VSLAs, which have been effective and in demand.
9. Work with government agencies to support social worker mobility and outreach.
10. Improve organizational support to SHFGs to ensure that this much-needed source of labor functions effectively.

USDOL

1. Provide a no-cost extension to allow time for critical activities to have an impact.
2. Work with grantee to ensure robust staffing plan that minimizes turnover and addresses logistical needs.

EVALUATION METHODS

This performance evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach with both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The evaluation team conducted a document review that included work plans, performance indicator targets, participant rosters, training materials, and more. During the in-country portion of the evaluation, the team conducted 51 Key Informant Interviews, 12 Focus Groups, and Focused Assessment Surveys with 122 respondents. In addition, the evaluation included observations and data collection in three participant communities and with two cooperatives at their operation centers.

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