



WORLD CHILD LABOUR DAY

ICI STATEMENT

Working towards responsible labour standards for cocoa growing

On June 12, 2007, World Child Labour Day focuses on the plight of the estimated 132 million of children working in agriculture around the world. The International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) welcomes this attention which supports our mandate to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and forced labour in the growing of cocoa.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recognised the issues in the agriculture sector when it stated last year that *“Unless a concerted effort is applied to reducing child labour in agriculture, it will be impossible to achieve the ILO goal of elimination of all the worst forms of child labour by 2016”* Missing this goal will also put at risk achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals to dramatically reduce poverty.

At ICI, we are doing our part to ensure this does not come to pass. A unique partnership between labour unions, NGOs, cocoa processors and each of the major chocolate manufacturers, ICI is dedicated to developing a cocoa supply chain free from child labour. On the occasion of World Child Labour Day, ICI welcomes the initiative of the ILO, FAO, IFAD, IFPRI, FIPA and IUF in making a firm and clear commitment to working towards the elimination of child labour in agriculture. Placing the issue of child labour in the mainstream of agricultural development is both necessary and timely.

The reality is child labour is often difficult to detect, obscured by accepted social practices and, most importantly, deliberately concealed by those breaking the law. ICI’s programmes work with cocoa-growing communities collaboratively to change behaviour and raise awareness. *“Before children were working hard in the farms.*

We didn't know this was harmful to them. Now the children are cared for, they no longer do hazardous work. We make sure they go to school and attendance has greatly improved." Nana Kwame Buah, Chief of Sika Nti Village, Ghana.

The ICI's work in cocoa producing communities has shone a spotlight on the practices that put children at risk, keep them out of school and make them vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers. Our work to date also demonstrates how to most efficiently affect change by empowering cocoa-growing communities. ICI's programmes address economic needs, invest in education and build local capacity while working with Governments around the world. To date, ICI's pilot phase operating in just 24 communities in Ghana, means over 3,800 children are now protected against hazardous work and those of school age are getting an education.

Let us all take the opportunity presented by this special day to re-commit to the elimination of such practices -- banishing ignorance while remaining sensitive to local perspectives. Today, on World Child Labour Day, let us each remember children everywhere deserve a childhood, an education and an opportunity to escape a cycle of poverty.

For further information, please visit www.cocoainitiative.org