

Combatting Illegal Child Labor in the West African Chocolate Industry

United Nations Human Rights Council

I. Introduction

The Human Rights Council is one of ten United Nations Treaty Body. This committee is dedicated to monitoring the correct implementation from the states of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In this committee, states debate human rights concerns and examine reports and rules on individual communications related. It is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe (United Nations Human Rights Council).

Chocolate comes from the cacao bean, which comes from the tropical climates of different places around the world such as Western Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Mostly from Western African countries, such as Ghana and the Ivory Coast. These countries supply more than 70% of the world's cocoa. "The farms of Western Africa supply cocoa to international companies such as Hershey's, Mars, and Nestlé—revealing the industry's direct connection to the worst forms of child labor, human trafficking, and slavery" ("Child Labor and Slavery"). Recently, many organizations and journalists have been exposing horrible child labor and slavery that is happening in Western Africa. By this time, the different corporations have been making the work difficult for reports to have any type of connection with the farms where human rights have been violated.

II. History and Description of the Issue

Vocabulary

To start with, Child labor is defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity. Child labor and child slavery are often confused. According to, an article by international human rights organisation, antislavery approximately 151.6 million kids are suffering from child labor around the world and aproximatly 114 million child laborers are under the 14 years old. Child labor harms children not only mentally and physically but, it obstructs their education development. Besides, it often happens when the child is in the care of its parents. "Child slavery happens when a child's labor is exploited for someone else's gain" ("Child Labor and Slavery").

Origins and Causes

Around the world economic classes have always dominated society. During the Industrial Revolution as a child, it was terrifying and at the same time wonderful to be a child. As said before, this depends on the family's economic status. "Children from lower-class families generally joined

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the workforce” (Eichner, “Class Distinctions”). Not only in the agricultural sector, but in mining too. It is said that the Industrial Revolution started in the years between 1760 to 1850. This was a time where Europe and the United States started innovating a more industrial lifestyle. There were impactful changes made such as transportation (from boats to the usage of trains), steam power started and from the country to the cities. These innovations that were made in England and the United States impacted the lives of many people, but mainly in kids. As stated before, kids at some point have always been part of farm jobs, and textiles. As life started going on everything changed into a more metropolitan and industrialized/modern area, and this led to fewer domestic job opportunities. This leads children to work outside. Textile factories start employing children, the conditions were strict, they were times in which they worked for approximately 14 hours long or even overnight shifts. Most of cocoa farmers located in West Africa, earn about \$2 per day, this is estimated to be lower than the income of poverty line (“Child Labor and Slavery”). This means the rank of poverty is really high. For decades this problem wasn’t seen as a problem with child labor. In those times, most children didn’t have the special protection that is seen nowadays, the main ideology in those times were that each member of the family should collaborate with the economy of the house (Eichner, “Class Distinctions”).

Once the United States and Europe became a more developed country, they start relying on underdeveloped countries. Most children with low income end up working on cocoa farms, as a way of contributing to their families. Besides, they are assured by traffickers that the payment will be good. On other cases, children are sold or trade by their own families to traffickers or landowners, who need people to work in their lands. Families sometimes aren’t aware of how they are exposing their children to a dangerous environment and work. Once the kids are taken to small villages in West Africa, these children may not see their families for years... Nowadays, “Africa has the largest number of child laborers; 72.1 million African children are estimated to be in child labor and 31.5 million in hazardous work” (“Child Labour in Africa”).

The causes of this problematic vary... Poverty, farmers don’t make enough money to stand their business and Cocoa prices, yields at the same time are low. Farmers don’t have enough money to pay for adult services... They have “no choice” than using children for this work. In addition, children are used because of their size and weight. They can move and fit easier in whatever place they are ordered to work. These kids work to somehow support their families. Their limited access to education in Africa. There is an impressive lack of schools and teachers in West Africa. Most people that have a school in the regions where they live, they don’t have the budget to actually pay for it.

On a normal day, their labors start at six in the morning and they end in the evening.[18] “Some of the children use chainsaws to clear the forests. Other children climb the cocoa trees to cut bean pods using a machete” (“Child Labor and Slavery”). Children use different kinds of instruments that may harm them. Most of them have been banned by the international labor laws and the UN convention on finishing with child labor. “Once they finish with the cutting of the bean pods from the plantations, children pack the pods in special sacks that weight approximately 100 pounds” (“Child Labor and Slavery”). Aly Diabate, a former cocoa slave, said, “Some of the bags were taller than me. It took two people to put the bag on my head. And when you didn’t hurry, you were beaten” (“Child Labor and Slavery”). It’s impressive how a lot of companies want to stop child labor, but they haven’t take the time to see where they own production of cocoa is coming from.

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According to Peter Whoriskey - a reporter who investigates the different financial issues and writes for the Washington Post - Mars, maker of M&M's and Milky Way, can trace only 24 percent of its cocoa back to farms; Hershey, the maker of Kisses and Reese's, less than half; Nestlé can trace 49 percent of its global cocoa supply to farms.

III. International Response and Bloc Analysis

Child labor is and it will always be unacceptable and unfair not only because it's taking a way the opportunity of letting progress a child in their education, but prohibiting them of being free. They've stated that kids are and will always be the most vulnerable part of a country. Besides, in the Sustainable Development Goals has stated to eliminate all forms of child labour by 2025 ("Child Labour in Africa"). Ngo's has been part of various projects created around the world...Such as *The Global March Against Child Labour* is basically, a network were teachers, trade unions, and civil society that is against child labor and their main goal as an organization is the elimination of this problematic. Their programs focus on community participation, such as the Creation of Child-Friendly Communities to End Child Labour and they also attack the core of the issue by Addressing Child Labour and Trafficking In Supply Chains. Another project is *Love 46*, their main goal is to work with children who have passed through this problem and lead them to normal lives. Almost all the projects have the same goal, for this one their ultimate goal is to stop child trafficking and exploitation entirely. This organization has been working to advocating and making education programs for prevention. By education these children, the can feel protected and at the same time protect themselves.

IV. Committee Mission

Throughout the debate it has been stated the different causes of this problematic that has not only affected West Africa, but the world in general. Child labour has not only affected children by the trauma of coercion, but the threats of penalty, and lack of freedom. It requires urgent action from governments and the international community ("Child Labour in Africa"). The committee's should look around for countries with a high economic statues that could invest in helping stop child labour. Delegates should have in conscience that "Africa is the only region in the world where the overall number of extremely poor people is increasing rather than decreasing," according to the World Bank's latest Poverty and Shared Prosperity report (Müller-Jung). Besides, delegates should take a deeper look in all the different ways that the NGO's is helping different organizations. The main goal of this committee is to discuss further solutions and ways of educating families around Africa to never sell their kids for a certain amount of money.

Questions for Further Consideration

1. What are the main obstacles to achieve the elimination of Child Labour in Western Africa?
2. How can governments and people around the world could accelerate action against child labor?
3. What might be the hardest risk of helping Western Africa as a foreign?

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V. Annotated links for further research

a) General country Research

[African Studies and African Country Resources](#): This website shows different aspects of Africa. For example, the political, economical, social and cultural.

b) Committee Links

<https://www.ohchr.org>: This is the link to the Human Rights Council webpage. It provides information about the committee and the basic information.

c) Topic Links

[Child Labor](#): This website explains the history of child labor in a Africa. It talks about how this problem has evolutionate thru time.

[Cocoa's child laborers](#): This website provides a real "interview " with children that were in the cocoa farms. Children were really scared that someone would see them answering some of the questions that they were being asked...

[International Labour Organization](#): This website explains how Africa has grown in child labor since 2016. It shows how in 2025 child labor may be over...

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