

Cocoa Industry Under Attack for Failing to Act on Child Labor

Wednesday 30 May 2018, by [JHA Manisha](#) (Date first published: 19 May 2018).

The cocoa industry is nowhere close to meeting its commitments to reducing child labor and environmental degradation and, in the top growers, the number of children working to produce the chocolate ingredient is actually increasing, according to a report.

Despite more than a decade of efforts, 2.1 million children continue to work in West Africa alone, according to Cocoa Barometer 2018, published by several non-government organizations including Oxfam and Voice Network. Although there was a slight relative decline in child labor, an increase in overall cocoa production means absolute numbers have risen, according to the report.

Cocoa output has increased fourfold since 1960, resulting in the elimination of more than 90 percent of West Africa's original forests, according to the report. The remaining forests must be protected, it said. Ivory Coast and Ghana are the biggest producers.

"Sector-wide efforts to improve the lives of farmers, communities and the environment are having little impact; the scope of proposed solutions is not even in the ballpark of addressing the scope of the problem."

Random audits and adopting a zero-tolerance policy on paper haven't succeeded, the report said. The industry and governments need to tackle systemic poverty and the lack of local infrastructure.

"It is a matter of urgency for efforts to be increased -- in funding as well as in ambition and political will."

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