WHAT CAUSES CHILD LABOR?

Child labor in cocoa, as in many other industries, has no one cause. There are often complex and deep-rooted cultural, social, and economic challenges at play. Farmers cannot always afford to pay for farm labor, so their children help on the farm at weekends or after school.

Some parents have no school nearby to send their children to or they cannot provide the documents needed to enroll them, such as birth certificates. Sometimes labor laws are misunderstood or cannot be effectively enforced. The complexity of the problem means one intervention will never be enough – it requires a range of long-term actions at the individual, community, and national levels.

HOW WE ARE ACTING TO ADDRESS CHILD LABOR

100% direct traceability and child labor monitoring

In 2020, we achieved 100% traceability of our direct, global supply chain, which is cocoa procured directly from farmers, or from a farm, farmer group, or cooperative. This is a vital step forward on the road to eliminating child labor completely and putting children first in cocoa. And we rolled out child labor monitoring in collaboration with the Fair Labor Association (FLA) across all our managed sustainability programs, covering 218,437 cocoa households in nine countries. The data is helping us to identify children at risk and take effective action to remediate cases of child labor. This includes extending the monitoring to countries like Papua New Guinea, after our monitoring flagged the country as an emerging hotspot for cocoa-related child labor in 2020.

Action to tackle the root causes of child labor

We have been working for two decades with customers, partners, governments, former groups, and communities to deliver tailored programs that put children first and tackle the root causes of child labor. This includes improving access to educational support by 73% since 2018 by building and equipping classrooms, establishing birth certificates for children so they can be admitted to school, setting up Village Savings and Loans Associations to help reduce poverty in cocoa communities, establishing child protection committees, and creating educational funds.

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A spotlight on Ghana

We invited Save The Children and its Centre for Child Rights and Business to assess how effectively we combat child labor across four of our key cocoa-growing countries, including Ghana, and to identify areas where we could focus our efforts. Save The Children found our programs have real reach and impact. That is in Ghana, where we have set up protection committees covering 210 communities. It found that our strengths lie in our holistic approach, which considers a range of root causes, the link we have made between traceability and child labor monitoring, and the end-out of our digital Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation System app. As a result of the study, we intend to build on child labor training programs and measure their impact through before and after assessments. We plan to more strongly link community protection programs with our supply chain operations and create more robust outcome indicators to ensure we are making a real difference.