



PRESS RELEASE

'Prioritise child well-being and community development in the cocoa sector' says Embode

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Dominican Republic - International consulting group Embode released '*Children at the Heart*' today, the first two in a series of three reports on child labour in the cocoa sectors of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Indonesia commissioned by Mondelez International.

Embode's research found that a complex array of conditions and factors, such as economic and structural poverty, persistent cultural practices, child vulnerability and labour migration, enabled child labour in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Embode's report issued eight recommendations, calling on cocoa producers to place more emphasis on child well-being and community development.

"Any intervention we make must take a child-centred approach, recognising the child within the ecology of their family and community," said Aarti Kapoor, Managing Director of Embode and Lead Researcher on the project. "Child labour does not exist in a vacuum, and is far from being limited to cocoa," added Kapoor. "Tackling the complex problem of child labour requires a complex solution – we must address the livelihoods and basic services for quality education, health and social services in communities over time," said Kapoor.

Mondelez International's Cocoa Life programme has been heralded as a promising approach, fostering the transformation of communities over time and helping tackle the root enablers of child labour. The Cocoa Life programme has a significant community development component, and is implemented on the ground through multi-year partnerships with international non-governmental organisations.

Building on Mondelez's achievements, Embode called for more focus on child protection and well-being using school systems as entry-points for proactive child protection interventions into child labour; more robust impact reporting to enable

enabling a continuous cycle of learning; and better access to quality education for children.

“We value Embode’s insights and plan to implement the recommendations for our Cocoa Life programme,” said Cathy Pieters, Director of Cocoa Life. “We’ll consult with our programme partners and government authorities to strengthen existing child protection structures, improve access to education and continue to address root causes like poverty in Cocoa Life communities in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire.”

Compliance-driven approaches have been the major focus of efforts addressing child labour issues in the cocoa sector. “Compliance-driven approaches cannot work on their own – or else they run the risk of shutting out farmers and pushing incidences underground or onto another community,” warns Kapoor.

“Child well-being in cocoa-growing communities means that children need to be safe from all harm and exploitation, not just child labour in cocoa. They need to grow in an environment that enables them to thrive, not just survive,” said Kapoor.

Child labour, including its worst forms, continues to be of significant concern to the cocoa sector, particularly in West Africa. Despite efforts by industry, governments and the international community over the last two decades, child labour in cocoa is prevalent in both Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana. According to a recent survey conducted by the University of Tulane, there are over 2 million children engaged in hazardous child labour in cocoa in the two countries combined.

The full reports and executive summaries can be downloaded at [here](#).

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Note to Editors

Embode is an independent international consulting agency specialising in business and human rights, child protection and organisational analysis.

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