Bitter Truth Behind Sweet Chocolate

Potential Solutions to Eliminating Child Labor in the Chocolate Industry

Tag Words: cocoa, child labor, child slavery, chocolate, Ivory coast, Cote d’Ivoire, Hershey, Mars, Mondelez, Fair trade, education, Africa

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Summary: Child labor and chocolate don’t mix very well. The demand for cheaper cocoa by multinational companies has resulted in cocoa farmers using child laborers to keep their costs down. Children should be eating the chocolates not producing the ingredients for them. We have written to the CEOS of the largest chocolate manufacturers in the US to request that they consider helping the cocoa farmer financially by eliminating the middlemen in the purchasing of cocoa and by donating equipment that would essentially lessen the need for man-power (and effectively eliminating the need to hire children) in the harvesting of the cocoa. We also hope to deliver a lesson plan to educate Ivorian youth about child labor this (2015) summer.

Video Link: https://youtu.be/83On--Qc0d0

Child labor is prevalent in the cocoa industry. Do consumers of chocolate know that they are supporting child labor practices?

Today, despite efforts of trying to eliminate child labor, child abuse, and child trafficking, cocoa farms today still use children to harvest the cocoa. Cocoa farms are becoming less ethical day by day in order to meet the manufacturer’s’ demand for cheap cocoa. Farmers resort to letting go of ‘of age’ workers and hiring children that are paid much less than older workers (or sometimes they don’t get paid at all). Oftentimes cocoa farmers provide the children with a minimum amount of food that they can survive on, consisting of only corn or bread. These malnourished (therefore small) children are then tasked with climbing trees to cut down the cocoa pods with heavy and sharp machetes, cutting through the forest sometimes using chainsaws, and moving the sac filled with cocoa pods which often weigh much more than the children themselves. They have little or no medical help when injured at work either.

Cote d’Ivoire, being the greatest producer of cocoa globally, suffers from one of the worst forms of child labor/ slavery. Children as young as 5 years old are kidnapped, sold, and trafficked to work at these cocoa farms, where they’re whipped, locked up in small rooms, and beaten if the work seems slow or if they try to escape. These children deserve, like any other child, proper education, moral support, and proper nutrition for their future. As it is the youth that will lead the country in the future, it is important that children receive a proper education. The country should recognize this and provide more oversight in the welfare of the countries’ children.
Although Cote d’Ivoire provides the largest percentage of cocoa used worldwide, the country remains extremely poor. Cocoa farmers earn so little money from selling their cocoa to middlemen that then sell to chocolate companies worldwide, that they’re limited in what they can pay its workers and therefore, they commonly use child labor. The large chocolate companies that are purchasing the cocoa from the middlemen should rethink their purchasing practices. Perhaps the large chocolate manufacturers could seek to eliminate the middleman in this operation, the ones that buy the cocoa directly from the farmers for a very low price and sell to the large manufacturers for higher price, pocketing the difference. Perhaps American chocolate companies should identify and send their own representatives to buy directly from the cocoa farmers. A more intimate relationship between the end company (like Hershey’s, Mars and Mondelez International) and the producer (the cocoa farm owner) will encourage/incentivize both sides to adhere to ethical labor practices. This new relationship may also identify how the large chocolate corporations can aid the cocoa farmers with mechanizing their harvest and preparation of the cocoa by providing equipment to the farmer that now they can’t afford. This new equipment will likely reduce the “man-power” needed to harvest and process the cocoa and hopefully, eliminate child labor. After all, it is the large chocolate corporations that do have a tremendous investment in cocoa and they should recognize that their helping the farmer become more efficient will help the chocolate corporation in the long run (both ethically and financially).

**Cocoa Industry**

Cocoa beans are the major ingredient in chocolate production, which are seeds of the cocoa fruits (cocoa pods). Cocoa fruits from cacao trees grow in very specific climates and therefore only a few major countries produce and export the majority of the global supply of cocoa. Cacao trees flourish only in the hot, rainy tropics, in a swath 20 degrees north and south of the Equator (1). The cocoa industry is a global supply chain; countries with appropriate climates harvesting and exporting cocoa, and countries without the appropriate climates importing the goods. Cocoa beans go through a complicated production process including farmers, buyers, shipping organizations, processors, manufacturers, chocolatiers, and distributors (2). There is a global demand for chocolate and the industry is worth billions. By 2016, the global chocolate market is expected to be worth $98.3 billion (3).

Because of the very specific conditions required for cocoa production due to sensitive and delicate nature of cocoa trees, the majority of the cocoa farms are in hot and rainy countries like Cote d’Ivoire, Indonesia or Ghana. The Ivory Coast (Cote d’Ivoire) which supplies 30 percent of the world’s total cocoa, leads the rest of the world by over half a million metric tons with a total crop of 1,485,822 tons (3). Figure 1 displays the countries that are top cocoa producing countries (red) and the top cocoa importing countries (yellow). According to the map, West Africa supplies more than half of the world’s cocoa. These cocoa farms are usually small family farms that require intensive labor including constant physical labor of cutting the pods off the cacao trees with machetes. Also, these cocoa trees can be difficult to manage and require constant watch over the trees for pests or diseases.
Does Cocaine come from cocoa plants?
A very common misconception about Cacao trees is that Cocaine comes from the same tree as cocoa. This is because of the similarity in names of the trees: Cocaine comes from Coca plants and Cocoa comes from Cacao or Cocoa plants. This misconception is common also because many cacao-producing countries export Cocaine as well. Both Coca and Cocoa plants are cultivated mainly in Africa and Southeast Asia, both thriving best in hot and damp areas (5). However, the specie name of the Cocoa plant is Theobroma Cacao and the name of Coca plants is Erythroxylum Coca; completely different species. Also, while the source of cocaine is the leaf of coca trees, the source of cocoa is the cocoa pod seeds, the seed of the fruit of the tree.
Cocoa Bean Production

Since the cocoa trees need constant care from sun exposure, pests and diseases, workers are required to stay out in the field in hot and humid weather all throughout the day. Workers usually start working early in the morning and end work late at night. Cacao trees are especially susceptible to disease. Most common are fungi that rot the pods, such as witches broom, black pod and frosty pod rot. The pods are also vulnerable to pests like the cocoa pod borer, which are moth larvae that infiltrate the pods (6).

Ripe pods may be found throughout the continuous growing season; however, most countries have two peak production harvests per year (2). When the pods are ripe, workers, oftentimes children, use machetes or similar tools to remove them and cut them open to collect seeds inside. In this process, often workers hurt themselves from using the tools, sometimes leading to severe cuts. But cocoa farms rarely have proper first aid supplies or skills to handle the injuries, so the workers often work with open wounds. Workers then pack the cocoa beans into boxes or stack them into piles. This packing and stacking process is labor intensive because of how heavy they are. Then the cocoa beans are fermented. They have a layer of liquid surrounding the beans, which causes natural fermentation by heating them up. This process of fermenting is what essentially gives the chocolate flavor to the seeds when they’re dried. The beans stay uncrushed until they reach the manufacturer and are ready to be grinded and pressed, in order to be made into variety of cocoa products such as chocolate, cocoa butter, or cocoa powder (2).

After the beans are all packed and ready to be sold, since most cocoa farms are small averaging about 7-10 acres, farmers often sell these beans to a buying station or a local agent or middleman, not to the manufacturer (6). The middlemen buy the cocoa directly from the farmers for a very low price and sell to the large manufacturers for higher price, pocketing the difference.

The Cocoa Market Today
Cocoa prices have risen year after year as the demand for the product increases (7). Chocolate is hugely popular. Chocolate manufacturers are constantly coming up with bigger and better marketing strategies to sell more of their products. Chocolate treats play a key role in celebrated holidays like Valentine’s Day, Christmas, Halloween, Easter, and Pocky Day (in Asia) which encourages the purchase and consumption of chocolate. Many cafes and restaurants are coming up with more luxurious dessert menus, and European dessert companies are becoming more popular as well. Today, desserts not only include just chocolate candy bars or ice creams, but include high-class luxury products.

One might expect that the revenues earned by the cocoa farmers, who provide the commodity, should increase as well. However, such is not the case. In 2014, the total global retail value sales of chocolate confectionery reached a staggering 100 billion dollars - an increase of 20 billion from 2012 (8). At the same time, many cocoa farmers and workers in Africa and Asia did not see a rise in their income and were earning less than 1.25 USD a day; below the limit of poverty. It is somewhat ironic that they’re
involved in the fast growing chocolate industry with an even greater future potential, but still struggle to provide food and clean water for themselves.

Fig 2. Breakdown of retail unit price of 100g of chocolate by each component (Euromonitor International (9))

While the profits of multinational chocolate companies have increased since the 1980s, the world market price for cocoa beans has declined by half (inflation-adjusted). Cocoa growers today receive about 6% of the price that consumers in rich countries pay for chocolate. In the 1980s their share was almost three times as great: 16% (8). So in reality, when the cocoa product, especially the chocolate, industry has been growing in demand and economically, the cocoa farmers are having tougher time maintaining their everyday lives; many cocoa farmers in fact have never even tasted chocolate in their lives. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of retail unit price of chocolate in 2013, 2014, and the forecast of what will happen in 2020. This graph is showing that the solution to the rising unit price of chocolate without raising the retail price of chocolate is raising the price of cocoa.
itself. But you can see that even after the cocoa price has increased, it still holds a very minimal percentage in the manufacturer’s cost of chocolate. Also, the markup, manufacturers and retailers combined, is more than half the unit price.

**2015 Top Ten Global Confectionery Companies That Manufacture Some Form of Chocolate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Net Sales 2014 (US$ millions)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mars Inc (USA)</td>
<td>18,480</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mondelēz International (USA)</td>
<td>14,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferrero Group (Luxembourg / Italy)</td>
<td>10,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nestlé SA (Switzerland)</td>
<td>10,466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meiji Co Ltd (Japan)</td>
<td>9,818*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hershey Foods Corp (USA)</td>
<td>7,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocoladenfabriken Lindt &amp; Sprüngli AG (Switzerland)</td>
<td>4,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arcor (Argentina)</td>
<td>3,500*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezaki Glico Co Ltd (Japan)</td>
<td>3,049*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August Storck KG (Germany)</td>
<td>2,272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 3. Top Ten Global Confectionery Companies That Manufacture Some Form of Chocolate, Reference: [http://www.icco.org/about-cocoa/chocolate-industry.html](http://www.icco.org/about-cocoa/chocolate-industry.html) compiled from Candy Industry, January 2015

**Child Labor in Cocoa Farms**

As chocolate demand rises, so does the demand for more and more cocoa. When the demand for cocoa rises, the revenues of cocoa farms don’t increase accordingly and the farmers resort to hiring children to work at the farm because they can pay children lower wages than proper-aged workers. On top of this, since the country suffers poverty, children are naturally called into the work force at a young age to support their family alongside their parents. It’s natural for these children to follow in their parents’ footsteps, which may times involves working at cocoa farms. That’s all they know and seen to do. For these children, going to school or playing at the playground with other children isn’t their childhood. Their childhood involves helping raising the family. These children are sometimes sold by their families or trafficked to work at the cocoa farms; being treated much like slaves. Even worse, some children are kidnapped to work. The farm owners using child labor usually provide the children with the cheapest food available, such as
corn paste and bananas (10). In some cases, the children sleep on wooden planks in small windowless buildings with no access to clean water or sanitary bathrooms (11). These children work in hazardous environments and are extremely susceptible to injuries. Their day consists of climbing trees to cut down the cocoa pods with heavy and sharp machetes, cutting through the forest sometimes using chainsaws, and transporting the sac filled with cocoa pods often weighing much more than the children themselves. These malnourished, underweight children’s lives consist only of exhausting and unreasonable work even for adults.

In the major countries involved in cocoa farming, such as Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, and Indonesia, cocoa farming is the country’s main cash crop. These countries also belong in the bottom half or lower in the ranking of amount of their international dollars, according to the International Monetary Fund (12). The economy in these countries is greatly dependent on cocoa production and exportation therefore leaving the country extremely vulnerable. The vulnerability of the country affects cocoa farms to become more vulnerable to big manufacturers. This vulnerability is the major cause of why the countries can’t recover from poverty. The lack of education in the future generations of these countries will amount to even more vulnerability; it’s a cycle of poverty. In Cote d’Ivoire, the country that produces the largest amount of cocoa throughout the world, over two-thirds of native Ivoirians work in agriculture, and children are often needed as part of the work force (13). The farmers have little to no power in determining the price of their goods. Cocoa pricing is done on the corporate level, and the farmers have no other choice but to follow.

Earning right below the threshold of absolute poverty, cocoa farmers can’t provide the workers or for themselves, proper food, shelter, clean water, or education. This also means the work force on these farms can’t be kept ethical.

A 2013 report conducted by the Government of Côte d’Ivoire and the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that more than 1.6 million children, or 73.3 per cent of the estimated 2.13 million children were working in agriculture, domestic service; mining; transportation; and commerce in stores, markets, and on the street (14). Most of the children laboring on cocoa farms are between the ages of 12 and 16, but reporters have found children as young as 5 (15).

Young children trapped in this vicious workforce will learn to accept that as their purpose, and mature to become uneducated, unhealthy, and mentally unstable adults. They will have no self-esteem, no dream, and no reason to live other than to work. These children deserve proper education to brighten their future, proper nutritional intake to fully physically mature, and moral and emotional support from family and friends in their daily lives. Instead, their countries’ poverty and manipulation of power from larger corporations are giving them nothing but lack of resources to grow as a healthy person; physically and emotionally. In other words, these children are abused physically and emotionally. There even have been reports of whipping or starving the children for slow work or attempts to escape. The need for these children to realize that the purpose of their existence is more than being trapped in abusive cocoa farming work is urgent.
It’s a chain of command; Bigger corporations pressuring cocoa farmers, to cocoa farmers pressuring workers. But there is one more category of people above bigger corporations: the consumers. Corporations chase after more profit, which come from the consumers. The consumers have the power, to demand what they want and what they don’t.

**Fair Trade and Efforts to Promote Ethical Labor in Cocoa Production**

“Fair trade is a system of international trade that reinforces ethical standards and practices in the global marketplace for agricultural goods produced in developing communities. These practices include the maintenance of fair labor conditions and wages, the eradication of child labor, sustainable approaches to agriculture, and most importantly, promoting investment into the communities of the farmers that produce these goods.” (16). Until recently, the majority of the major chocolate companies like Hershey’s still weren’t participating in the Fair Trade system. Hershey’s has since made the commitment to transition to Fair trade certified cocoa suppliers by 2020. Like many companies, Hershey’s has been vague about their cocoa source and social justice activists have been sending them letters and raising public awareness. Now that a major company like Hershey’s is following the road to ethical labor practices, other cocoa product companies will likely follow suit. In 2014, another company Clif Bars revealed the source of their cocoa (17); that they import some of their cocoa beans from Ghana and the Ivory Coast (meaning that they likely purchase cocoa from cocoa farms that use child labor). So, this is a work in progress – getting manufacturers on board and insisting on Fair Trade sourced goods.

Not too long ago, Nike became completely transparent with the working conditions of their factories in other countries. This was after numerous years of protests and promotions to raise awareness of the issues of Nike sweatshops’ unethical working environments. This issue was tackled starting with the consumers’ complaints. Then the consumers worked together to raise awareness of the issue, even involving celebrities. This finally pushed Nike to become more transparent about the working conditions and pays of their workers in their factories. Since 2005, they continue to post its commitments, standards, and audit data as part of its corporate social responsibility reports (18). The case of Nike clearly displays the possibility of significantly lessening child labor in cocoa farms, eventually completely abolishing it.

Numerous organizations are working to raise awareness of this issue, to abolish child labor in trafficking in these countries, many specific to children working in cocoa farms. But this fight won’t end too quickly nor too easy because of the involvement of large companies. The industry has done little to remove child labor, let alone aid survivors of child labor. Hershey’s, the largest chocolate manufacturer in North America, has not thoroughly addressed accusations of child labor in its supply chain and refuses to release any information about where it sources its cocoa.(19) Like so, larger companies have been ambiguous when asked about child labor involvement in the cocoa they use.

Organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) or World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) are actively working with other organizations to launch projects
and publicize the issue to support ethical cocoa production. When farmers can sell on Fairtrade terms, it provides them with a better deal and improved terms of trade. This allows them the opportunity to improve their lives and plan for their future. Fairtrade offers consumers a powerful way to reduce poverty through their everyday shopping (20). Since WFTO is a network of Fair Trade organizations worldwide, it is one of the largest organizations active today. Fair Trade organizations focus on trading ethics, monitoring pricing and the terms of trading. Products that participate and have the Fair Trade Certification have Fair Trade logo on their products and shops.

![FairTrade logo](image.png)

Fig 3. FairTrade logos found on shops and products of participating companies (Image from WTFO and FairTrade International websites)

On the other hand, ILO, a UN agency, focuses more on labor before trading. They’re devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights, pursuing its founding mission that labour peace is essential to prosperity (21). Especially against child labor, ILO created International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). They raise awareness by creating videos and holding conferences worldwide, aid the government of affected countries with planning new laws and initiating actions in fighting against child labor.

Like ILO, other organizations such as Food Empowerment Project, World Vision, Rainforest Alliance, and World Cocoa Foundation, are building schools for children, building hospitals, and rescuing children out of unethically run cocoa farms across the nation. The lack of education for these children is mainly because of lack of school and teachers so many lack accesses to education. Part of it is also because countries like Cote d’Ivoire don’t offer free public education; the law doesn’t require children to attend school at any age. Many feel helpless and relent to giving up education.

Although some of the biggest names in the chocolate industry like Nestle, Ferrero, and Lindt have made commitments to sourcing only ethical cocoa, and be child labor-free by 2020 (22), the transparency of these companies are still being questioned. Today, three men who claim to be formal child slaves at Cote d’Ivoire’s cocoa farms are suing Nestle, ADM, and Cargill for supporting child slavery. Like so, the fights against child slavery in cocoa farms have been going on as long as the cocoa industry has existed, but it still
struggles and children are still suffering. America can do something about this. We can give them more power to their voices and we can provide more support for their dreams and becoming better. We can encourage them with confidence that they have a purpose for being who they are.

**Community Action: Development of a Lesson Plan to Educate Ivorian Youth about child labor and a letter to American Chocolate Companies**

One of the authors of this paper, Seunghee Lee (Maria), is going to Cote d'Ivoire in June of 2015 through an organization named AIM (Abidjan International Ministry), as a part of a Non-governmental organization called ECCY (Empowerment Center for Children and Youth). ECCY currently has three empowerment centers in Anyama, Abobo, and Adiaké. Their mission is to encourage and empower communities to take responsibility and ownership to influence their own communities to make lasting changes. They believe this starts with empowering children, so they provide nutritional, education, medical, and social/emotional support for these children. Along with providing educational support for these children by teaching them English, Seunghee Lee (Maria) also hopes to be there for emotional support, and to deliver the message emphasizing the importance of education and spending their time being children, playing alongside other children, not working to make money. With ECCY, she looks forward to the future, which good education will bring, such as higher salary, better working conditions, and more freedom in their career choices, and these children eventually bringing about an everlasting change to their own lives to their family, to their community, to their city, eventually to their country. She hopes to deliver the lesson plan below.

**Lesson Plan for Young People that Maybe Taken Advantage of by Unethical Industries**

**Age:** 8 - 19

**Goals:**
1. Instill in them that it’s okay to say no, it’s okay to talk to someone when you’re forced to work, and that child labor and the conditions cocoa farms provide are illegal

**Objectives:**
1. Tell them about their rights
2. Let them know specifically who and how they can contact when adults are forcing them to work.
3. Difference between labor and chores at home
4. Specifics of horrible conditions in child labor at cocoa farms
5. Laws against child labor and labor conditions at cocoa farms

**Materials:** pencils, notebook

**Introduction:**
“What do your family do for a living? Where do your parents work? Have you ever worked? If so where?”
Ask if they have any personal experience of working at cocoa farms or if they know anyone that does.
“Has anyone ever been approached by people who asked you to work at a Cocoa farm? Do you know anyone that is or has in the past?”
Also ask if they’ve had experience or almost forced into cocoa farm labors, if they had any consequences of resistance.
“Do you have the experience, could you share your experience with the class? Could you warn them of the consequences?”

**Development:** Share with them the statistics of child labor in Cote d’Ivoire. Let them know what they will be missing out on if they work at the cocoa farms at a young age.
“Cote d’Ivoire is the country that produces the largest amount of cocoa and share them around the world. You also need a lot of workers for this to happen. In 2013 in Cote d’Ivoire, there were 2.13 million children working. And 1.6 million of them are involved with the worst forms of labor. They don’t get to eat properly, they don’t get to go to school, and they’re beaten and whipped.”

Explain about the importance of education.
“Do you think learning is important? Continuing coming to school and having a dream is very important. You need education to have a happier future when you grow up and have a family. You know how hard it is to continue going to school, so if you give up going to school now, your children will think the same. Many of you probably can’t or couldn’t go to school because you don’t have the money or because the school is too far. But please don’t think that it’s okay not to go to school. This is extremely dangerous. Especially girls, I know that majority of children that get the higher education are boys, but know that you deserve the same education as them. If you don’t study now, you probably can’t have your dream jobs. Also, school is not only for your studies, but also where you learn to communicate and interact with people, which are essential skills when you start working later on.”

Also talk about the laws in Cote d’Ivoire against child labor and harmful work environments.
“In Cote d’Ivoire, the minimum age allowed to work is 14. If you’re younger than that, people can’t make you work if you don’t want to. Also trafficking and forcing you to work is illegal. They’re not allowed to do that to you.”

Discuss difference between chores of helping at the family farm and laboring at a cocoa farm.
“However, you need to know the difference between helping your parents with chores and labor. If you’re helping around the house or if your family owns a farm and your parents ask you to help, that’s fine. As long as you don’t feel that it’s dangerous to work there it’s not labor. But if you’re working everyday from morning until night time, like if you see people getting beaten, whipped, or if you yourself get that kind of treatment, where you hurt yourself and you don’t get enough breaks, then that’s labor. When you’re in labor, you wouldn’t feel comfortable, and you wouldn’t feel like you’re helping.”

Teach them about what global and national organizations are doing to alleviate child labor issues worldwide and that they can contact if ever they’re approached to work at the farms.
“There are organizations like UNICEF, International Labor Rights Forum, International Cocoa Initiative, and Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, who are willing to help extract you out of the situation if you’re ever involved in forced labor or abuse at work places. If you’re ever contacted by these organizations, don’t be afraid to tell them about your situation. I know that when you start working at these bad places, they don’t give you much freedom but you can speak for yourselves and you can say no. Also, if you get the opportunities to go to school or learn, please take them. Don’t ever think that education is unnecessary. This is not only for yourself, but for the future of your country and for your family.”

**Closure:** Check again if they know exactly why child labor is wrong and that they can do something about it. End with encouragements.

“You all deserve better. You all deserve to have dreams, education, support from family for your dreams, and proper working environments. Don’t think that you’re required to work in the same field as your parents. If your parents support you learning, go for it! You have a purpose. You’re here for a reason. Be confident and stand up for yourself and your dreams.”

Talking to abuse victims needs tremendous patience and in order to help them appropriately, the helper need to be educated on the culture of the victims and the conditions of the issue. As a teacher and a supporter, I will need to be extra careful with my words, most of the time just listening to the children well and let them know that I believe their stories and validating their feelings.

Speaking with the parents of these working children will provide support for the children. It may be advantageous to first speak with the parents as a group (perhaps even with the children present) so as not to appear accusational to any one family. I may have the opportunity to speak with parents in private, allotting plenty of time for them to open up. Since I am a stranger to them, they will likely be reluctant to listen or talk to a stranger. I need to thoroughly explain the importance of their children’s education and recommend free education provided by non-profit organizations such as AIM’s ECCY program. In this process of talking with the parents, I must show respect and avoid victim blaming. To them, I may seem like a random stranger who doesn’t understand their life styles, trying to change what they’ve been doing for years, which has now become part of their culture.

**We have also sent the letter below to the following American chocolate companies that were in the 2015 Top Ten Global Confectionery Companies That Manufacture Some Form of Chocolate**

Mars Inc (USA): #1 in net sales in 2014 – CEO: Grant F. Reid
Mondelēz International (USA): #2 in net sales in 2014 – CEO: Irene Rosenfeld
Hershey Foods Corp (USA): #6 in net sales in 2014 – CEO: John P. Bilbrey

Sent to:
Grant F. Reid [grant.reid@effem.com](mailto:grant.reid@effem.com) CEO of Mars, Inc
Irene Rosenfeld [Irene.rosenfeld@mdlz.com](mailto:Irene.rosenfeld@mdlz.com) CEO of Mondelēz International
Dear CEO’s of Mars, Inc, Mondelez International, and Hershey Foods,

During our research on cocoa farms in Cote d’Ivoire, we were amazed to learn that cocoa farmers still use children to harvest the cocoa. Most consumers probably don’t realize that they are supporting child labor/slavery when they purchase products containing cocoa. As we love chocolate, we will now think twice before purchasing chocolate candy or item and seek to purchase chocolate that has the Fair Trade logo on it.

Why don’t you as a large manufacturer of chocolate goods do something about this? We understand that Hershey intends to transition to certified cocoa suppliers by 2020 – 5 years from now and some of you are taking steps to be more ethically responsible with regards to knowingly getting cocoa from farms that use child labor.

We read that manufacturers purchase the cocoa, not from the farm itself, but from middlemen that are seeking to make their own profit. The middlemen pay the cocoa farm as little as possible so that they can jack up the price to the large manufacturers and put that profit into their own pockets. A simple solution would be for you to buy direct from the cocoa farm. Perhaps you could send your own representatives to buy directly from the cocoa farmers. A more intimate relationship between your company and the actual producer (the cocoa farm owner) will likely encourage and incentivize both sides to adhere to ethical labor practices.

This new relationship may also identify how you could aid the cocoa farmers with mechanizing their harvest and preparation of the cocoa by providing equipment to the farmer that they currently can’t afford. Your donation of equipment, like cocoa bean sorting machines and forklifts that would be useful in mechanizing cocoa harvesting and production to the cocoa farmers in Cote d’Ivoire, would likely dramatically reduce the “man-power” (and need to hire low paid child workers) needed to harvest and process the cocoa. After all, it is your corporation that do has a tremendous investment in cocoa and you should recognize that your helping the farmer become more efficient will help your corporation in the long run (both ethically and financially).

We are interested in hearing your thoughts on the above.

Sincerely,

Seunghee Lee

Julie M. Fagan, Ph.D.
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
References


Letters to the Editor

Sent to pacyniakb@bnmedia.com on June 25, 2015
To the Editor of Candy Industry Magazine (candyindustry.com)
We are asking you to please publish the letter to the editor below in your Candy Industry Magazine. We also ask that you consider publishing an article about potential solutions to child labor on cocoa farms in your magazine. What we are hoping is that the end result of such awareness would result in the donation of equipment like cocoa bean sorting machines and forklifts that would be useful in mechanizing cocoa harvesting and production to the cocoa farmers in Cote d’Ivoire. This equipment would dramatically reduce the need to hire low paid child workers.

Dear Editor:

Solutions to Child Labor on Cocoa Farms

During our research on cocoa farms in Cote d’Ivoire, we were amazed to learn that cocoa farmers still use children to harvest the cocoa. Most consumers probably don’t realize that they are supporting child labor/slavery when they purchase products containing cocoa. As we love chocolate, we will now think twice before purchasing the “run of the mill” chocolate candy or item and seek to purchase chocolate that has the Fair Trade logo on it.

Why don’t the large manufacturers of chocolate goods do something about this? We understand that these manufacturers purchase the cocoa, not from the farm itself, but from middlemen that are seeking to make their own profit. The middlemen pay the cocoa farm as little as possible so that they can jack up the price to the large manufacturers and put that profit into their own pockets. A simple solution would be for the chocolate manufacturers to buy direct from the cocoa farm. Perhaps chocolate companies, like Hershey’s and Nestles, should identify and send their own representatives to buy directly from the cocoa farmers. A more intimate relationship between the end company (Hershey’s, Nestles) and the producer (the cocoa farm owner) will likely encourage and incentivize both sides to adhere to ethical labor practices.

This new relationship may also identify how the large chocolate corporations could aid the cocoa farmers with mechanizing their harvest and preparation of the cocoa by providing equipment to the farmer that they currently can’t afford. This new equipment will likely reduce the “man-power” needed to harvest and process the cocoa and hopefully, eliminate child labor. After all, it is the large chocolate corporations that do have a tremendous investment in cocoa and they should recognize that their helping the farmer become more efficient will help the chocolate corporation in the long run (both ethically and financially).

Sincerely,

Seunghee Lee

Julie M. Fagan, Ph.D.
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Response to our letter to the editor:

------------------------------ Original Message -------------------------------
Subject: RE: Publishing our Letter to the editor
From:    "Pacyniak, Bernard" <pacyniakb@bnmedia.com>
Date:    Mon, June 29, 2015 12:19 pm
To:      "Dr. Julie fagan"
          "Seunghee Lee"
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Dear Seunghee Lee,

Thank you for sending your letter, which I read with great interest. I'm glad that you are doing research on the cocoa industry and are interested in helping the industry meet challenges, such as child labor. I'd recommend, however, doing a bit more research, since the child labor issue isn't as simply resolved as providing "equipment" to help with harvesting.

First, there are hundreds of thousands of cocoa farmers in West Africa farming small plots of land, typically between 2-3 hectares. Second, cocoa farming on these small plots doesn't lend itself to mechanized harvesting. Cocoa trees and pods require inspection; harvesting is done by hand, hence the need for manual labor.

Third, for the past 10 years, the cocoa and chocolate industries have been working extremely hard to improve both the economic and social conditions of cocoa farmers in West Africa, using a series of initiatives involving farmer school programs to improve cocoa yield and quality, by building schools and medical clinics in farmer communities and establishing cooperatives. Tens of millions of dollars have been spent by multinationals, non-profits and government agencies to address the issues of child labor and farmer quality of life.

Keeping in mind that the infrastructure in many of these communities is either lacking or in very poor shape, it's difficult to easily reach farmers scattered throughout the Ivory Coast and Ghana, the largest cocoa-producing countries in the world. Second, only recently has stability returned to the Ivory Coast given the political civil unrest that was prevalent several years ago.

I'd suggest you connect with the World Cocoa Foundation to gain a bit more insight on the struggles and challenges involved in West Africa. After doing so, I'd be more than willing to consider a letter to the editor. bernie

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