



## **Child Labour In Global Value Chains: Why Children's Voices Matter**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the narratives of children working in Global Value Chains with specific reference to children working in the production of cocoa, the key ingredient in chocolate. Based on fieldwork undertaken with children in collaboration with Save the Children in Côte d'Ivoire in 2022, it discusses some of the complex, and at times contradictory, issues that arose from collecting data with these children. For example, the data showed that there are strong familial bonds between children and their caregivers but that children's health and safety are at times put at risk by the actions and choices of these caregivers. However, the novelty of this research is that it also illustrates that while child labour in cocoa has elicited controversy for many years (Berlan 2004; 2009; 2013) and many observers argue the issue is intractable without higher prices and a fundamental re-engineering of the value chain (Cocoa Barometer 2022), a more enabling environment for positive change to occur *can* be facilitated by appropriate interventions compatible with local values and the realities of the children's lives. For example, the data showed there was evidence of a strong basis for holding meaningful conversations with children and adults about how the involvement of minors in cocoa might be reshaped away from dangerous tasks in breach of ILO Convention 182. This illustrates the value of using participatory research methods with children and of giving children a voice in research and policymaking.

**Keywords:** Child-focused participatory research, cocoa, chocolate, child rights, participation