



U.S. Department of Labor

News Release

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U.S. Labor Department Funds Project to Evaluate Effectiveness of Anti-Child-Labor Efforts in the Cocoa Industry

WASHINGTON — U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao today announced the funding of a \$4.3 million project to oversee public and private efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in the cocoa sector.

"The global elimination of exploitative child labor requires a strong and sustained commitment from governments and industry," said Secretary Chao. "This \$4.3 million initiative will study the health of exploited children, train public officials in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana to monitor the incidence of child labor in the cocoa industry and report to the department and Congress on the status of child labor certification, monitoring and verification systems."

West Africa represents the world's major source for cocoa production, accounting for 70 percent of the world market. Cocoa farming is labor intensive, and, as a result, thousands of children are involved in work on cocoa farms, including tasks considered to be among the worst forms of child labor. For many of these children, working in the cocoa sector deprives them of the chance to attend school.

The three-year project will be spearheaded by the Payson Center for International Development and Technology at Tulane University in New Orleans. The Payson Center is the university's newest interdisciplinary center for education, research and service. In implementing this project, Tulane University will partner with the West African Health Organization.

The university will study the health effects on children working under exploitative conditions in the cocoa sector and train government officials in both Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana to monitor the incidence of work in this sector. Tulane University will also prepare annual reports for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the U.S. Congress on progress being made toward implementation of a child-labor-free cocoa certification system, covering at least 50 percent of the cocoa growing areas in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana. The reports will also cover efforts to establish child labor monitoring and verification systems to assess progress made toward meeting obligations under the Harkin-Engel Protocol.

The Harkin-Engel Protocol is a voluntary agreement signed in September 2001 by the Chocolate Manufacturers Association (CMA) and the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) and witnessed by the congressional offices of U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and U.S. Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.). The protocol, together with the joint statement of Oct. 1, 2005, calls for action by the chocolate and cocoa industry to address the issue of exploitative child labor, especially the worst forms, in the West African cocoa sector. The Harkin-Engel Protocol also includes a commitment by industry to develop and implement voluntary, industry-wide standards of public certification that cocoa beans and their derivative products have been grown and processed without the worst forms of child labor.

The Labor Department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs is responsible for monitoring the progress of all DOL-funded international child labor projects, including this one. Since 1995, DOL has provided \$530 million for international technical assistance to combat exploitative child labor around the world.

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