

This investigation aimed at gaining empirical and deeper understanding on child labour in cocoa farms in Ondo and Osun States of Southwest Nigeria with a view to designing and/or redesigning intervention programmes needed to eradicate it in places where it still exists. The main objective of the research was to generate and analyze information on the scale, knowledge and current efforts by groups, government and agencies towards eliminating child labour in cocoa communities.

Before the research protocol was finalised, the questionnaire was pretested, using sixty respondents which represent ten percent of the sample. To forestall data contamination, pretesting was carried out in a cocoa farming community not included in the substantive study. In addition, two In-depth Interviews (IDIs) were conducted for the same purpose. Through this strategy, apart from ascertaining reliability and validity of the instruments, necessary adjustments were made on the tools for ease of understanding among stakeholders.

Data collection involved a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. A total 618 copies of questionnaire were administered on the generality of the people in order to elicit community perception; and 64 IDIs were conducted among purposively selected respondents such as cocoa farmers, village elders and opinion leaders, Non-Governmental Organization officials, members' of the farmers' association, ministry officials among others. Engaging this wide spectrum of stakeholders ensured robust information and comparability of insights. In addition, unobtrusive observation of farm activities was adopted in order gain direct knowledge of cocoa farming processes and activities. The study locations selected from the two thematic states were: Apomu, Madakeke, Ilesha, Owo, Ijare and Odigbo. The criterion for selecting these communities was their involvement in cocoa farming. Findings reveal the following:

### ***Social problems and their scale in project intervention areas***

A large majority of the respondents identified infrastructural challenges and inadequacies as major problems than the ones related to social and behavioural issues. Lack of electricity, schools, good roads and water infrastructure were consistently mentioned. The people blamed the government for the existence of these problems mainly due to its failure to provide essential infrastructures that would have addressed their other livelihood needs.

### ***Existence and scale of incidence of Child labour in target locations***

Responses on this were mixed. While some denied its existence in present day society, others noted that child labour was occurring in a few locations at the time of this study. However, in the course of our observation of cocoa farms, no child was seen working in any of the farms visited.

### ***Community perception on child labour and existing level of its knowledge***

The consequences linked to child labour included those related to injuries and deaths resulting from use of obsolete, labour-intensive implements. There was consensus among stakeholders that the FADU-intervention has been effective in discouraging child labour but that it would be difficult to eliminate children's involvement in paid jobs without alleviating poverty which is the main factor accounting for it. Generally, child labour evoked high level of condemnation and call for stiff sanctions even in places where respondents reported its occurrence.

### ***Community governance and accountability mechanisms that could be used for interventions against child labour***

The view of stakeholders was that the community can do a lot in stemming the tide of child labour in cocoa farms, where it still exists, through its various organs of social control. These include community unions and youth groups working through their separate governance structures and laws to compel members to submit to the authority of the groups. Also identified were influential traditional and opinion leaders whose charismatic qualities could be deployed in bringing about necessary attitudinal and behavioural change.

### ***Current interventions by government, NGOs and Civil society on child labour***

One thing common to all the respondents was an acknowledgement that FADU/Continaf through the *Kokodola* project had impacted the lives of community members in a variety of ways; it has been quite vocal in discouraging farmers from engaging children as labourers in cocoa farms. The government was also commended in areas of training and provision of farm equipment. In particular, the Osun State government was praised for developing a youth academy.

### ***Adequacy of current project interventions in addressing the social issues***

The project embarked upon by FADU although highly commended, some respondents advised that it should be extended to areas where it was not operative. This call was hinged on the perceived impact of the project in changing people's behaviour towards children; more

children were enrolled in schools relative to what obtained in the past. Generally however, it was reported that a lot more needed to be done to eradicate child labour in relevant contexts and that government should implement policy interventions that actually impinge on these farming communities.