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HIGH FORCED LABOUR RISK IN COCOA. INDUSTRY NEEDS TO STEP UP.

Chocolate produced with cocoa from Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, which jointly produce two thirds of the world's cocoa, is at high risk of being tainted by forced labour and child labour, according to new research.

Within the cocoa growing areas surveyed in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, an estimated 30,000 adults and children were in forced labour in that industry, between 2013 and 2017.

The research is produced by the Walk Free Foundation in partnership with Tulane University, Dutch chocolate company Tony's Chocolonely and the Chocolonely Foundation and released today in Walk Free Foundation's Global Slavery Index 2018.

The research reveals valuable information on forced labour in this region, for which data is scarce. In addition it provides further confirmation of the massive scale of child labour in the region. It is based on surveys conducted between August and November 2017 of 1823 adult and 1379 child cocoa workers in areas with medium and high-levels of cocoa production in Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana.

"The sweet taste of chocolate turns bitter when it has been produced at the cost of men, women and children having been subjected to the cruelty of forced labour or child labour", said Fiona David, Executive Director of Global Research at the Walk Free Foundation.

The research found that in cocoa growing areas surveyed in Côte d'Ivoire, an estimated 2000 children and 9600 adults were in forced labour between 2013 and 2017.

In the cocoa growing areas surveyed in Ghana, an estimated 14,000 children and 3700 adults were in forced labour over the same period.

Forced labour includes situations where people are coerced to work through the use of violence or intimidation, or by more subtle means such as manipulated debt, trafficking, retention of identity papers or threats of denunciation to immigration authorities. While different criteria are used to determine if an adult or child is in forced labour, both adults and children can be subjected to this abuse of human rights.

The results also confirmed widespread use of child labour, including hazardous work and underage workers.

Child labour includes work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. Child labour is not as simple as children having a job or working a few hours a week after school hours. Child labour includes children aged below 15 who were performing more than light duties, as indicated by their age and the number of hours they worked, or had been involved in hazardous work. Child labour also includes children aged 15 to 17 involved in hazardous work.

Working with sharp tools, and lifting heavy loads were the most common forms of hazardous work reported.

"The good news is there is something we can do about forced labour and prohibited child labour in cocoa production," David continued.

"As consumers, we must demand the businesses involved in chocolate get serious about responding to the risk of forced labour and child labour. We need governments to demand that business take

these steps, through laws that require them to be concerned about where their products are coming from and take action.”

The research partners also call on business and government to invest in initiatives to improve the living income of cocoa farmers. This includes enabling sustainable domestic and international prices, improving support for workers, and supporting farmers to increase productivity.

Business and government must also invest in research to increase the evidence base for effective child and forced labour interventions and to monitor progress of existing interventions.

Tony’s Chokolonely is a chocolate company founded to make 100 per cent slave-free the norm in chocolate. The company has direct long-term relationships with partner cooperatives in Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire, working towards more equal business relations and providing conditions in which farmers can earn a living income. Tony’s Chokolonely supported the research to develop a baseline and a point of reference for the key players in the cocoa industry, to make the issue of forced labour more tangible and create a burning platform for action.

Tony’s Chokolonely’s Head of Impact Paul Schoenmakers reflected: “It is really important that we understand the scale of the problem we are dealing with in the chocolate industry. The topic of forced labour is very sensitive and cases are often hidden, which means this research is likely to be a conservative baseline.

“Despite this, the data confirms forced labour exists on cocoa-growing farms and that illegal child labour is still very common. Quantifying the issue shifts the debate from defining and questioning the problem to finding solutions to remediate it together.

“Our vision is 100 per cent slave free chocolate. Not only our chocolate, but all chocolate worldwide. Only if everybody takes responsibility, 100% slave free becomes the norm. Let’s raise the bar!’

ENDS.

The Global Slavery Index report can be found at www.globalsslaveryindex.org

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