Education program in Ivory Coast joins forces with eight cocoa and chocolate companies to achieve sustainable social impact

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The world's largest cocoa and chocolate companies have joined an international child and youth development program with the goal of transforming education in rural communities. These innovative partnerships launched in 2018 will achieve measurable impact by improving quality of education and enhancing its relevance within industry sustainability strategies.

Under the roof of the Transforming Education in Cocoa Communities (TRECC) program, Barry Callebaut, Blommer, Caboz, Cargill, Cémoi, Hershey, Mars and Mondelez International will engage in the implementation of the most comprehensive quality education effort to date in Ivory Coast.

The initiative will test 10 proven models from around the world on topics related to education and child development in Ivory Coast. The interventions will address children of all ages and their caregivers as well as youth starting their professional lives. Activities include parenting skills trainings in nutrition, hygiene and play as well as primary school dynamizing and financial literacy courses for youth, among other initiatives. It is a competitive selection of models based on solid evidence, endorsed by the Ivorian Government and monitored by Innovations for Poverty Action.

The parties have committed to scaling the activities that yield good results. The models could be incorporated into the Government's education policies, and TRECC and the involved cocoa and chocolate companies have also conveyed an engagement to scale up successful models.

TRECC is a unique collaboration between an industry, a government and several for-purpose organizations to achieve a UN Sustainable Development Goal. The program is meant to transform the education system by testing and promoting innovative interventions and pave the way for a new form of philanthropy.

Another important goal of these partnerships is to enhance the role of quality education within industry sustainability strategies. TRECC aims for cocoa partners to internalize the business case for quality education and to think of the integration of education into their community development activities.

The initiative will reach up to 80,000 children and youth in an estimated 150 communities across cocoa growing regions in Ivory Coast over the next four years to provide quality education. Most projects will be implemented by international development organizations, some by local organizations and some by the companies themselves. The total amount committed to this initiative amounts to over USD 8.5 million.

TRECC's impactful intervention

Barry Callebaut, the world's leading manufacturer of chocolate and cocoa products, will implement trainings to improve parent's knowledge and skills on how to prevent and protect their children from maltreatment, including child labour, with international organization ICS SP. Another important component of their activities will be bridging classes, which will help out-of-school children to get back into school, and ensure the implication of stakeholders into quality education. This part of the program will be implemented by local organization École pour tous.

Blommer, in partnership with Hershey, will focus on boosting early childhood development through two models: one on improved nutrition and hygiene and another one on play and stimulation. Both models follow a scalable, community-based approach. Helen Keller International will train health workers and volunteers on early childhood development practices with the support of PATH. An outreach campaign for family caregivers will focus on giving children a better start to life by ensuring they are clean, nutritiously fed, nurtured and stimulated. This intervention is meant to integrate responsive caregiving and stimulation content into the existing Government nutrition strategy.

As part of the Cargill Cocoa Promise and the company's approach to community livelihoods, as well as their commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, Cargill will focus on multi-grade-level teaching programs for primary-aged children currently out of school. They will adapt a multi-grade pedagogy model that was successfully implemented in rural low-resource environments in India to provide a solution to communities lacking infrastructure and personnel. The approach, developed by RiverTIDE and co-implemented with the International Cocoa Initiative, enables up to 150 early primary school students in five communities to attend lessons developed in alignment with the national curriculum. Furthermore, technology is employed to enhance the educational experience as well as to monitor teachers' presence and reinforce their pedagogical skills.

CABOZ, a Swiss-Ivorian company specialized in sourcing cocoa directly from small holder farmers, together with the Hanns R.Neumann Foundation will implement a program to provide youth with agricultural and life skills training, so they can improve their livelihoods and find meaningful employment in rural areas. Project participants will receive training on farming selected crops as a business and implement the learned practices with the help of trained facilitators.

Cémoi, together with J-PAL Europe and the Ivorian Government, will implement a *teaching at the right level* model to boost literacy and numeracy at primary school level as part of their Transparence Cacao initiative. The program has been evaluated by a series of randomized evaluations in India, Kenya and Ghana, showing that teaching to the level of the child results in large, strong, positive impacts on children's learning outcomes. The intervention works by testing students' levels and then regrouping them based on these levels, supplying appropriate material and adopting a new pedagogical style so as to make classes more interactive. The model is meant to give teachers the tools to lead more dynamic lessons where children are educated with activities that are engaging and suitable to their actual level, helping them to catch up.

Hershey will focus on life skills development, including social and financial education, entrepreneurial, and leadership skills. Its program, implemented by Aflatoun International, aims to unlock the potential of young people in cocoa-growing communities in Ivory Coast, so they become agents of change in their own lives through a comprehensive Life Skills and Financial Education program. It includes a technical training component focused on cocoa farming and setting up businesses in cocoa communities.

Mondelez International will focus on fostering early childhood development and engage and train caregivers around positive parenting practices. Beyond the training of parents, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), READ Global and IREX will set up community library and resource centers to promote learning, education and access to information in rural areas for all community members. The centers are designed to be financially self-supporting to sustainably foster healthy learning and supportive environments for all individuals, particularly children and youth.

Mars will promote parental involvement so that younger children can have strong relationships with their parents. ICS SP and CARE will implement a model where caregivers will be trained with the goal of enhancing educational outcomes, promoting age appropriate parenting and reducing child maltreatment. A group of community-level promoters will become skillful parenting facilitators so they can disseminate best parenting practices locally.

This is the second set of partnerships TRECC initiated with the chocolate industry. In the previous initiative, Mars, Nestlé, Mondelez International and Barry Callebaut set up similar initiatives in Ivorian cocoa communities. Building on these two sets of partnerships, TRECC is committed to deepening its engagement with Ivorian society by working with the cocoa and chocolate industry. Future collaborations will also bundle effective, evidence-based education models with the industry's on-going interventions on the ground and contributing to building an ecosystem around quality education in Ivory Coast.

About TRECC

TRECC is a program supported by the Jacobs Foundation, the Bernard van Leer Foundation and the UBS Optimus Foundation. TRECC works with industry partners, the Ivorian government, researchers, local organizations and entrepreneurs to boost quality of education in Ivory Coast. For more information, visit our website.

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