

Can Private Companies in the EU Reduce Child Labour in West Africa Cocoa through Mandatory Regulations?

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Introduction

Voluntary regulations (such as the **Harkin–Engel Protocol of 2001**, third-party certification schemes, etc.) have made progress to end worst forms of child labour in cocoa but the goals (e.g. SDG 8.7) are far from achieved. The European Union (EU) regulation on human rights through the controversial Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (**CSDDD**) presents a **policy innovation** with important implications for **child labour elimination**. Our objective is to discuss key **limitations** and **recommendations** to increase the **effectiveness** of **CSDDD** in child labour reduction in West Africa cocoa if the rules start to apply fully in **2029**.



Source: International Labour Rights Forum

Theory and Methods

- Ex-ante assessment of its Theory of Change (TOC) following existing impact reports based on Fairtrade's TOC.
- Insights from literature on impacts of voluntary governance on child labour.
- Insights from sustainability reports of private company's on their commitments to child labour reduction.

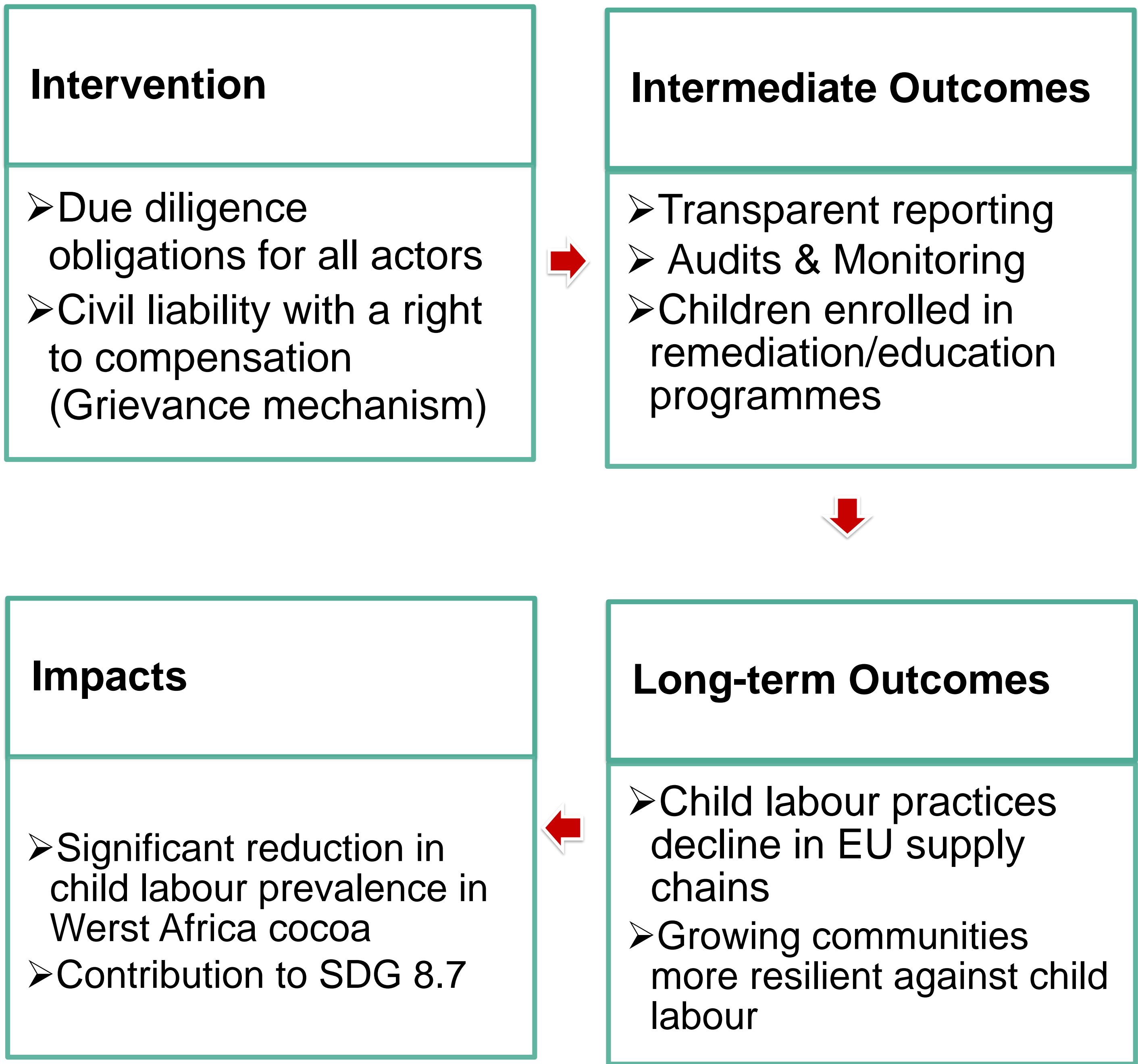


Figure 1 The Theory of Change of the CSDDD

Results

Key limitations

- What is considered as child labour in the West African context (**Definition and Acceptance**)
- Channels for children and adults to raise complaints on child rights risks (**Accessibility**).
- Inadequate competencies and transaction cost in fulfilling obligation (**Capability**)

Key Recommendations

- Holistic and context definition of child labour (**Definition and Acceptance**)
- Ensure child friendly grievance mechanisms (**Accessibility**).
- Capacity building, collaboration and economic incentives (**Capability**)

Discussion

While the CSDDD may have potential positive impacts due to its binding nature, it is unlikely to help private companies in the EU address child labour in West African cocoa production, due to existing implementation challenges that are closely linked to voluntary regulations. This finding shifts the debate away from a simple dichotomy over whether mandatory or voluntary regulations are effective in addressing child labour.

Conclusion

For an effective reduction of child labour in West Africa cocoa through the CSDDD, our finding calls for a focus on addressing the fundamental structural issues that sustain child labour.



Source: UNSplash.com

References

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