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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
ACRONYMS.....	vii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	ix
1 INTRODUCTION.....	- 2 -
2 PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS.....	- 3 -
2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation.....	- 3 -
2.2 Specific Objectives.....	- 3 -
2.3 Scope of the Evaluation.....	- 3 -
2.4 Evaluation Criteria.....	- 4 -
2.5 Evaluation Questions.....	- 4 -
3 METHODOLOGY.....	- 6 -
3.1 Overall Design.....	- 6 -
3.2 Study Population and Sampling.....	- 6 -
3.3 Data Collection Methods.....	- 8 -
3.4 Measurement of Child Labour.....	- 8 -
3.5 Data Analysis.....	- 9 -
3.5.1 Qualitative Data Analysis.....	- 9 -
3.5.2 Integration.....	- 10 -
4 LIMITATIONS, RISKS AND MITIGATION.....	- 10 -
4.1 Methodological Limitations and Mitigation.....	- 10 -
4.2 Contextual and Operational Risks and Mitigation.....	- 11 -
5 FINDINGS.....	- 12 -
Pillar 1 – Direct SC Implementation of the Holistic Approach.....	- 12 -
5.1 Impact and Effectiveness.....	- 12 -
5.1.1 Child Protection.....	- 13 -
5.1.2 Education.....	- 29 -
5.1.3 Community Development.....	- 37 -
5.1.4 Adolescent and Youth.....	- 50 -
5.1.5 Impact and Effectiveness of the Project’s Holistic Approach.....	- 58 -
5.2 Sustainability.....	- 63 -
5.2.1 Knowledge Transfer, Institutional Anchoring, and Sustainable Changes in Access, Offer, and Quality of Services.....	- 63 -
5.2.2 Sustainability of Community-based Structures and Local Ownership.....	- 65 -
5.2.3 Enablers and Challenges for Sustaining Reductions in Child Labour Risks.....	- 67 -
5.3 Inclusion & Participation.....	- 69 -

5.3.1	Differences in Participation Across Participant Groups	- 69 -
5.3.2	Barriers to Participation	- 71 -
5.3.3	VSLA Participation and Changes in Gender Norms	- 71 -
Pillar 2 – Programmatic Framework.....		- 72 -
5.4	Effectiveness and Uptake - Level of adoption and implementation of Pillar 2 Programmatic Framework.....	- 73 -
5.4.1	Limits in Assessing Adoption of the Programmatic Framework.....	- 73 -
5.4.2	Reported Adoption of the Programmatic Framework based on Save the Children Staff	- 73 -
5.4.3	Challenges Affecting Adoption and Implementation of the Programmatic Framework	- 74 -
The Parallel Project – The Integrated Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation model (CLMR)		- 75 -
5.5	Adoption and Effectiveness of the Integrated CLMR.....	- 75 -
5.5.1	Strengthening Collaboration between Private Actors and the National Protection System	- 76 -
5.5.2	Identification, Referral, and Case Management of Child Labour Cases and other Vulnerabilities	- 78 -
5.5.3	Timeliness of Assessment and Remediation.....	- 78 -
5.5.4	Partial Implementation and Deviations from the Model.....	- 79 -
5.5.5	Challenges affecting adoption and implementation of the Integrated CLMR model	- 79 -
5.6	Sustainability of the integrated CLMR	- 82 -
5.7	Alignment with National Policies through Innovative Approaches.....	- 82 -
5.7.1	Overall Alignment with National Priorities and Systems.....	- 83 -
5.7.2	Alignment and Innovation – Child Protection.....	- 83 -
5.7.3	Alignment and Innovation – Education	- 84 -
5.7.4	Alignment and Innovation – Community Development.....	- 85 -
5.7.5	Alignment and Innovation – Adolescents and Youth.....	- 85 -
5.8	Satisfaction with Services and Project Engagement.....	- 86 -
5.8.1	Satisfaction of Community Members and Community Structures.....	- 86 -
5.8.2	Satisfaction of Frontline Service Providers.....	- 88 -
5.8.3	Satisfaction of Government Actors (National and Regional)	- 89 -
5.8.4	Satisfaction with the Integrated CLMR model.....	- 89 -
5.9	Fidelity of Implementation.....	- 90 -
5.9.1	Fidelity of project implementation (design, logframe, timeline)	- 90 -
5.9.2	Fidelity of implementation of Common Approaches.....	- 91 -
5.10	Cost-Efficiency Analysis	- 92 -
5.10.1	Methodology.....	- 92 -
5.10.2	Cost-efficiency results by thematic area.....	- 92 -

5.10.3	Recommendations	- 93 -
6	CONCLUSION	- 94 -
7	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	- 98 -
7.1	Child Protection Recommendations	- 98 -
7.2	Community Development Recommendations.....	- 99 -
7.3	Education Recommendations	- 100 -
7.4	Adolescent and Youth Recommendations.....	- 102 -
7.5	Holistic Approach and Project Recommendations.....	- 103 -
7.6	Programmatic Framework (Pillar 2) Recommendations	- 105 -
7.7	The integrated CLMR model recommendations	- 105 -
7.8	Sustainability Recommendations	- 107 -
7.9	Evaluation methodology recommendations.....	- 108 -
7.10	MEAL recommendations	- 108 -
8	REFERENCES	- 110 -
9	ANNEX 1: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED WITH NUMBER OF FGD AND KII Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.	
10	ANNEX 2: ATTRITION RESULTS	Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.
11	ANNEX 3: HOUSEHOLD CHILD LABOUR VULNERABILITY EXPOSURE MODULE Il segnalibro non è definito.	Errore.
12	ANNEX 4: CHILD LABOUR MEASUREMENT AND ADDITIONAL RESULTS	Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.
13	ANNEX 5: KNOWLEDGE ON CHILD RIGHTS AND CHILD LABOUR.. Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.	Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.
14	ANNEX 6: HEALTH AND NUTRITION INDICATORS	Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.
15	ANNEX 7: EFFECTIVENESS – LIFE SKILLS AND DECENT EMPLOYMENT	Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.
16	ANNEX 8: HOUSEHOLD FIXED EFFECTS ANALYSIS: PROGRAMME PARTICIPATION AND CHILD LABOUR EXPOSURE SCORE	Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.
17	ANNEX 9: Quality of Services of Formal and Informal Structures	Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.
18	ANNEX 10: INTEGRATED CLMR VERSUS TRADITIONAL CLMRS.....	Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.
19	ANNEX 11: Cost-Efficiency Analysis: Stop Child Labour in Cocoa Sourcing Communities.....	Errore. Il segnalibro non è definito.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Improvement in child labour exposure between baseline and endline	- 20 -
Figure 2: School-aged Children Enrolled in School.....	- 31 -
Figure 3: School-aged children who regularly attend school.....	- 32 -
Figure 4: Prevalence of stunting among the U5 children by gender.....	- 39 -
Figure 5: Body Mass Index for adolescent girls (10-17).....	- 41 -
Figure 6: Body Mass Index for adolescent girls (10-17) by location.....	- 41 -
Figure 7: Percentage of A&Y who demonstrated knowledge of life skills.....	- 55 -
Figure 8: Beneficiary overall satisfaction with project activities/services	- 87 -

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Quantitative Sample distribution by instrument	- 7 -
Table 2: Qualitative Sample distribution by instrument	- 8 -
Table 3: Key Child Protection Indicators	- 14 -
Table 4: Child labour reported by children aged 5–17: Baseline vs Endline	- 16 -
Table 5: Child labour status among children 5-17 years: Children's reports vs Caregiver reports	- 17 -
Table 6: Child labour prevalence by work environment, and gender (5-17 years): Children report	- 19 -
Table 7: Transition of Households' exposure to Child Labour between Baseline and Endline	- 19 -
Table 8: Child Labour Vulnerability Scores at Baseline and Endline	- 21 -
Table 9: Proportion of women and men who demonstrate increased knowledge and change in attitude towards child labour (baseline vs endline)	- 21 -
Table 10: Summary of Key Findings for Formal Service Providers	- 26 -
Table 11: Summary of Key Findings on the Quality of Services Provided by Formal Structures	- 27 -
Table 12: Key Education Indicators	- 29 -
Table 13: Key Community Development Indicators	- 37 -
Table 14: Average annual household income in EUR	- 42 -
Table 15: Average Expenditure on Children (including school related costs and health costs) in EUR	- 43 -
Table 16: Women's decision-making power over resource allocation and management by batch	- 44 -
Table 17: Women's participation in decision making by domain	- 45 -
Table 18: Key adolescent youth indicators	- 51 -
Table 19: Percentage of A&Y in employment	- 52 -
Table 20: Summary with composite index values	- 54 -

ACRONYMS

A&Y	Adolescents and Youth
APPH	Alternatives to Physical and Humiliating Punishment
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
AVEC	Association Villageoise d'Épargne et de Crédit (Village Savings and Loan Association)
CAP	Community Action Plan
CL	Child Labor
CG	Group of children
COGES	Comité de Gestion des Établissements Scolaires (School Management Committee)
CPIMS+	Child Protection Information Management System Plus
CPCs	Child Protection Committees
CPU	Cours Préparatoire Unique (Combined Preparatory Course)
DENF	Direction de l'Éducation Non-Formelle (Directorate of Non-Formal Education)
DOPA	Direction des Organisations Professionnelles Agricoles (Directorate of Agricultural Professional Organisations)
DRENA	Direction Régionale de l'Éducation Nationale et de l'Alphabétisation (Regional Directorate of National Education and Literacy)
DSPS	Strategies, Planning, and Statistics Department
FFS	Farmer Field School
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICI	International Cocoa Initiative
IGA	Income Generating Activities
KII	Key Informant Interview
MDD-W	Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
LB/NB	Literacy Boost / Numeracy Boost
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OCPV	Office d'Aide à la Commercialisation des Produits Vivriers (Office for Assistance in the Marketing of Food Crops)
PEC-CP	Programme d'Enseignement Ciblé – Cours Préparatoire (Targeted Teaching Programme – Preparatory Course)
PENAPASS	Programme National d'Amélioration des Premiers Apprentissages Scolaires (National Programme for the Improvement of Early Grade Learning)
PND	Plan National de Développement (National Development Plan)
SCI	Save the Children International
SEL	socio-emotional learning
SIP PLUS	Système d'Information et de Protection Plus (Information and Protection System Plus)

<i>SOSTECI</i>	<i>Système d'Observation et de Suivi du Travail des Enfants en Côte d'Ivoire (Child Labour Monitoring and Observation System in Côte d'Ivoire)</i>
<i>VSLA</i>	<i>Village Savings and Loan Association</i>
<i>WDDS</i>	<i>Women's Dietary Diversity Score</i>
<i>WFCL</i>	<i>Worst Forms of Child Labour</i>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of the Evaluation

The *Stop Child Labour in Cocoa Sourcing Communities* project was implemented by Save the Children in partnership with Ferrero between 2020 and 2025 in selected cocoa growing communities in Côte d'Ivoire. The project responded to persistently high rates of child labour in cocoa production and to the recognition that child labour is deeply embedded within broader systems of poverty, limited educational access, social norms, and under-resourced child protection institutions. Rather than focusing solely on child labour as a compliance issue, the project sought to address both immediate manifestations and the underlying structural drivers that shape children's vulnerability.

This Final Evaluation was commissioned to assess the project's performance and results across the agreed evaluation dimensions of Effectiveness and Impact, Inclusion and Participation, Sustainability through Transformational Partnership, Satisfaction and Experience, and Cost Analysis. In addition to accountability, the evaluation sought to generate evidence and learning to inform future programming and strengthen public-private collaboration in child labour prevention.

Programme Overview

The project, implemented from 2020 to 2025, sought to reduce the risk factors associated with child labour and hazardous work among children in cocoa-growing communities in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. It operated through two interconnected pillars and a Parallel Project. Pillar 1 comprised direct implementation in 65 cocoa-producing communities in the Haut-Sassandra region of Côte d'Ivoire, where Save the Children and partners delivered interventions through a holistic approach across four areas: strengthening local child protection systems, increasing access to quality education, improving community development and household resilience, and empowering adolescents and youth with life skills and vocational opportunities.

Pillar 2 focused on technical support to Ferrero's suppliers and cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire (and earlier in Ghana) to harmonise child protection and community development approaches across sustainability programmes. This included the development of programmatic and monitoring frameworks, and capacity-building for suppliers.

The Parallel Project introduced child labour guidelines for suppliers, comprising ten measures. The integrated CLMR is one of these directives aimed at strengthening coordination between private-sector actors and national child protection systems through structured identification, referral, and case management processes.

Evaluation Scope and Users

The evaluation covered Pillar 1, Pillar 2 and the integrated CLMR measures under the Parallel Project (given that this directive was closely linked to the objectives of the Child Protection component) across the full project period. The scope included baseline cohort households, children aged 5–17, adolescents and youth engaged in empowerment activities, community structures, government representatives, Ferrero suppliers, and Save the Children teams. Primary users of the evaluation were Save the Children Italy and Côte d'Ivoire, Ferrero, suppliers and cooperatives, and national and regional government bodies.

Methodology

The evaluation employed a mixed methods, longitudinal design combining quantitative and qualitative data sources. The household survey sampling frame consisted of 1,316 baseline households (896 in batch 1 and 420 in batch 2). Using a 95% confidence level, 80% power, and a minimum detectable effect of 5%, and applying finite population correction and non-response adjustments, the final required sample was 482 households (237 from batch 1 and 245 from batch 2). One child aged 5–17 was randomly selected per household for the child labour module, while all under-five children and adolescent girls aged 10–17 were included in anthropometric assessments. The adolescent and youth surveys used separate sampling frames for life skills and vocational training cohorts. After adjustments, final target sample sizes were 139 adolescents/youth for the life skills cohort and 210 youth for the decent work cohort.

To ensure comparability with baseline data, child labour prevalence was measured using child self-reported data for all children and adolescents aged 5–17 years. Given the recognised limitations of this approach, particularly for younger children, the same instrument was also administered to caregivers. The evaluation therefore presents both sources of data and analyses the degree of convergence between them. While reliability concerns affect younger age groups, especially children aged 5–12 years, the combination of evidence from caregiver reports, adolescent data, and household-level analysis (vulnerability data) provides a consistent picture of change over time. Inferential statistical analysis was used to examine associations between programme exposure and changes in child labour exposure, while qualitative findings were used to interpret pathways of change and contextual dynamics. Qualitative data were collected through 96 key informant interviews and focus group discussions with children, adolescents, caregivers, community leaders, Child Protection Committees, cooperative and supplier representatives, social workers, and education and child protection authorities at community, sub prefectoral, and departmental levels. These data were used to triangulate survey findings, explore causal pathways, examine system level effects, and interpret outcomes not readily captured through quantitative instruments. Documentary review and programme monitoring data complemented primary data collection.

Limitations

The evaluation faced some methodological and operational limitations. The absence of a control group limited causal attribution, while attrition between baseline and endline introduced potential bias. Exposure to project interventions was measured through self-reported participation, as baseline IDs were not linked to monitoring systems. This introduces potential recall and misclassification bias. In addition, the holistic nature of the project made it difficult to isolate the individual impact of each component, since households often participated in multiple interventions.

An important methodological limitation relates to the reliability of child labour measurement among children aged 5–12 years. To ensure comparability with the baseline, the endline used the same context-specific child labour module that had been developed at baseline to capture cocoa-related work activities and hazards in the project context. However, this module is a non-standard module that does not align with the measurement approaches used by the ILO, UNICEF or DHS/MICS. Concerns were raised regarding younger children's ability to accurately recall and estimate work activities over a 12-month period. To assess the reliability of findings, the same module was also administered to caregivers of sampled children. Findings revealed substantial divergence between caregiver-reported and child self-reported prevalence estimates for younger children, with child self-reports producing implausibly low endline prevalence rates, indicating likely comprehension and recall issues among younger children.

Consistent with evidence from previous research, the evaluation concludes that child self-reported findings for children aged 5–12 are to be interpreted with caution as they likely underestimate the prevalence of child labour.

FINDINGS

Impact and Effectiveness

The evaluation finds strong and consistent evidence that the project contributed to a substantial reduction in child labour and in its most hazardous forms. Based on child self-reported data, the proportion of children and adolescents aged 5–17 engaged in child labour declined from 72% at baseline to 23 % at endline, while involvement in the worst forms of child labour declined from 64% to 22% over the same period. These figures should be interpreted with appropriate nuance. For adolescents aged 13–17 years, for whom reporting reliability is stronger, the results provide robust evidence of significant reductions. For younger children aged 5–12 years, while the exact magnitude of change is uncertain due to known methodological limitations, the direction of change is consistently confirmed by caregiver-reported data and by household-level vulnerability analysis. The evaluation further demonstrates that the project's holistic approach played a critical role in reducing child labour vulnerability.

Education outcomes improved substantially and played a central role in reducing child labour risk. School enrolment among children aged 6–16 increased from 78% at baseline to 84% at endline, while regular attendance increased from 75% to 97%. The proportion of children who had never attended school declined from 20% to 13%. Programme monitoring data indicate that 3,502 out-of-school children were enrolled in bridging classes, equivalent to 86% of the target, with 96% attending regularly and 89% successfully reintegrated into formal schooling. These changes were driven by a combination of interventions, including bridging classes for out-of-school children, support for birth registration, parental engagement, and systematic follow-up through case management mechanisms. Together, these interventions contributed to shifting children's daily routines away from labour and towards schooling.

Household economic resilience improved markedly. The share of households earning at or below 400,000 CFA (EUR 609.80) per year declined from 60% to 42%, while median household income increased from 300,000 CFA (EUR 457.35) to 500,000 CFA (EUR 762.25). Income diversification rose sharply from 24% to 65% of households, reducing dependence on cocoa as a sole income source and lowering reliance on children's labour as a coping strategy. These gains were associated with increased expenditure on children, particularly in education and health. At the same time, improvements in knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to child rights and child labour were observed, reflecting the combined effects of awareness-raising, community engagement, and behaviour change interventions.

Women's decision-making power showed meaningful but uneven progress. The proportion of households where women's decision-making power was classified as "very weak" declined from 64% to 26%, with the greatest gains observed in welfare-related domains concerning children's education, health, and nutrition. However, women's influence over productive and income-related decisions remained limited, and the proportion of women with strong decision-making power remained low at endline. This suggests that while economic participation and awareness-raising contributed to more child-centred household decisions, deeper gender norm transformation requires sustained and intentional engagement.

The Adolescent and Youth component achieved mixed but positive results, particularly in strengthening economic opportunities and personal development among participants. While

overall employment rates changed little and results were not statistically significant, there was a notable shift from self-employment to wage employment, suggesting improved access to apprenticeships and more structured work opportunities, alongside increased participation by young women. The project also greatly exceeded its target for youth reporting increased revenue streams, demonstrating its contribution to income generation. In addition, the project strengthened life skills, especially decision-making and problem-solving, and contributed to greater confidence and agency among some participants. However, gains in employment did not consistently translate into stable or decent work, as income security remained weak and market access for youth-led businesses was limited. Overall, the component's effectiveness was constrained by follow-up support, financial barriers, uneven access to start-up resources, trainer capacity challenges, competing livelihood demands, and its short implementation period.

At system and supply chain level, the project strengthened key elements of child protection functionality, particularly in relation to case identification, referral, and management. The number of identified and supported cases increased substantially, and qualitative evidence indicates improved coordination between community structures and formal services. Under Pillar 2, the Programmatic Framework helped strengthen awareness and understanding of more holistic approaches to child labour prevention among suppliers and cooperatives. However, uptake remained partial and inconsistently institutionalised. Findings suggest that the Framework was less visible and less operationally embedded than the Ferrero Child Labour Guidelines project (Parallel project), largely because implementation under Pillar 2 relied primarily on voluntary participation, earlier one-off training, and limited follow-up, while the Parallel Project introduced more structured accountability mechanisms including action plans, cascading to cooperatives, and quarterly review processes.

Under the Parallel Project, the integrated CLMR was effective in initiating a shift from parallel, private-led child labour monitoring and remediation toward more coordinated approaches linked to national child protection systems. The model strengthened collaboration between suppliers, cooperatives, and social services, improved understanding of institutional roles, and reinforced referral and case management processes. However, findings also show that the integrated CLMR was not yet fully adopted or fully implemented. Adoption remained partial, gradual, and uneven across suppliers and cooperatives, primarily due to severe structural constraints affecting social centres, including insufficient staffing, transport, operational budgets, and case management capacity. These constraints contributed to delays in assessment, referral, remediation, and follow-up and, in some cases, reinforced continued reliance on parallel or hybrid private-led approaches.

Sustainability

The evaluation finds that sustainability prospects are strongest at household and community levels, particularly where outcomes are anchored in improved economic resilience, behavioural change, and locally owned structures. Interventions such as Village Savings and Loans Associations and household livelihood diversification created conditions under which families are better able to absorb shocks without reverting to child labour as a coping strategy. Increased income diversification, higher and more stable household earnings, and greater expenditure on children support the durability of gains in education participation, health-seeking behaviour, and caregiving practices. Improvements in women's decision-making power especially in domains related to children's education, health, and nutrition further reinforce sustainability by strengthening child-centred household governance. Community-level structures such as Child Protection Committees and school management bodies have increased visibility and legitimacy, and normative shifts around child labour and schooling suggest that some attitudinal and

behavioural changes are likely to persist beyond the project period. However, sustainability at this level remains vulnerable to external shocks, including cocoa price volatility, climate stress, and food insecurity, which could erode household resilience gains in the absence of continued economic opportunities.

By contrast, sustainability at system and institutional levels remains fragile. While the project contributed to measurable strengthening of child protection practices particularly in case identification, referral, documentation, and coordination, these gains are not yet fully institutionalised or adequately resourced. Social centres and education services continue to operate with limited staffing, transport, and operational budgets, constraining their functionality. The integrated CLMR represents an important step toward long-term sustainability by aligning supply-chain monitoring and remediation with national child protection systems, but its operational viability remains dependent on external financing and facilitation. Without sustained public investment, clearer financing mechanisms, and stronger institutional embedding, there is a significant risk that system-level functions will weaken over time. The evaluation therefore concludes that while the project has laid important foundations for sustainability, the long-term continuation and scaling of outcomes will depend on sustained government commitment, continued private sector engagement, and coordinated efforts to address structural resource constraints beyond the life of the project.

Inclusion and Participation

The inclusion and participation findings suggest that the project made deliberate efforts to identify and reach vulnerable households and children, particularly those affected by or at risk of hazardous child labour, and many respondents perceived participation as broadly inclusive across communities. However, gender and disability inclusion were not systematically mainstreamed across all components. While the project reached poorer households, diverse ethnic groups, girls and boys, and supported women's participation through VSLAs, more tailored approaches to address gender-specific barriers, support children with disabilities, and include other specific vulnerable groups remained limited. Participation also varied by component: education activities faced barriers linked to parental attitudes and limited available places; community development structures reflected gendered assumptions about who should participate; and adolescent and youth activities were affected by pregnancy, low literacy, and unequal access to start-up materials. Overall, the project supported inclusion in important ways but did not fully address structural barriers to equitable participation. Evidence on gender norms was also mixed: VSLAs strengthened women's economic participation and reduced financial dependence but did not substantially shift household decision-making power or broader gender relations.

Alignment with National Policies through Innovative Approaches

The evaluation finds that the project was strongly aligned with national policy priorities and contributed to the operationalisation of several key child protection, education, and child labour commitments in Côte d'Ivoire through innovative and system-strengthening approaches. Stakeholders consistently highlighted that the project worked through existing government structures and institutional mandates rather than creating parallel systems, reinforcing national priorities related to compulsory education, child protection, alternative care, and the elimination of child labour. A central distinguishing feature of the project was its holistic approach, which respondents frequently described as innovative not because the concept itself was new, but because of the way it was operationalised in practice through integrated implementation across child protection, education, livelihoods, community development, and

adolescent and youth empowerment. This integrated approach reflected growing national and international recognition that child labour is closely linked to broader structural vulnerabilities and therefore requires coordinated, multi-sectoral responses. Respondents emphasised that the project translated these principles into practice through common targeting approaches, referral pathways, and collaboration with government actors at multiple levels, strengthening alignment with national child protection and social protection frameworks.

The project also contributed to several operational and institutional innovations that strengthened the practical implementation of national systems and procedures. In child protection, the project supported the strengthening and rollout of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for case management and foster care, contributed to the operationalisation of the Child Protection Information Management System Plus (CPIMS+), and supported the functioning of SOSTECI sub-prefectural committees, reinforcing coordination, referral, and monitoring systems at decentralised level. In education, the project operationalised bridging classes for out-of-school children, helping to translate compulsory education commitments into concrete community-level mechanisms, while maintaining alignment with national pedagogical frameworks such as PEC and PNAPAS. Community development interventions, particularly Community Service Groups and Community Action Planning, were viewed as innovative approaches to reducing reliance on child labour and strengthening participatory local planning. The integrated CLMR emerged as one of the project's most significant innovations, linking private-sector child labour monitoring systems with formal national child protection and case management structures. This represented an important shift away from parallel, privately managed remediation systems toward more coordinated and state-linked approaches, strengthening collaboration between suppliers, cooperatives, communities, and social services while broadening responses beyond child labour alone to include wider child protection vulnerabilities.

Satisfaction with Services and Project Engagement

Overall, the evaluation finds high levels of satisfaction with project activities and engagement across community members, frontline service providers, government stakeholders, and private-sector actors. Quantitative findings indicate that more than 90% of caregivers reported being satisfied or very satisfied with project services, with similarly positive perceptions emerging across qualitative interviews and discussions. Satisfaction was strongest in relation to education support, bridging classes, Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), child protection awareness activities, and broader improvements in children's wellbeing, schooling, and household resilience.

Respondents frequently highlighted the holistic nature of the project and the visible benefits generated across multiple areas of household and community life. Frontline service providers and government actors particularly valued the project's collaborative approach, capacity strengthening efforts, logistical support, and the strong involvement of state structures throughout implementation. Many stakeholders, e.g. government actors, also emphasised that the project's coordination and engagement model was stronger and more inclusive than typical NGO-government partnerships.

At the same time, satisfaction levels varied across components and stakeholder groups, and several important gaps and frustrations were identified. Dissatisfaction was most consistently linked to limited access to safe drinking water, incomplete or non-functional water infrastructure, and unmet expectations regarding community development support, despite building water infrastructure not being among project objectives.

Community service group members also raised concerns regarding the quality and functionality of equipment provided, while satisfaction with the adolescent and youth component was more mixed due to perceived limitations in training quality, coverage, certification, and access to livelihood support and materials. Among frontline actors, e.g., teachers and social workers, and government stakeholders, some respondents highlighted insufficient communication, limited inclusion in planning or implementation processes, and gaps in operational support, supervision, and training intensity.

Within the integrated CLMR, suppliers generally appreciated the quality of technical support and training provided under the Parallel project but expressed frustration regarding delays and operational constraints caused by the limited capacity and underfunding of social centres.

Overall, while stakeholder satisfaction with the project was high, findings indicate that unmet expectations, infrastructure gaps, and broader system capacity constraints affected perceptions of effectiveness and quality in some areas.

Fidelity of Implementation

Overall, the evaluation finds that the project was implemented with high fidelity to the original design, logframe, and planned implementation approach across most components, particularly child protection, education, and community development. Implementation generally followed the intended structure and sequencing, with most deviations reflecting adaptive management and contextual improvements rather than failure to implement planned activities. The phased rollout across communities supported gradual scale-up, recruitment, and capacity building, while additional adaptations—such as mentoring and coaching for social workers, adjustments to bridging class infrastructure, and expansion of income-generating activities—strengthened implementation quality and responsiveness to community needs. External factors, including COVID-19 and presidential elections, caused temporary delays but did not fundamentally alter overall implementation fidelity.

The main deviation from the original design concerned the Adolescents and Youth component, which was not fully developed at project inception and was substantially redesigned during implementation. Fidelity to Save the Children Common Approaches was uneven across components. Steps to Protect was implemented with very high fidelity and strongly informed child protection case management and alignment with national systems. Other approaches, including Parenting without Violence and Literacy and Numeracy Boost, were only partially implemented or adapted to fit the national context. Life skills programming was also adapted to the Côte d'Ivoire context through the development of a contextualised curriculum in collaboration with the University of Zurich. However, this should be understood as a contextualised application of the Life Skills for Success Common Approach, rather than a deviation from it, as the curriculum was aligned with the Common Approach toolkit and guidance and reflected its core components. Overall, implementation fidelity improved over time as implementation teams gained experience and approaches became more structured and consistently applied.

Cost-Efficiency Analysis

A complementing cost-efficiency analysis (see Annex 10) found that:

Project cost: Pillar I expenditure totalled approximately US\$7.6 million, with the majority allocated to direct costs (US\$5.6 million; 74%), and the remainder to support costs (US\$2.0 million; 26%). Most direct expenditure (71%) was concentrated in Child Protection and

Education, while Community Development and Adolescent and Youth Empowerment accounted for 29%, with the latter representing only 8%.

Child Protection cost-efficiency: The cost per case identified and referred was estimated at US\$1,288, and at US\$1,406 per victim receiving at least one service (1,933 out of 2,110 referrals). These estimates include all Child Protection activities and both direct and support costs. However, the selected output variable likely understates the broader programme value, which extended beyond case management and aimed at systems strengthening, community awareness, and improved access to services such as birth registration.

Comparability limitations in Child Protection: Existing cost benchmarks are limited and highly variable due to differences in scale, service scope, and delivery models. The intervention is not directly comparable to standard case management programmes, as it emphasised system strengthening and included additional elements such as engagement with cocoa cooperatives.

Education cost-efficiency: The cost per enrolled and regularly attending student was estimated at US\$803 and US\$899, respectively, across 3,502 and 3,127 beneficiaries. The relatively modest scale limited economies of scale but aligned with the targeted focus on cocoa-growing communities.

Role of fixed and variable costs in Education: A notable share of costs was fixed (e.g. infrastructure averaging US\$109 per student), suggesting potential efficiency gains of longer-term programming. In contrast, variable costs (e.g. teacher support at ~US\$80 per student) are likely largely scale independent.

Conclusions

The evaluation concludes that the project made a substantial and meaningful contribution to reducing child labour and strengthening protective environments for children in cocoa-producing communities. The evidence shows that the most significant results were achieved where multiple vulnerabilities were addressed simultaneously, confirming the effectiveness of the holistic approach. However, the sustainability and scalability of these results depend on addressing broader structural constraints, particularly the capacity and resourcing of public systems. Continued investment, stronger institutionalisation, and sustained public-private collaboration will be essential to consolidate and expand the gains achieved.

Recommendations

The evaluation recommends maintaining and scaling the project's holistic approach as the core strategy for reducing child labour risks in cocoa-growing communities. Future programming should continue integrating education, child protection, livelihoods, community development, and adolescent and youth empowerment interventions within the same vulnerable households and communities, while strengthening formal linkages and referral pathways between components. Greater emphasis should also be placed on sustainability and state ownership through early transition planning, stronger institutional embedding, and increased public financing for social centres, schools, and decentralised child protection and education services. The evaluation also recommends strengthening Save the Children's institutional advocacy capacity, reinforcing economic resilience as a core prevention pillar, and more systematically mainstreaming gender equity, disability inclusion, and community participation across all components.

In child protection, recommendations focus on advocating for increased public financing and strengthening the operational and technical capacity of social services, institutionalising mentoring and supervision systems for social workers, expanding digital case management

systems, strengthening the sustainability and autonomy of community-based protection structures such as CPCs and children's groups, and maintaining regular outreach and follow-up by social workers within communities. For the integrated CLMR, the evaluation recommends strengthening operational capacity of social centres, formalising collaboration between public and private actors, improving accountability mechanisms across the case management chain, and institutionalising the integrated model within national policy and regulatory frameworks.

For community development, the evaluation recommends deepening livelihood diversification and economic resilience interventions, particularly through VSLAs, IGAs, and Community Service Groups, while strengthening their profitability, sustainability, and links to child protection outcomes. Additional recommendations include improving water infrastructure and maintenance systems, strengthening collaboration with government technical services, linking VSLAs to financial institutions and microcredit organisations, and adapting Farmer Field Schools approaches to local realities through more practical, hands-on training, and continuous follow-up support.

In education, recommendations focus on strengthening access to formal schooling in remote communities, including transitioning bridging classes into recognised community schools with assigned government teachers where formal schools remain inaccessible. The evaluation also recommends improving follow-up after children transition into formal schools, expanding reading spaces, having a more inclusive educational approach, especially for children and youth with disabilities, strengthening teacher and facilitator training, integrating positive discipline more systematically, and strengthening coordination with national education authorities, including support for development of dedicated CPU/bridging class learning materials.

For adolescents and youth, recommendations emphasise earlier and clearer design of youth pathways, stronger transition support from training to livelihoods, greater access to productive assets and financial support, stronger partnerships with public employment and vocational systems, and sustained post-training accompaniment. The evaluation also recommends strengthening Farmer Field Schools and climate-resilient livelihoods while maintaining explicit links between youth programming and child labour prevention objectives.

The evaluation further recommends strengthening implementation of Pillar 2 by moving beyond one-off training toward structured operationalisation and accountability mechanisms, including supplier action plans, regular technical accompaniment, quarterly reviews, and integration of Programmatic Framework commitments into supplier systems and agreements. Finally, the evaluation recommends the use of internationally recognised and age-appropriate child labour measurement methodologies in future evaluations, including greater reliance on caregiver or proxy reporting for younger children alongside direct child reporting for older adolescents.

1 INTRODUCTION

Côte d'Ivoire plays a central role in the global cocoa economy, producing approximately 40% of the world's supply and generating nearly 40% of the country's export revenues. Despite the sector's importance, cocoa-growing regions in Côte d'Ivoire continue to face high levels of poverty, with nearly half of the national population and more than half of cocoa farmers living below the poverty line (van Vliet, Jiska A., Maja A. Slingerland, Yuca R. Waarts, and Ken E. Giller, 2021). Economic vulnerability pushes many households to rely on children's labour as a coping mechanism, often under hazardous conditions that undermine children's education, health, safety, and overall development. Evidence from the International Cocoa Initiative (2019) and UNICEF highlights pervasive risks including long working hours, exposure to dangerous tools and chemicals, frequent injuries, and chronic school absenteeism, as well as overlapping protection challenges such as sexual violence, early marriage, trafficking, and lack of birth registration.

Save the Children and Ferrero first partnered in 2016 in the Soubré region of Côte d'Ivoire with a pilot intervention aimed at strengthening protection mechanisms and providing psychosocial, educational, and case management support to children at risk of harmful or exploitative work. The pilot demonstrated promising results and was expanded between 2017 and 2020 through the Child Labour in Cocoa Plantations project, which reached 20 communities and over 5,600 children and adolescents with increased access to education, strengthened child protection systems, and improved household livelihoods. Building on these achievements, the current five-year Stop Child Labour in Cocoa Sourcing Communities project was launched in December 2020 to scale a holistic, systems-oriented approach to preventing and reducing child labour in cocoa supply chains.

The project operates through two complementary pillars, with a third pillar introduced in 2022. While Pillars I and II fall under Ferrero's sustainability function, the Parallel Project was initiated through Ferrero's procurement function. Pillar 1 supports 65 cocoa growing communities in the Hautassandra region of Côte d'Ivoire through direct implementation. Activities address the underlying drivers of child labour by strengthening child protection systems, improving access to quality and inclusive education, supporting community development and household resilience, and empowering adolescents and youth with life skills and market relevant vocational skills. Implementation was sequenced across two cohorts of communities beginning in 2021 and 2022 to allow phased learning. Pillar 2 provides technical support to Ferrero's suppliers and their cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire (and earlier in Ghana) to harmonise child protection and community development practices across sustainability programmes. This includes capacity strengthening, and the development of programmatic and monitoring frameworks. The Parallel Project (Pillar 3) introduces child labour guidelines for suppliers, comprising ten directives. The integrated CLMR is one of these directives, aimed at strengthening coordination between private-sector actors and national child protection systems through structured identification, referral, and case management processes. This evaluation focuses on the integrated CLMR as the only measure assessed under the Parallel Project.

This Final Evaluation builds on previous evidence, including baseline studies for both cohorts under Pillar 1 and an adolescent and youth baseline. It assesses the project's effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and contribution to child labour reduction by drawing on new quantitative and qualitative data and triangulating these with existing documentation. The evaluation also examines the functionality of strengthened community and government structures, the

integration of child protection systems within private-sector supply chains, and the overall relevance and strategic value of the Save the Children–Ferrero partnership. Insights generated are intended to inform future programme phases, strengthen public–private collaboration, and contribute to global learning on effective approaches to addressing child labour in agricultural supply chains.

2 PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

2.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the Final Evaluation was to assess the performance and results of the Stop Child Labour in Cocoa Sourcing Communities project at the end of its five-year implementation period. The evaluation examined the extent to which the project had achieved its intended objectives under Pillar 1, Pillar 2, and the CLMRS component of the Parallel Project, how and why change had occurred, and the degree to which the holistic model had contributed to reducing child labour risks in cocoa growing communities. It also aimed to identify lessons and generate actionable recommendations to inform future programming and to strengthen public–private collaboration for child protection in cocoa supply chains.

2.2 Specific Objectives

The evaluation had the following specific objectives:

1. **To assess results and effectiveness** by determining whether the project had achieved its planned objectives, outcomes, and targets and whether interventions had contributed to measurable reductions in child labour risks and improvements in children’s wellbeing.
2. **To examine mechanisms of change** by analysing how and why project components had influenced household, community, and systems-level outcomes, and which elements of the holistic model had been most influential.
3. **To assess alignment with national systems** by examining how project innovations, capacity-strengthening efforts, and partnership approaches had contributed to policy implementation, service quality, and institutional strengthening
4. **To assess sustainability and partnership dynamics** by exploring the extent to which capacities, structures, and collaborations established during the project were likely to be sustained beyond the project period.
5. **To identify strengths, gaps, and unintended outcomes**, capturing both positive and negative effects that had emerged during implementation.
6. **To provide evidence-based recommendations** for future programme phases, including guidance on cost-efficiency, scalability, and emerging issues such as environmental and ecological considerations.

2.3 Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation covered the full duration of the project from December 2020 to December 2025 and encompassed three pillars. **Pillar 1** focused on the 65 cocoa-growing communities in the Haut-Sassandra region of Côte d’Ivoire where direct interventions had been implemented in child protection, education, community development, and adolescent and youth empowerment. **Pillar 2** examined the technical assistance that had been provided to Ferrero’s suppliers and cooperatives in Côte d’Ivoire. The Parallel Project promoted the adoption of Child Labour Guidelines: it assessed the level of adoption and implementation of the ten measures, including the integrated CLMR and its role in strengthening the protection system and contributing to the

child protection component of the project. The scope included households, children and adolescents, youth beneficiaries, community structures, government institutions, private-sector partners, and Save the Children teams as the key actors whose experiences and outcomes were examined.

2.4 Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation was structured around five core areas: **Effectiveness and Impact, Inclusion and Participation, Sustainability through Transformational Partnerships, Satisfaction and Experience, and Cost Analysis.** These informed both the development of the evaluation questions and the overall analytical framework for interpreting findings.

2.5 Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions reflected both pillars and aligned with the Terms of Reference.

Evaluation area	Questions
Effectiveness and Impact	• Has the project achieved all its intended objectives based on project indicators? • What has been the impact of the specific interventions foreseen under the two pillars towards strengthening the CP system and increasing protection of children? • Has the project holistic approach contributed to a decrease of Child Labor and its risks in target communities? • Which components (community development, protection, education, A&Y empowerment) and interventions proved to be more effective in the reduction of CL? • What were the key achievements of the programme for each component? • Are suppliers and their cooperatives applying the concepts and methodologies they have learned? • If and how (through what mechanisms) have the interventions under the two pillars made a difference for participants and communities? • Were there any unintended outcomes, positive or negative? What are the key gaps and lessons learnt?
Sustainability through transformational partnership	• How has the cooperation among key project actors worked towards maximizing the impact and guaranteeing sustainability? • Has the collaboration with private sector transformed the system in the long term, bringing positive changes? How? • Did the integrated monitoring and remediation model (designed by the SC team for Ferrero suppliers participating in project activities) have a positive effect on mutual understanding and collaboration between the private sector and the national protection system? • Has the pilot adoption of this model, and therefore closer collaboration between the national system and the private sector, better supported the identification of cases of CL (or other vulnerabilities)? have there been more cases remedied and faster remediation?

Evaluation area	Questions
	• What are the distinguishing innovative approaches of the project? What innovations have been put in place to strengthen the alignment with and compliance of national sectoral policies and their modelling and operationalisation? • Has the knowledge transfer to government partners, project innovations, and collaboration with national actors created sustainable change in terms of better access, offer and quality of services? • What challenges remain to achieve sustainable reduction of child labour risks? • What recommendations could be made to improve the model/collaboration between private and public sectors and its sustainability?
Inclusion and participation:	• Are there any differences in the participation to activities and in the results achieved by different participant groups (e.g. men, women, boys and girls of different ages, people with disabilities and other vulnerable people)? • What were the barriers and enablers reported by participants in accessing the program? • What is the impact of the involvement of women members of the AVEC groups on gender norms in the targeted communities?
Satisfaction and experience	• Are participants of different target groups satisfied with the project activities? • Do they think the project has brought a change to their lives, or to their ways of working? (for example: satisfaction with the services and support received by children who benefited from case management; or changes reported by A&Y after the life-skills training and their application in daily life, use of new methodologies by Ferrero suppliers etc.)
Cost analysis ¹	• What is the cost (direct and shared cost) per beneficiary of the overall programme? • What are the differences among programme components (outcomes and outputs) in cost per beneficiary and reach? • What is the average cost of the specific interventions for example the case management cycle (including referral and services provided) to remediate a child labour case?
Fidelity of Implementation	• To what extent was the project implemented with fidelity to its original design—including the logical framework, workplan, and Save the Children Common Approaches?

¹ This component is done separately by another service provider but will be integrated in this report.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overall Design

The final evaluation used a mixed-method, non-experimental pre-post design, comparing endline results with baseline measurements for the same households and, where possible, the same adolescents and youth. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were combined to answer the evaluation questions and to understand not only whether change occurred, but also how and why it happened. For Pillar 1, the design was anchored in two baseline cohort studies (batch 1 and batch 2), enabling longitudinal analysis of change in child labour, education, vulnerability, and related outcomes. For Pillar 2 and the Parallel Project, including the integrated CLMR measure, the evaluation combined desk review of existing documentation with qualitative data from suppliers and key informants in Côte d'Ivoire, given the limited intervention activities implemented in Ghana in the latter phase of the project.

The evaluation was designed to assess contribution rather than causal attribution, given the absence of a comparison group and the integrated nature of the intervention. Triangulation across multiple data sources, quantitative, qualitative, and administrative, was therefore used to strengthen the credibility and robustness of findings.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling

The evaluation covered households, children aged 5–17, adolescents and youth aged 14–24, community structures, and key institutional stakeholders across 65 cocoa-producing communities targeted by the programme. In addition, the evaluation involved government actors, implementing partners, and private-sector stakeholders engaged in project implementation. The sampling strategies applied at baseline differed between batch 1 and batch 2, reflecting distinct methodological choices at the time of study design, and these differences have implications for both sample size and representativeness.

In Batch 1, the baseline adopted a multi-stage approach designed to identify and prioritise the most vulnerable households. The process began with the identification of 1,575 households considered potentially vulnerable by local stakeholders. Of these, 1,173 households were surveyed during an initial data collection phase. A vulnerability scoring tool was then applied and based on this ranking, 896 most vulnerable households were selected for inclusion in the baseline batch 1 household survey. This approach resulted in a relatively large baseline sample that was intentionally concentrated on the most vulnerable households, thereby maximising the programme's ability to target and monitor those at greatest risk. However, the approach was not designed to achieve statistical representativeness of the broader population.

In Batch 2, the baseline employed a more conventional sampling strategy combining a census and probabilistic selection. A comprehensive census of 1,397 potentially vulnerable households was first conducted, from which 925 households were identified as vulnerable using the same vulnerability scoring approach. From this group, a random sample of 420 households was then selected using proportional allocation across the 33 communities in the cohort. This ensured that each vulnerable household had an equal probability of selection, resulting in a sample that is statistically representative of vulnerable households within the Batch 2 intervention areas, though smaller than the Batch 1 sample.

These methodological differences explain the variation in baseline sample sizes across the two cohorts. The larger sample in Batch 1 reflects a purposive focus on identifying and following the most vulnerable households through an exhaustive and ranking-based approach, whereas the smaller sample in Batch 2 reflects a probabilistic design intended to ensure representativeness across communities. Taken together, the two approaches provide complementary analytical value, capturing both depth of vulnerability (Batch 1) and proportional distribution across the intervention areas (Batch 2).

For the endline, simple random sampling was applied separately within the baseline household lists for both batches. A fixed number of households was drawn from each sub-list in proportion to the size of the targeted population in each batch, ensuring balanced representation across both groups. Within each group, households were then randomly selected so that each household in that sub-list had an equal probability of inclusion. Where selected households could not be reached after repeated attempts, replacements were selected using random sampling without replacement to preserve the integrity of the sample.

The final quantitative study sample comprised of about 1,046 participants across five survey instruments. The household survey included 490 adult respondents (268 male and 222 female). Within sampled households, one child aged 5–17 years was randomly selected to participate in the child labour survey, resulting in 386 child respondents (224 boys and 162 girls). Anthropometric measurements were collected for children under five years of age and adolescent girls aged 10–17 years.

Separate sampling frames were used for adolescents and youth who had participated in life skills and vocational training interventions to ensure representation of these beneficiary groups. Following adjustments to the sampling strategy due to challenges in tracing participants, project monitoring data collected in December 2025 were utilised.

This dataset included 342 adolescents and youth who participated in life skills pre- and post-assessments (205 male and 137 female) and 35 youth who participated in decent work pre- and post-assessments (25 male and 10 female). In addition, 165 literacy tests were administered (84 male and 81 female participants). The distribution of sample sizes by gender is provided in the table below:

Table 1: Quantitative Sample distribution by instrument

Data Collection Activity	Total Participants	Male	Female
Household survey (Adults)	490	268	222
Adolescent & Youth Life Skills Assessment	342	205	137
Adolescent & Youth Decent Work Assessment	35	25	10
Literacy Tests	165	84	81
Child Labour Survey (5–17 years)	386	224	162

The qualitative component employed purposive sampling to select participants based on their exposure to project interventions and their relevance to the evaluation questions, while ensuring diversity in gender, age, and vulnerability status. Qualitative data were collected through 96 consultations, comprising 44 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 52 key informant interviews (KIIs). These engagements involved a minimum of 261 recorded participants, including 209 FGD participants and 52 KII participants. As participant numbers were not recorded for some FGDs, the total number of qualitative participants was likely higher. The table below provides the distribution of the participants by instrument.

Table 2: Qualitative Sample distribution by instrument

Method	Number Conducted	Recorded Participants
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	44	209
Key Informant/Individual & Group Interviews (KIIs)	52	52
Total	96	261

Qualitative respondents included children, adolescents and youth, caregivers, community leaders, Child Protection Committee members, teachers, cooperative and supplier representatives, social workers, and education and child protection authorities at community, sub-prefectural, and departmental levels. This broad range of stakeholders ensured that the evaluation captured diverse perspectives on project implementation, outcomes, and sustainability. A detailed breakdown of qualitative stakeholders consulted, the data collection tool used and the number of FGDs and interviews conducted by stakeholder group is provided in Annex 1.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data collection combined quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, service quality assessments, and document review.

The household survey replicated key modules from the baseline to ensure comparability over time. It included data on household demographics, health and nutrition, livelihoods, education, participation in project activities, and child labour. To complement the household survey, dedicated surveys were conducted with adolescents and youth to assess outcomes related to life skills, employability, and economic engagement.

A Quality-of-Service assessment was conducted for selected 6 social centres (out of 8) and 10 Child Protection Committees (out of 65) to examine changes in the accessibility and functionality of services. Qualitative data were collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions with children, caregivers, community structures, government representatives, suppliers, and project staff. These data provided insights into perceptions of change, mechanisms of impact, inclusion, and sustainability.

3.4 Measurement of Child Labour

Child labour was measured using a context-relevant child labour module developed at baseline. To ensure comparability between baseline and endline data, the same instrument was retained for all children aged 5–17 years. During the evaluation design phase, concerns were raised regarding the reliability of collecting detailed child labour data directly from younger children, particularly those aged 5–12 years, due to the complexity of the instrument and the length of the recall period. However, the approach was maintained in order to ensure comparability with baseline data, where the same methodology had been applied.

To address these limitations, the same child labour module was also administered to caregivers at endline. This allowed for comparison between child-reported and caregiver-reported data and enabled an analysis of the degree of convergence between the two sources. The evaluation therefore presents both datasets and explicitly accounts for differences in interpretation. While child self-reported data are used for baseline–endline comparison, particularly for consistency with project indicators, the analysis triangulates findings across all sources, including the data collected from the H5 module (Vulnerability data), and acknowledges limitations for younger

age groups. The H5 module was administered to the household head or his/her representative adult and asked child labour questions concerning all children in the household.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to examine changes in key indicators between baseline and endline, including child labour prevalence, education outcomes, and household economic conditions. To assess the relationship between project participation and changes in outcomes, fixed-effects regression models were used on panel household data. This approach controls for time-invariant household characteristics and allows for the analysis of how changes in programme exposure are associated with changes in child labour vulnerability over time. A composite child labour vulnerability score, constructed from household-level indicators, served as the primary outcome measure in this analysis. Given the scale of this index (ranging from low to high vulnerability), estimated changes can be interpreted as meaningful shifts in levels of risk rather than marginal variations.

The primary inferential analysis estimated the association between programme exposure and within household change in child labour vulnerability using household fixed effects regression models. This approach controlled for all unobserved, time invariant household characteristics, such as entrenched poverty, cultural norms, or long-standing attitudes toward children's work. Time varying controls were included to account for concurrent changes in household composition or shock exposure. Standard errors were clustered at the community level to account for intra community correlation.

Attrition

At endline, 490 households that were interviewed at baseline were sampled but only 430 were interviewed and 60 households could not be traced as such they were therefore replaced. This represents a 12% attrition rate. Of the 430 households that were successfully traced and re-interviewed at endline, 55 households could not be matched to their vulnerability records at baseline because of the lack of a unique household identifier. Consequently, only 375 households had both baseline and endline data that could be linked, providing complete information on vulnerability scores. This gap of 55 unmatched households represents 13% of the traced and reinterviewed households (55 out of 430) for which linkage was not possible despite successful follow-up. Levels of attrition of this magnitude are commonly observed in longitudinal household surveys conducted in low- and middle-income country settings, where population mobility, seasonal migration, and insecurity can affect follow-up rates, and are generally considered acceptable when appropriately documented and analytically addressed (Alderman, et al, 2000; Sánchez & Escobal, 2020).

To assess whether attrition was likely to introduce bias, baseline characteristics of households retained at endline were compared with those of households lost to follow-up. The results of this analysis and other analyses associated with this are presented in Annex 2.

3.5.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis used a structured thematic approach. Transcripts were coded deductively using evaluation questions and inductively to capture emerging patterns. Codes were iteratively refined and grouped into broader themes that directly addressed the key evaluation questions, including effectiveness, impact, sustainability, inclusion, and the factors and mechanisms

shaping observed outcomes. This analysis provided in-depth insights into stakeholder experiences, motivations, barriers, and causal mechanisms, enriching the interpretation of quantitative findings and strengthening the overall assessment of programme performance.

3.5.2 Integration

For questions which drew on quantitative and qualitative data, integration of the quantitative and qualitative strands included triangulation of findings to strengthen the credibility of conclusions. Convergence, expansion and complementarity across sources reinforced reliability and trustworthiness, while divergence between quantitative and qualitative strands was examined for contextual explanations, subgroup variation, or measurement limitations. This integrative approach ensured that each evaluation question was addressed using the strongest available evidence.

4 LIMITATIONS, RISKS, AND MITIGATION

The evaluation faced some methodological, contextual, and operational limitations that shaped the scope and interpretation of findings. While these limitations could not be fully addressed, efforts were made to apply appropriate mitigation strategies to support analytical rigour and credibility.

4.1 Methodological Limitations and Mitigation

The evaluation employed a non-experimental pre-post design without a comparison group, which limits the ability to attribute observed changes solely to the project. To mitigate this, the analysis used household fixed-effects models to control for all stable household characteristics and employed mixed-methods triangulation to strengthen causal plausibility.

Exposure to project interventions was measured through self-reported participation, as baseline IDs were not linked to monitoring systems. This introduces potential recall and misclassification bias. To mitigate this, participation variables were constructed consistently across components, “don’t know” responses were flagged and tested in sensitivity checks, and qualitative findings were used to triangulate exposure trends.

The holistic nature of the project made it difficult to isolate the individual impact of each component, since households often participated in multiple interventions. Child labour was measured using a context-relevant child labour module developed at baseline which had recall period of 12 months. During the evaluation design phase, concerns were raised regarding the reliability of collecting detailed child labour data directly from younger children, particularly those aged 5–12 years. Similar concerns were also raised by the SCI’s ethics review committee. This approach also differs from internationally recognised methodologies used by UNICEF, ILO, and in MICS, where child labour data for younger children are typically collected from caregivers rather than children themselves, precisely to address limitations related to comprehension and recall. However, the tool was maintained to ensure comparability between baseline and endline data, so as to establish changes in child labour over time across all age groups. Data produced from this tool is used to calculate the impact-level indicator “Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, there including its worst forms, in the areas covered by the intervention, by sex, age”. To mitigate this limitation and assess the robustness of findings, the same child labour module was administered to caregivers using identical definitions, activity lists, and thresholds

Limitations also arise from differences in sampling approaches between baseline and endline: at baseline, a convenience sampling strategy was used, in which children were selected for participation in the child labour survey module based on their availability and convenience, and respondents could be replaced where comprehension was limited. In contrast, the endline employed random selection to ensure a representative sample. This means that direct comparison of baseline with endline (which used random, representative sampling) has limited validity.

4.2 Contextual and Operational Risks and Mitigation

Safeguarding risks were inherent in collecting sensitive information on child labour, violence, or household vulnerabilities. All data collectors underwent mandatory training on Child Safeguarding and PSEA, used age-appropriate and sensitive interviewing techniques, and applied a clear referral protocol for any protection concerns arising during data collection.

There was also a risk of social desirability bias, particularly where participants viewed the evaluation as linked to programme continuation or assistance. Enumerators reinforced confidentiality, clarified the independent nature of the evaluation, and used indirect questioning techniques to reduce response bias.

Language and translation challenges also posed risks, as multiple local languages were spoken in target communities. Enumerators fluent in those languages were recruited, tools were piloted to check comprehension, and transcripts were carefully reviewed to maintain meaning in translation.

Finally, Pillar 2 activities in Ghana did not continue after the mid-term review, limiting the ability to collect new endline evidence there.

5 FINDINGS

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative findings of the final evaluation of the project. The findings are organised around the project's two pillars plus a specific component of the Parallel project, while also examining several cross-cutting dimensions. The key evaluation questions addressed by each section are included in the introduction of the relevant section, alongside any important limitations in the extent to which those questions were answered by the available data.

The first part of this section presents findings related to Pillar I, focusing on the direct implementation of interventions by Save the Children. This includes analysis of the project's effectiveness and impact, sustainability, and inclusion across the different thematic components and the holistic approach. The second part presents findings related to Pillar II, with particular attention to the adoption and implementation of the Programmatic Framework by suppliers and other stakeholders, while also acknowledging the limitations affecting the scope of available findings for this component. A third part that focuses on the Parallel Project is included as well, aiming to examine the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the integrated Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation model (CLMR), including its alignment with national child protection systems and collaboration between public and private actors.

Following the pillar-specific analysis, the section presents cross-cutting findings related to the project's alignment with national policies and systems through innovative approaches, stakeholder satisfaction with services and project engagement, and the fidelity of implementation across intervention components.

Pillar 1 – Direct SC Implementation of the Holistic Approach

This section presents the evaluation findings related to Pillar 1, which focused on Save the Children's direct implementation of the holistic approach in cocoa-growing communities. The findings are organised under four main areas of analysis: impact and effectiveness, sustainability, and inclusion.

Within each of these sections, findings are presented across the project's main components, including education, child protection, community development and household resilience, and adolescents and youth interventions. In addition, each section also includes analysis of the holistic approach as a whole, examining how the different components interacted and complemented one another in addressing the interconnected drivers of child labour and child vulnerability within targeted communities.

5.1 Impact and Effectiveness

The project demonstrates strong results across impact and effectiveness dimensions, reflecting both substantial reductions in child labour and strengthening of child protection systems at community and institutional levels. This section addresses evaluation questions on impact and effectiveness and mainly focuses on the extent to which the programme achieved its intended results, the mechanisms through which change occurred, and the key enabling and constraining factors shaping outcomes. The analysis further addresses the evaluation questions by examining whether the project achieved its key indicators, the nature and significance of the changes observed, and the contribution of the intervention to these results.

This section answers the following evaluation questions:

- Has the project achieved all its intended objectives based on project indicators?
- What has been the impact of the specific interventions foreseen under the pillar 1 towards strengthening the CP system and increasing protection of children?
- Has the project holistic approach contributed to a decrease of Child Labor and its risks in target communities?
- Which components (community development, protection, education, A&Y empowerment) and interventions proved to be more effective in the reduction of CL?
- What are the key achievements of the programme for each component?
- If and how (through what mechanisms) the interventions under pillar 1 made a difference for participants and communities?
- Were there any unintended outcomes, positive or negative?
What are the key gaps and lessons learnt

5.1.1 Child Protection

5.1.1.1 Overview

The analysis of the child protection component demonstrates a high level of convergence between quantitative and qualitative findings, with both strands consistently pointing toward substantial improvements in child protection outcomes. Quantitative results provide strong statistical evidence of change across most key indicators (Table 3), while qualitative findings offer explanatory depth, illustrating how these changes occurred at household, community, and system levels.

Overall, the project achieved significant and mutually reinforcing results across behavioural, community, and system domains, demonstrating effectiveness against most of its core

"Since the children stopped going to the field [for heavy work], it has allowed these children to grow up well and no longer fall ill as they used to when they went. So this new way of monitoring the children pleases them greatly."
Community Leaders,
Zoukougbeu

indicators. One of the most notable achievements was the substantial reduction in child labour prevalence. This reflects a major shift in children's exposure to labour, particularly hazardous forms, and demonstrates that the intervention was highly effective in reducing child labour overall.

The reduction was especially pronounced among younger children, indicating strong success in preventing early entry into labour. However, the persistence of child labour among older adolescents highlights that deeper structural drivers such as poverty and economic pressures were not fully addressed, pointing to the need for longer-term and more systemic solutions.

Closely linked to the reduction in child labour was the **major improvement in household knowledge of child rights and child labour issues, alongside positive attitudes toward child protection**. This represents one of the most important achievements of the project, as it underpinned behavioural change at household level. Qualitative evidence confirm that increased awareness, positive attitudes and practices were instrumental in reinforcing the observed reductions in child labour and strengthening protective environments for children.

Table 3: Key Child Protection Indicators

Key project Indicators	Disaggregation	BL (%)	EL (%)	Change (pp)	P-value
Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, there including its worst forms, in the areas covered by the intervention, by age	All	72%	23%	-49 pp	0.00***
	5-12 years	52%	7%	-44 pp	0.00***
	13-15 years	85%	52%	-33 pp	0.00***
	16-17 years	84%	73%	-11 pp	0.00***
Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in worst forms of child labour in the areas covered by the intervention, by age	All	72%	22%	-50 pp	0.00***
	5-12 years	52%	6%	-46 pp	0.00***
	13-15 years	83%	52%	-31 pp	0.00***
	16-17 years	85%	73%	-12 pp	0.00***
Proportion of targeted women and men who demonstrate increased knowledge/changed attitudes towards child labour		Mean score 18.9	88% (Mean score 28)	+9.1	0.00***
Key project indicators	Disaggregation	BL (%)	EL (%)	Target	% Achieved
Number of cases of abuse and other vulnerabilities identified and referred (by the CPC, the GC, cooperatives and community members), including cases of the worst forms of child labour, such as forced labour and trafficking.	All	0	2,110	1,950	108%
	Boys	0	1,038		
	Girls	0	1,072		
Percentage of cases of abuse and other vulnerabilities identified and referred that received at least one case management service	All	0	92%	80%	115%
Percentage of managed S2P cases that meet S2P process and quality standards.	Boys	0	100%	80%	125%
Number of birth certificates issued and facilitated by the project	Girls	0	278	385	72%

Another key achievement was the **strengthening of child protection systems and service delivery**. The project institutionalized standardised case management procedures improving the quality, structure, and consistency of provided services. At community level, the project achieved important progress in **strengthening local child protection mechanisms and collective responsibility**. Child Protection Committees played a key role in awareness-raising, case identification, and referral, contributing to improved community monitoring and increased accountability for child protection.

Another notable achievement was the **enhanced visibility and utilisation of child protection services**. Communities became more aware of available services and more willing to report cases and seek support, reflecting increased trust in formal systems. This shift from informal to formal reporting mechanisms represents an important transformation in how child protection issues are addressed. The project also made **meaningful progress in improving birth registration** (although failed short of meeting the targets) which represents a significant outcome in improving children's access to legal identity, which is critical for accessing education and protection services.

Despite these achievements, several limitations remain. Capacity constraints within service delivery systems such as human resource limitations, workload pressures, and resource gaps may affect the depth, consistency, and sustainability of outcomes. In addition, while behavioural and community-level changes were significant, addressing the structural drivers of child labour and vulnerability such as poverty and cultural norms will require sustained, multi-sectoral interventions beyond the project's timeframe.

"We have noticed a significant reduction in child labour in the fields and in injuries related to the handling of machetes."
Child Protection
Committee member

5.1.1.2 Changes in Child Labour Prevalence and Exposure

Child labour prevalence estimates in this evaluation were primarily based on surveys administered directly to 411 randomly sampled children aged 5–17 years using a detailed child labour measurement instrument that partially aligns with international standards but largely reflects national legislative provisions, ensuring contextual relevance. The instrument applies to all children aged 5–17 years and is designed to distinguish between acceptable forms of children's participation in work and situations that constitute child labour. To achieve this, information was collected on the specific activities performed by children and the amount of time spent on these activities during the past 12 months. Both domestic and rural, or agricultural activities were included in the assessment in order to capture the full range of work commonly undertaken by children in the study context. Children's work activities were first identified using a detailed list of tasks derived from national legislation. These activities were pre-classified as either non-hazardous or hazardous by nature or by the conditions under which they are performed. Non-hazardous activities included routine household tasks and age-appropriate assistance in farming and other family enterprises, while hazardous activities included tasks prohibited for children, such as land clearing, carrying heavy loads, the use of sharp tools or machinery, and handling agrochemicals. This approach ensured systematic identification of hazardous exposures while reducing the risk of underreporting and misclassification.

The overall findings indicate a substantial reduction in the prevalence of child labour between the baseline and endline periods, alongside a marked decline in exposure to hazardous activities and the worst forms of child labour. At baseline, nearly three-quarters (72%) of children aged 5–17 were classified as being in child labour, with 64% falling in the category of worst forms of child labour. These figures underscore the severity of child labour at the outset, particularly in rural and agricultural contexts where children's work often involves hazardous tasks. The proportion of children in child labour had fallen significantly at endline to less than one quarter (23%), and the share of children in the worst forms of child labour declined to 22%. This represents a substantial absolute reduction across all categories of child labour, including hazardous work.

Qualitative findings consistently reinforce this trend, with respondents across all groups reporting visible reductions in children's participation in hazardous work. These changes were most frequently associated with decreased involvement in agricultural tasks involving physical risk, such as machete use and carrying heavy loads. This highlights that improvements were not limited to participation rates but also extended to the severity of children's work.

Further analysis by age group (Table 4) reveals that reductions in child labour occurred across all age cohorts, though the patterns differed by age. Among younger children aged 5–12, the reduction in child labour appears particularly pronounced and did not converge with caregiver-reported data. The child labour measurements for this age group are therefore not fully reliable,

as further discussed in the next section. Despite this limitation, the direction of change remains consistent across data sources. Caregiver-reported data and household-level vulnerability analysis both confirm that child labour decreased for younger children, but the precise magnitude cannot be determined with full accuracy.

Among children aged 13–15, reductions in child labour were also evident, though levels remained higher than among younger children. At baseline, 85% of children in this age group were classified as being in child labour, largely due to long working hours and hazardous agricultural work. By endline, 52% of children aged 13–15 remained in child labour, indicating progress but also highlighting persistent risks associated with adolescent work, particularly in rural livelihoods. A similar pattern was observed among adolescents aged 16–17; although child labour prevalence declined (from 85% to 73%), it remained relatively high compared with younger cohorts, reflecting continued exposure to hazardous tasks and excessive working hours among older adolescents.

Qualitative findings indicate this persistence is closely linked to entrenched livelihood patterns and the ongoing role of children in supporting household economic activities. These insights highlight the extent to which child labour remains deeply embedded within household production systems and reinforced by intergenerational norms.

“At the level of tradition, since from a young age, some among us even were subjected to hazardous work. So the challenge to address was being able to change mindsets – that too was a challenge to address: changing mindsets – bringing communities to understand that the child is not – I would say – cheap labour or family labour.” Social Centre, Daloa

Table 4: Child labour reported by children aged 5–17: Baseline vs Endline

		5-12 years		13-15 years		16-17 years	
		Baseline (N=596)	Endline (N=288)	Baseline (N=253)	Endline (N=86)	Baseline (N=106)	Endline (N=37)
Not involved in child work	Boys	19%	93%	19%	35%	18%	22%
	Girls	20%	92%	1%	43%	4%	7%
	All	20%	92%	11%	38%	11%	16%
Light permitted work	Boys	11%	0%	24%	6%	39%	13%
	Girls	12%	1%	20%	14%	37%	7%
	All	11%	0%	22%	9%	38%	11%
Child labour	Boys	54%	7%	80%	59%	82%	64%
	Girls	68%	8%	91%	43%	88%	87%
	All	61%	7%	85%	52%	85%	73%
WFCL	Boys	46%	6%	76%	59%	82%	64%
	Girls	57%	7%	91%	43%	88%	87%
	All	52%	6%	83%	52%	85%	73%

Gender differences in child labour were observed at both baseline and endline. At baseline, girls were at least as likely as boys to be classified as being in child labour, particularly among younger age groups where domestic and agricultural activities frequently exceeded permissible thresholds. By endline, reductions were observed for both boys and girls; however, girls continued to experience slightly higher rates of involvement in the worst forms of child labour in some age groups. Qualitative findings indicate that children’s work has not been uniformly eliminated but rather redefined, with certain forms remaining socially acceptable. Stakeholders consistently emphasised that not all forms of children’s work are considered problematic,

suggesting that efforts have been more effective in reducing clearly hazardous activities, while forms of work perceived as acceptable—including domestic labour, where girls are more engaged—remain more difficult to address due to their normative acceptance within households. This aligns with broader literature indicating that girls' work, especially domestic and unpaid family labour, is more likely to be under-recognised and underestimated, despite its significant risks to well-being and education.

“Today you would hear parents saying: the child must not do everything, the child must not do all the tasks. Before, they would even hand a pesticide sprayer to the child to go and spray the field. But today, they know that the child must not spray the field, because the child does not have the capacity or the required age to spray a plantation, and so on.” Social Centre, Daloa

Reliability of Findings: Comparison of children's self-reports and caregiver reports CL data

The comparison of child- and caregiver-reported child labour shows clear and systematic divergence across age groups, especially among children aged 5–12. These gaps are not minor but fundamental, highlighting significant data reliability challenges beyond simple respondent bias and requiring careful interpretation. Among children aged 5–12 years, only 7% self-report engagement in CL, compared with 47% reported by caregivers (N=480), while exposure to the worst forms of child labour is reported by 6% of children and 27% of caregivers (Table 5). This pronounced divergence narrows among children aged 13–15 years, where 52% of children report engagement in child labour compared with 44% of caregivers, and 52% versus 38% report exposure to the worst forms. Convergence improves further among adolescents aged 16–17 years, though discrepancies persist, with children reporting higher involvement (73%) than caregivers (60%). This age gradient in reporting consistency mirrors findings from survey experiments in cocoa-growing contexts, which show that discrepancies between child and proxy reporting are greatest among younger children and decline with age (Erwin et al., 2025; Janzen, 2018), suggesting that reliability improves with age but remains imperfect across all cohorts.

Table 5: Child labour status among children 5-17 years: Children's reports vs Caregiver reports

		5-12 years		13-15 years		16-17 years		All	
		Children	Caregiver	Children	Caregiver	Children	Caregiver	Children	Caregiver
No child work	Boy	93%	57%	35%	43%	22%	40%	75%	53%
	Girl	92%	48%	43%	31%	7%	22%	73%	42%
	Total	92%	53%	38%	38%	16%	32%	74%	48%
Light permitted tasks	Boy	0%	0%	6%	17%	13%	0%	3%	4%
	Girl	1%	0%	14%	21%	7%	0%	3%	5%
	Total	0%	0%	9%	19%	11%	0%	3%	4%
Child labour including WFCL	Boy	7%	43%	59%	39%	64%	60%	22%	44%
	Girl	8%	52%	43%	48%	87%	78%	23%	54%
	Total	7%	47%	52%	44%	73%	60%	23%	48%
WFCL	Boy	6%	22%	59%	35%	64%	60%	21%	28%
	Girl	7%	32%	43%	40%	87%	78%	23%	38%
	Total	6%	27%	52%	38%	73%	68%	22%	33%

The divergence observed among children aged 5–12 is largely explained by a combination of cognitive limitations and survey design challenges. Younger children often struggle with long recall periods, complex questionnaires, and tasks requiring detailed reporting on activities, duration, and risks, which leads to underreporting in their responses. In contrast, caregivers may

overestimate children's involvement, creating a noticeable gap between the two sources. This gap tends to decrease as children grow older, suggesting that the differences are driven more by developmental and methodological factors than by actual variations in labour participation. Overall, the findings indicate that self-reported data from younger children are to be interpreted with caution as they likely underestimate their exposure to labour, highlighting the importance of using age-appropriate tools and multiple sources of information (see a deeper discussion on this issue in Annex 4).

In conclusion, the baseline–endline comparison for children aged 13–17 provides a clearer and more robust and reliable assessment of trends in child labour than is possible for younger age groups. The convergence observed across age, sex and child labour categories indicates that measurement error is likely lower for adolescents and that observed reductions can be interpreted with greater confidence. This underscores the importance of age-disaggregated analysis in child labour monitoring and reinforces the need for differentiated interpretation of results by age group when assessing progress and drawing programmatic and policy conclusions.

Child Labour Prevalence by Work Environment: children report

The analysis of child labour by work environment reveals important variations in the scale and nature of change, with quantitative and qualitative findings showing that reductions were substantial but uneven across sectors (Table 6). At baseline, children's engagement in light permitted work was most prevalent in domestic settings, particularly among girls (34% compared to 13% for boys), reflecting a strongly gendered pattern of participation in household-based activities. By endline, this form of work had been almost eliminated across all environments, declining to 3% overall in domestic work and to zero in both rural and combined domestic–rural contexts. This sharp reduction suggests that the project was effective in addressing less hazardous forms of child work, particularly those most visible and amenable to behaviour change.

"Truly the parents were informed... But thanks to the sensitisation, they understood we are not saying children cannot work, but there are types of work that are dangerous for the child. At least they were awakened and informed" Regional Government Official

More severe forms of child labour followed a similar but more differentiated trajectory. Rural work showed the most pronounced improvements, with child labour and the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) falling from 3% and 6% respectively at baseline to complete elimination at endline. Children engaged in both domestic and rural work also experienced substantial reductions, with overall child labour declining from 32% to 8% and WFCL from 31% to 8%. These results indicate that interventions targeting hazardous agricultural labour were particularly effective, leading to near elimination of high-risk activities in these environments.

"We have noticed a significant reduction in child labour in the fields and in injuries related to the handling of machetes." Child Protection Committee member in Daloa

In contrast, domestic work remains the area where child labour persists most strongly. Although prevalence declined considerably from 33% to 12% overall, it continues to affect a notable proportion of children compared to other work environments. Gender differences remain evident within this category. Girls experienced a particularly steep reduction in domestic child labour (from 46% to 10%), while the decline among boys was more modest (from 20% to 15%),

resulting in a narrowing but still meaningful gender gap. A similar pattern is observed in the worst forms of child labour, which declined significantly for both boys and girls but remained highest in domestic settings at endline (12% overall), reinforcing concerns about the persistence of less visible and socially embedded forms of labour.

Qualitative findings strongly support and help explain why domestic work remains more resistant to reduction. Across all groups, respondents reported a marked reduction in children's involvement in hazardous agricultural work, particularly in cocoa farming. Awareness-raising efforts were particularly effective in addressing clearly hazardous and visible tasks, such as those associated with farming, where risks were widely recognised and socially acknowledged. By contrast, domestic labour remains more embedded in social norms and less visible to external monitoring, making it less responsive to change. This divergence helps explain why, despite overall progress, domestic work continues to present a comparatively higher risk of child labour and WFCL exposure at endline.

Table 6: Child labour prevalence by work environment, and gender (5-17 years): Children report

		Domestic work		Rural work		Domestic work & rural work	
		Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline
Light permitted work	Boys	13%	3%	10%	0%	19%	0%
	Girls	34%	3%	3%	0%	11%	0%
	All	23%	3%	6%	0%	15%	0%
Child labour including WFCL	Boys	20%	15%	6%	0%	38%	7%
	Girls	46%	10%	1%	0%	26%	10%
	All	33%	12%	3%	0%	32%	8%
WFCL	Boys	20%	14%	10%	0%	36%	7%
	Girls	44%	10%	2%	0%	26%	10%
	All	32%	12%	6%	0%	31%	8%

Households' exposure to Child Labour between Baseline and Endline

Households' exposure to child labour measured through the H5 Vulnerability assessment module shows evidence of change and marked improvements in child labour status between baseline and endline (Table 7). At baseline, all households in the analytical sample (n = 322) were classified as either engaging in child labour or in the worst forms of child labour. By endline, a substantial proportion of these households had transitioned out of child labour altogether. Among households classified as engaged in child labour at baseline (n = 7), 86% (6) transitioned to no child labour by endline, while 14% (1) moved into the worst forms of child labour category. None of these households remained in the child labour category at endline. Among households classified under the worst forms of child labour at baseline (n = 315), 83% transitioned to no child labour, 12% moved to child labour, and 6% remained in the worst forms of child labour category. Overall, by endline, 83% of households were classified as having no child labour, while 12% remained in child labour and 6% remained in the worst forms of child labour.

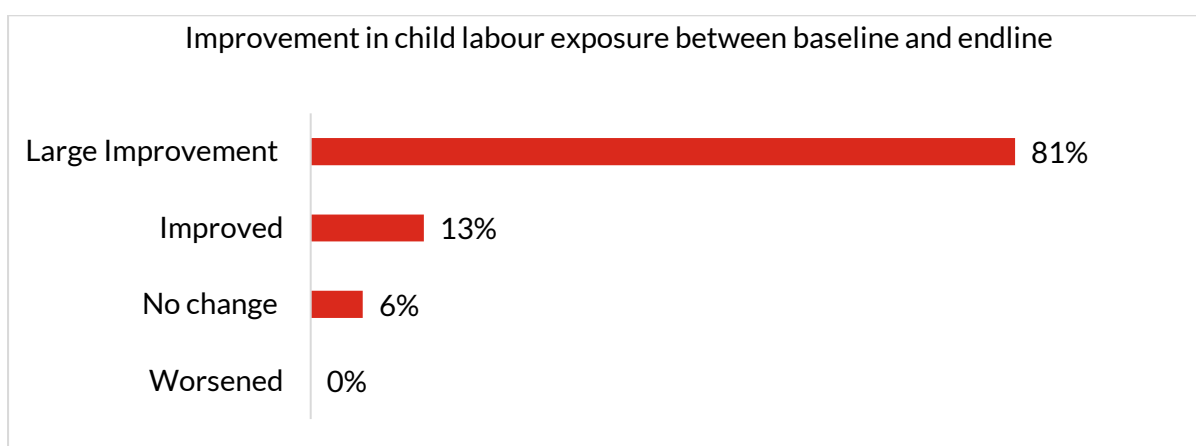
Table 7: Transition of Households' exposure to Child Labour between Baseline and Endline

Baseline child labour	No child labour at endline	Child labour at endline	WFCL at endline	Total
Child labour (excluding WFCL)	6 (86%)	0 (0%)	1 (14%)	7 (100%)

Worst forms of child labour	260 (83%)	37 (12%)	18 (6%)	315 (100%)
All	266 (83%)	37 (12%)	19 (6%)	322 (100%)

Net change analysis highlights the scale and direction of transitions. A total of 260 households (81% of the sample) experienced a large improvement, moving directly from the worst forms of child labour to no child labour. An additional 43 households (13%) showed a moderate improvement, transitioning either from the worst forms of child labour to child labour or from child labour to no child labour. **In total, 94% of households experienced an improvement in exposure to child labour between baseline and endline.** Only eighteen households (6%) recorded no change over the period, while only one household experienced a deterioration in child labour status.

Figure 1: Improvement in child labour exposure between baseline and endline



Qualitative findings corroborate this transformation and indicate that these changes were rooted in shifts in social norms and collective practices. Respondents described a growing sense of shared responsibility for child protection, suggesting that behaviour change extended beyond individual households to encompass broader community-level norms, reinforcing the sustainability of observed outcomes.

"So, children today belong to the whole community. Where once there was a fear that individualism meant each person thinks only of their own child and protects only their own child – today, in the communities, everyone protects everyone else's child, and the child belongs to everyone. That is also a positive aspect of the project." Social Centre, Dalao"

Changes in Child Labour Exposure Scores Between Baseline and Endline

The improvements in child labour outcomes are also reflected in a substantial and statistically significant reduction in the composite child-labour exposure scores between baseline and endline. The mean scores decreased from 18.3 to 5.7 ($p=0.00$). Further analysis by household head gender shows improvements for both male- and female-headed households, with similarly large reductions in vulnerability scores observed across groups. This reflects improvements in underlying socio-economic conditions and risk factors, indicating that the project not only influenced individual behaviours but also reflected broader shifts in social norms, awareness, and accessibility of protection mechanisms.

Table 8: Child Labour Vulnerability Scores at Baseline and Endline

	Mean score (Baseline)	Mean score (Endline)	Mean difference (Endline – Baseline)	P-value
Male headed households	18.3 (SD 2.37)	5.7 (SD 1.59)	-12.6	0.00***
Female headed households	18.6 (SD 1.62)	5.7 (SD 1.19)	-12.9	0.00***
All	18.3 (SD 2.25)	5.7 (SD 1.42)	-12.6	0.00***

Targeted women and men who demonstrate increased knowledge/changed attitudes towards child labour

Data on this indicator were collected through the household survey. This indicator measures changes in respondents' knowledge and normative understanding of child rights and child labour, including definitions of a child, child labour, child exploitation, hazardous work, worst forms of child labour, associated risks, and sanctions for violations. The indicator is based on a series of survey questions designed to capture both factual knowledge and attitudes aligned with child protection standards.

The proportion of respondents demonstrating improved knowledge reached 88%, with the overall composite knowledge score increasing from 18.9 to 28.0 (+9.1, $p < 0.001$). These improvements were observed consistently across all knowledge domains, with particularly large gains in understanding child exploitation and the worst forms of child labour (both 84% improved), as well as notable improvements in knowledge of child rights, hazardous work, and associated risks. The scale and breadth of these changes indicate a widespread shift in perceptions and understanding within communities.

Table 9: Proportion of women and men who demonstrate increased knowledge and change in attitude towards child labour (baseline vs endline)

Knowledge domain	Sample size (paired)	% Improved (95% CI)	Mean BL score	Mean EL score	Difference (Δ)	P-value
Definition of child labour	302	51% (45%-57%)	2.4	2.9	+0.55	0.00***
Child rights	302	57% (51%-62%)	5.4	6.5	+1.1	0.00***
Definition of child labour	302	78% (73%-83%)	1.4	3.2	+1.8	0.00***
Child exploitation	302	84% (80%-89%)	2.6	5.7	+3.1	0.00***
Child hazardous work	302	49% (43%-55%)	5.6	6.3	+0.7	0.00***
Risks linked to hazardous work	302	55% (49%-61%)	2.3	2.8	+0.5	0.00***
Worst forms of child labour	302	84% (80%-88%)	1.6	3.3	+1.7	0.00***
Sanctions against child abuse	302	35% (29%-40%)	0.7	1.0	+0.3	0.00***
Overall score	302	88% (84%-91%)	18.9	28.0	+9.1	0.00***

Qualitative findings reinforce this evidence and illustrate how increased knowledge and awareness reduced vulnerability by reshaping perceptions of children's roles and rights. Awareness-raising, one of the causal pathways, was transformative in reshaping caregivers'

perceptions of children's roles and rights. This shift in understanding appears to have enabled caregivers to reassess the acceptability of children's work and to adopt practices that reduce risk. Community engagement mechanisms further indicate that knowledge gains were actively translated into behavioural change through repeated interaction and reinforcement. Respondents highlighted how awareness efforts clarified distinctions between acceptable and hazardous work, enabling households to reduce children's exposure to risk even when children's participation in some tasks persisted.

"Before the arrival of Save the Children, we didn't even know children's rights. Now we know how to treat children, and things are going well – the children are protected." Child Protection Committee, Zoukougbeu

"We are not saying children cannot work, but there are types of work that are dangerous for the child" Regional Government Official explained

5.1.1.3 Integrated Systems Strengthening, Service Quality and Enabling Environment

The reduction in child labour vulnerability appears linked not only to increased awareness and community engagement, but also to changes in the functioning of child protection systems. Quantitative evidence shows strong performance in the identification and referral of child labour cases. By endline, a total of 2,110 children and adolescents aged 5–17 involved in child labour, including cases of the worst forms of child labour (WFCL), had been identified and referred to case management service providers, exceeding the overall programme target of 1,950 children and adolescents. Of these cases, 1,038 were girls, and 1,072 were boys, indicating a balanced reach across sexes. This achievement suggests that the project contributed to strengthening community-based and formal identification and referral pathways across the targeted areas. Qualitative findings converge with the quantitative results. Social workers and community leaders consistently described how the establishment and strengthening of Child Protection Committees (CPCs), improved capacity of community-based actors, and stronger linkages with formal child protection services contributed to increased identification and referral of vulnerable children to social centres. This was further reinforced by enhanced collaboration between public and private sector actors, with cooperatives and suppliers increasingly using the formal child protection system to refer identified cases to social centres.

CPCs emerged as one of the most effective mechanisms within the child protection component. Qualitative findings suggest that CPCs played a central role in translating awareness into action at community level. Their contribution went beyond general sensitisation and included door-to-door awareness-raising, identification of concerning situations, direct engagement with parents, community mediation, referral of unresolved cases to social centres, and follow-up within communities. CPCs also appear to have **contributed to deterring child labour and other harmful practices by increasing community-level monitoring and accountability**. Their regular presence in communities, their recognised role as local child protection relays, and their ability to escalate cases to chiefs or social centres created a sense that harmful practices were more likely to be noticed and acted upon. In this way, CPCs helped reinforce child protection messages, strengthen compliance with community norms against child labour and violence, and create a stronger local protective environment, particularly in contexts where formal social services had limited day-to-day presence. Thus, **monitoring, follow-up, and reporting systems**

were one of the important causal pathways through which the project drove sustained change in child labour.

In terms of case management, quantitative evidence indicates that the operationalisation of the Steps to Protect (S2P) approach was substantial, with 100% of managed cases meeting S2P process and quality standards at endline, exceeding the programme target of 80%. This level of achievement suggests that core components of the child protection system, including standardised procedures, documentation tools, and referral pathways, were effectively established across project areas. However, evidence on service reach and effectiveness is more mixed. While over 90% of identified cases reportedly received at least one case management service, this indicator requires careful interpretation. The definition of “receiving at least one service” is broad and captures varying levels of engagement, ranging from initial case registration to more comprehensive support. As such, the high coverage rate should not be taken as evidence that cases consistently received sustained or in-depth assistance. Rather, it primarily reflects improved entry into the system, not necessarily the quality or completeness of support provided.

Qualitative findings show the extent of these improvements. Stakeholders consistently reported improvement in structure and standardisation in case management processes, with clearer procedures and greater use of formal tools, reflecting stronger professional practice and institutional capacity.

“Today, thanks to the project, we received training and we have tools – we have case management forms that we fill in at each step of the case management process” Social Centre, Daloa.

However, qualitative evidence also highlights persistent systemic constraints such as high workloads, wide coverage of geographical areas and limited transport and operational budgets, which limit the effectiveness of these improvements in practice. These challenges affect follow-up, timeliness, and continuity of case management. In many cases, they made it difficult to progress from referral and registration to case assessment and follow-up unless transport and operational support were provided by cooperatives or suppliers. This indicates that compliance with procedural standards did not always translate into sustained engagement with beneficiaries. These challenges are discussed in further detail under “The Parallel Project” section.

The progress in birth registration provides further evidence of system-level strengthening contributing to improved child protection outcomes. By endline, 278 birth certificates had been issued, representing 72 per cent of the programme target. Although this falls short of full achievement, it nonetheless reflects meaningful progress in addressing barriers to legal identity, particularly for vulnerable children. An enabling factor relating to this achievement was the collective community responsibility, which was, among others, demonstrated by collective financing of children’s birth registration (and this in itself was a causal mechanism for better educational attendance).

“All the new births that come – they must think about it... they know they are in a community... They contribute 100 francs per person. That way, it allows the children to be accompanied. It allows the identity of the child to be established. I understood that they will try to think about how to do it. But I think this idea – there is the greatest interest in spreading it across all communities so that they can take pleasure in doing what they do.” Social Centre, Issia

Birth registration is a critical component of the child protection system, as it enables access to education, formal services, and legal protections, and thus contributes directly to reducing children's vulnerability. Qualitative findings confirm that this progress was closely linked to increased awareness and improved facilitation by both formal and informal actors.

Respondents emphasised that awareness-raising contributed to greater understanding of the importance of birth certificates, while support from social centres and community structures facilitated access to registration processes. At the same time, structural and administrative barriers continue to limit full coverage.

"The challenge is to support us in obtaining birth certificates. It is a major challenge. Most of the children here have no identity documents." Social Centre, Issia

Case management actors also indicated that the project contributed to improved coordination and operational coverage of child protection services, particularly through the establishment and strengthening of protection platforms. Respondents described these platforms as facilitating collaboration, referrals, information sharing, and shared responsibility between actors involved in child protection case management.

"We have what we call the coordination meeting of all actors fighting child labour, which we organise every two months. Everyone is there. We share information because we don't want overlaps or duplicates. We want solid results...." Regional Government Official

The most prominent enabling factor for improved child protection case management, according to participants, was the quality and coverage of training to build capacity of qualified social workers, who would be taking active responsibility for child protection case management. This was cited by the national directorate of child protection and the regional representatives of the Ministries of Women, Families and Children and Social Welfare, as crucial in contributing to the changes brought about through the project.

"I think training was the central element. Training of actors – because you have to give the tools to those who intervene on the subject, and Save the Children succeeded in that... There has been constant capacity building of social workers. For me, that was the most important element in implementing this project." Regional Government Official

However, as discussed further under the Parallel Project section, cooperatives and suppliers also indicated that, despite their perceived usefulness, protection platforms remained weak or non-functional in several areas, limiting the consistency and effectiveness of coordination mechanisms across regions.

Another important community-linked structure strengthened through the project was SOSTECI, particularly through support to its sub-prefectural committees in Haut-Sassandra. Findings suggest that while SOSTECI already existed at the national level, it had limited capacity to operate effectively at the community level due to resource constraints. Project support played a key role in addressing this gap by financing outreach activities, supporting the establishment of sub-prefectural committees, building institutional capacity, and increasing the visibility of SOSTECI within administrative structures. As noted by a regional stakeholder, this support was instrumental in enabling SOSTECI to enhance its reach to communities. However, the evidence does not allow for a conclusion that this translated into more effective child labour monitoring or response at community level. SOSTECI's role was not discussed by other

stakeholders, and its contribution to community-based monitoring appears to have remained limited or unclear, potentially because SOSTECI committees were established at sub-prefectural rather than community level. At the same time, the project's financial and logistical support to community-level structures and social centres, such as the provision of motorbikes, was perceived as an important enabling factor for implementation. However, stakeholders also emphasised that where such support was insufficient or unevenly distributed, it became a constraint, limiting the reach and effectiveness of activities, particularly in remote or underserved areas.

"SOSTECI is installed in all regions. If you go do an evaluation in Korhogo, people won't even know what SOSTECI means. We in Haut-Sassandra – with practically 23 sub-prefectures, 4 departments, more than 7,000 settlements – you'll see that at the Daloa department level alone, over 40 or 50 villages have been covered. Today, we are the only SOSTECI coordination in Côte d'Ivoire that, beyond departmental committees, has installed sub-prefectural committees. And those committees received capacity building." Regional Government Official

Another key contribution of the project appears to have been support to the development, adoption, and rollout of standardised national case management procedures. National stakeholders explained that Save the Children worked alongside government and UNICEF on these reforms, while earlier implementation of the Steps to Protect approach and training of social workers in project zones helped demonstrate and strengthen standardised frontline case management. This suggests the project helped link national policy reform with frontline implementation.

These findings suggest that improvements in service quality, system functionality, and access to legal identity contributed to strengthening the broader protective environment around children. The high achievement in case management standards indicates that the project was successful in establishing the foundations of a functional child protection system, while progress in birth registration reflects incremental gains in addressing systemic vulnerabilities. When combined with increased knowledge and strengthened community engagement, these system-level improvements appear to have played a key role in enabling households to reduce reliance on child labour, not only by influencing behaviour, but by expanding access to protection, support, and formal services.

5.1.1.4 Quality of Services of Formal and Informal Structures

Quality of Services for Formal Structures

The assessment of formal service providers (social centres) indicates that the overall quality of services remained within the **amber category** between baseline and endline. Although none of the assessed social centres reached the threshold for high-quality (**green**) performance, endline results demonstrate a clear improvement in service quality across all centres. Overall scores increased from a baseline range of 2.1-2.5 to 2.4-2.9 at endline, suggesting that service providers strengthened their capacity to meet quality standards over the course of programme implementation.

The most significant improvements were observed in areas that had recorded relatively weak performance at baseline. Child participation improved considerably, indicating stronger efforts to ensure that children's views and aspirations are reflected in decisions affecting their care and support. Similarly, improvements in family reintegration and individual support planning

suggest increased attention to promoting family-based care and supporting sustainable reintegration outcomes. Progress was also observed in non-discrimination and inclusion, with all assessed centres demonstrating stronger adherence to inclusive service delivery principles. In addition, case management and referral mechanisms showed notable strengthening, reflecting improvements in the identification, follow-up and coordination of support for vulnerable children and their families.

Table 10: Summary of Key Findings on the Quality of Services provided by Formal Service Providers

Areas of Strong Progress	Areas Requiring Further Strengthening
Child participation (Standard 5)	Child safeguarding mechanisms (Standard 2)
Family reintegration and individual support planning (Standard 7)	Staff capacity, training and supervision (Standard 6)
Non-discrimination and inclusion (Standard 4)	Availability of information (Standard 1)
Case management and referral systems (Standard 9)	Availability of confidential space (Standard 8)
Service planning and documentation processes (Standard 10)	Legal recognition and compliance (Standard 3)
Service management and accountability (Standard 11)	

Despite these positive developments, several challenges remain. Safeguarding systems continue to require strengthening, as performance in this area remained below desirable levels across several centres. Limited gains were also observed in staff capacity, training and supervision, suggesting persistent human resource constraints that may affect the consistency and quality of service delivery. Variations in infrastructure, particularly the availability of appropriate confidential spaces for case management and counselling services, further highlight continuing gaps in the enabling environment for quality service provision.

Overall, the findings point to a positive trajectory in the quality of services provided by formal structures. While the overall quality classification remained unchanged, improvements across several critical service dimensions demonstrate progress towards more child-centred, inclusive and responsive services. Continued investment in safeguarding, workforce development and infrastructure will be essential to support further improvements and enable service providers to achieve higher quality standards. The detailed assessment results and scoring tables are presented in Annex 9.

Quality of Services for Informal Structures

The assessment of informal service providers, represented by Child Protection Committees (CPCs), was conducted only at endline. Consequently, it is not possible to assess changes over time. Findings are based on the assessment of ten CPCs and should therefore be interpreted as indicative rather than representative of all community-based child protection structures within the programme area.

Overall, the quality of services provided by the assessed CPCs was found to be low to moderate, with overall scores ranging from 1.5 to 2.1. Only two CPCs achieved scores above 2.0, while the majority scored below this threshold, indicating significant challenges in meeting minimum quality standards.

Table 11: Summary of Key Findings on the Quality of Services Provided by Formal Structures

Areas of Strong Progress	Areas Requiring Further Strengthening
Child participation (Standard 5)	Child safeguarding mechanisms (Standard 2)
Family reintegration and support planning (Standard 7)	Staff capacity, training and supervision (Standard 6)
Non-discrimination and inclusion (Standard 4)	Availability of information (Standard 1)
Case management and referral systems (Standard 9)	Availability of confidential space (Standard 8)
Service planning and documentation (Standard 10)	Legal recognition and compliance (Standard 3)
Service management and accountability (Standard 11)	

The findings suggest that CPCs demonstrated relatively stronger performance in organisational and structural aspects, including basic governance and functioning arrangements. However, substantial weaknesses remain across several key service delivery areas. Common gaps were identified in safeguarding and protection mechanisms, case follow-up and referral processes, service delivery effectiveness, and capacity to respond comprehensively to child protection concerns. The consistently low scores recorded across these domains indicate that many CPCs continue to face challenges in delivering comprehensive and quality services to vulnerable children and their families.

Although the absence of baseline data limits the assessment of progress over time, the endline findings highlight priority areas for future investment. Strengthening the technical capacities of CPC members, enhancing community-based case management and referral systems, and reinforcing safeguarding mechanisms will be important to improve the effectiveness and quality of informal child protection services. The detailed assessment results and scoring tables are presented in Annex 9.

5.1.1.5 Challenges/hindering factors

The effectiveness of child protection interventions was constrained by a range of interrelated structural, operational, and contextual challenges, most prominently the limited capacity and coverage of the social welfare workforce. Training was beneficial, but its impact was often undermined by high staff turnover, understaffing, and limited resources to reach remote communities.

The provision of motorbikes helped mitigate mobility constraints, but it did not fully address the underlying gaps in financial and human resources. Social workers continued to face challenges where transport was available but operational resources, staffing levels, or budgets for field visits remained insufficient. This combination of high demand and limited resources ultimately affected both the reach and quality of services

“There is also a structural challenge within the institutions responsible for child protection. There are organizational and human resource limitations. Staff numbers are low, mobility is limited—especially for social workers managing cases in remote areas. Technical capacity can also be limited. Sometimes there are delays due to staff transfers or reassignments, which means training and capacity building have to start again to bring new staff up to the required level of understanding of the protection approach.” SCI Staff

These operational limitations were also reflected in the perspectives of implementing partners, who observed that operational engagement was often shaped by unmet logistical needs, with requests for transport and financial support frequently preceding programmatic considerations. Similar constraints affected SOSTECI. Despite gains in visibility and local engagement during the project, stakeholders stressed its dependence on external support.

“SOSTECI has no budget of its own. Who would make us known among the population? Do we have enough money, a proper SOSTECI budget to go into communities? No. But this project is what brought us into the population, into the communities, what allowed us to make ourselves known.”
Regional Government Official

In addition to resource constraints, resistance to changes in case management practices emerged as a further challenge. Some social workers reported difficulties in adopting the more structured and documentation-heavy S2P approach, particularly where it replaced previously informal and less time-intensive methods. The introduction of multiple tools and reporting requirements was perceived by some as complex and burdensome, contributing to initial resistance and uneven uptake. This suggests that improvements in procedural quality required not only training but also sustained support to manage change and ensure consistent application in practice.

“Colleagues did not want to detach themselves from the old method, which – for them – was easy: once you have a case, you work without any supporting documentation. So the requirement of filling in the tools – there are many tools to fill in – was somewhat tedious, especially since it was new.” Social Centre, Daloa

Constraints were also evident in the coordination between public and private actors. While efforts were made to bring stakeholders together, differing institutional priorities limited the extent of collaboration. Cooperatives and public entities were described (by the SC staff, cooperatives, suppliers, and social centres) as operating according to distinct objectives, which reduced alignment and hindered the development of fully integrated approaches. Although platforms for dialogue were established, stakeholders noted that these had not yet translated into strong or sustained joint action.

“Most of the CPEs were set up in Baoulé and Burkinabé villages. Go to a Bété village and you won’t find them. That’s a very important factor... There are factors linked to communities. Here in Haut-Sassandra, we have two types of communities: indigenous and non-indigenous. The communities that are more receptive are the non-indigenous ones. I’m from the region, so I have to tell the truth – when you go into Bété villages, if you’re not careful, you’ll hear strong language.”
Regional Government Official was new.” Social Centre, Daloa

At the community level, deeply embedded social and cultural norms continued to pose significant challenges. Despite improvements in behaviour change, child labour was widely described as a longstanding and socially accepted practice, making behavioural change slow and uneven. Stakeholders also pointed to variations in receptiveness between different communities, with some groups more resistant to external interventions or messaging. These dynamics complicated efforts to standardise community-based prevention approaches

and required context-specific engagement strategies.

Finally, limitations in the formal recognition and protection of community-based actors further constrained effectiveness. Members of Child Protection Committees reported challenges in carrying out their roles, particularly when dealing with sensitive or high-risk cases in neighbouring communities, due to a lack of formal identification or authority. Without visible accreditation (official badges), volunteers faced difficulties in intervening beyond their immediate communities, engaging with authorities, or challenging influential individuals. This lack of formal status not only limited their operational effectiveness but also raised concerns about their personal safety and legitimacy.

5.1.2 Education

5.1.2.1 Overview

The findings (Table 15) indicate that the project achieved its intended education objectives, demonstrating strong performance in improving access, participation, and reintegration into schooling. Enrolment and attendance increased significantly across all age groups and for both boys and girls, reflecting enhanced engagement with formal education and contributing to more equitable outcomes. At the same time, the reduction in the number of children who had never attended school highlights meaningful progress in addressing barriers to access, particularly among the most marginalised groups, although results varied across locations due to localised constraints. In contrast, disability inclusion appeared more limited. Although disability identification was reportedly part of the project approach, it was seldom discussed by respondents and, when mentioned, was often perceived as having fallen outside the project's core scope. There were also indications that facilitators felt insufficiently equipped to support the meaningful inclusion of children with disabilities.

The gains in enrolment were driven by a combination of increased learning opportunities, reduced child labour demands, improved learning environments, and stronger caregiver and community engagement. Changes in parental attitudes played an important role, with families placing greater value on education and supporting regular attendance. Complementary interventions, including the provision of school materials, facilitator training, reading spaces, and literacy and numeracy support, further contributed to more engaging and supportive learning conditions. Community involvement, particularly through strengthened school management committees, enhanced local ownership, monitoring, and mobilisation. In some contexts, school canteens also played a critical role in improving attendance, retention, and motivation, especially in food-insecure areas, although their availability was not uniform.

Table 12: Key Education Indicators

Key project Indicators	Disaggregation	BL (%)	EL (%)	Change (pp)	P-value
Number and percent of children of official primary school education age enrolled in primary school	All	78%	84%	+6 pp	
	Boys	78%	84%	+6 pp	
	Girls	77%	83%	+6 pp	
Number and percent of official primary school education age who regularly attend primary school	All	75%	97%	+22 pp	0.00
	Boys	75%	97%	+22 pp	0.00
	Girls	75%	97%	+22 pp	0.00
Number and percent of children who were never enrolled into school	All	22%	9%	-13 pp	0.00
	Boys	23%	11%	-12 pp	0.00
	Girls	22%	10%	-12 pp	0.00

Key project indicators	Disaggregation	BL (%)	EL (%)	Target	% Achieved
Number and % of children of formal school age (identified as out-of-school) enrolled in bridging classes	All	0	3,502	4,075	86%
	Boys	0	1,536		
	Girls	0	1,966		
Number and % of children enrolled in transition classes who attend classes regularly	All	0	3,127	3,260	96%
	Boys	0	1,395		
	Girls	0	1,732		
Number of children (male/female and age) who are integrated into the formal school system after completing the transition class	All	0	2,913	3,260	89%
	Boys	0	1,310		
	Girls	0	1,603		
Number and % of students enrolled in literacy enhancement sessions who improved their literacy and numeracy skills (LB/NB)	All		53%	80%	66%
	Boys		55%		
	Girls		50%		
Adoption of a national framework document on bridging classes by the Ministry of Education		Contributed by operationalising and implementing bridging classes			

A key driver of success was the establishment of bridging and transition classes, which created flexible and effective alternative learning pathways for out-of-school children. These mechanisms enabled many children facing barriers such as age constraints, distance, financial hardship, or prolonged absence from schooling to access education, attend regularly, and transition into the formal system. The project performed strongly in identifying, enrolling, and retaining learners in these pathways, with many successfully reintegrating into formal schooling. In addition to improving access, qualitative evidence highlights that bridging classes were not only effective in improving access but also in supporting learning and confidence among children. In some cases, bridging classes contributed to more durable changes, with learning spaces evolving into recognised schools, thereby improving long-term access and reducing travel distances.

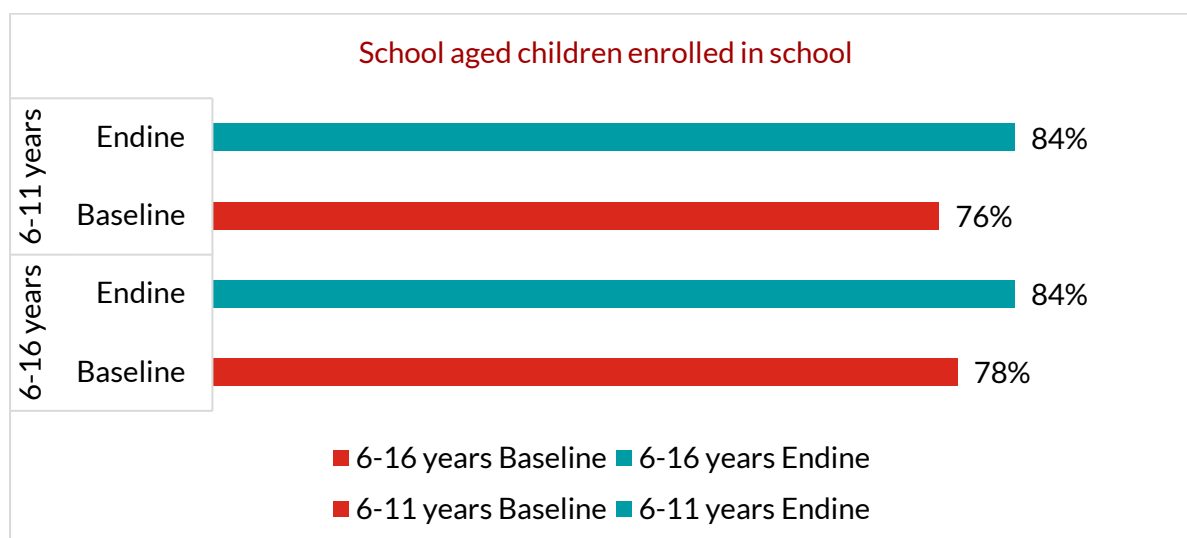
Beyond direct service delivery, the project contributed to broader system strengthening by supporting the operationalisation of bridging classes, which informed the development of a national framework, indicating progress toward institutional sustainability. However, some limitations remain. While access to and participation in education improved substantially, gains in learning outcomes, literacy and numeracy, were limited. Additionally, although most planned outputs were achieved, some fell slightly short of expected targets, pointing to implementation or contextual constraints. Overall, it can be concluded that the education component was effective and largely achieved its intended outcomes, particularly in improving access, attendance, and reintegration into formal schooling, while partially achieving its objectives related to strengthening learning outcomes.

5.1.2.2 School Enrolment, Attendance, and Retention

Results (Figure 2) show **improved school enrolment** between baseline and endline across both age groups (6 to 11, and 6 to 16). For children aged **6-16, enrolment rose from 78% to 84%** (+6 percentage points), with similar gains observed for both boys and girls, indicating equitable benefits. A similar positive trend is observed among younger children (6-11). Notably, boys showed stronger progress, narrowing an initial gender gap, while girls maintained consistently high enrolment levels. At the sub-regional level, performance varied, with Daloa recording the

highest enrolment (87%) and Zoukougbeu lagging (78%), suggesting the presence of localised constraints affecting access.

Figure 2: School-aged Children Enrolled in School



Simultaneously, children aged 6–16 years who never enrolled in school decreased from 20% at baseline to 13% at endline. The same trend was observed among younger children aged 6–11 years; the proportion decreased from 22% to 10% by endline.

Qualitative findings attribute these improvements primarily to the role of bridging classes, which provided flexible entry points for out-of-school children. Quantitative findings show a total of 3,502 out-of-school children (1,536 girls and 1,966 boys) of formal school age were enrolled in bridging classes, representing 86% of the project target of 4,075. **Following completion of transition classes, 2,913 of these children (1,310 girls and 1,603 boys) were successfully integrated into the formal school system, representing 89% of the project target of 3,260 children.**

"I think that the usefulness of the support lies in the creation of the bridging classes, which brought children back to school." Teachers, Zoukougbeu

"After just a few months... there were children who started to know how to read and write." – Bridging class facilitator, Issia

The high integration rate confirms that the transition classes effectively prepared learners for re-entry into formal education and that coordination with schools enabled absorption of returning learners. These findings are consistent with qualitative findings with many stakeholders consistently highlighting that these classes enabled children previously excluded to enrol or re-enrol in education.

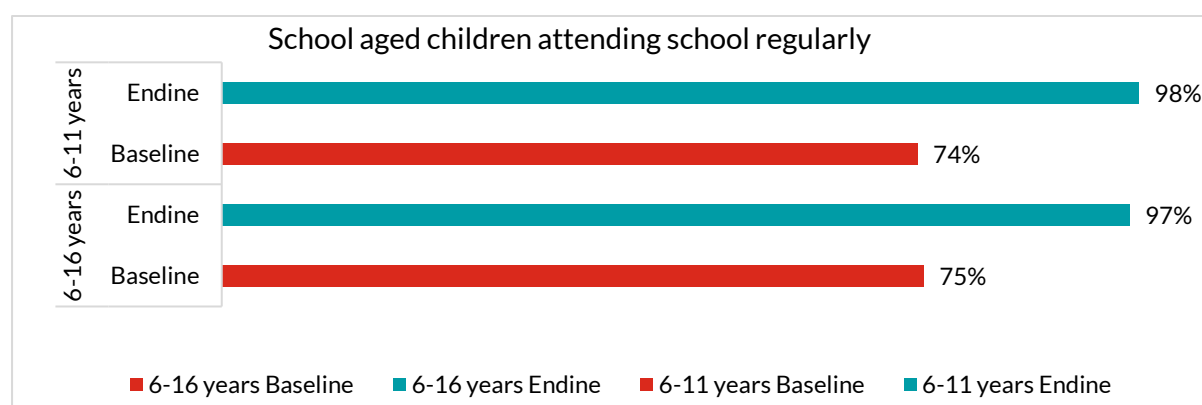
"There has been a change. The bridging class – I didn't think that from age 9 to 16, you could still put someone back in school." Reading space facilitator, Daloa

"There is always a part of the population on the margins... Fortunately, there are NGOs... I was happy that in the most remote zones... children were reached." Regional Government Official

Caregivers and community members also reported increased awareness of the importance of schooling, which contributed to increased regular attendance in both bridging classes and mainstream education. Among children enrolled in bridging classes, 96% attended regularly. Regular attendance showed even more pronounced improvement, increasing from 75% at

baseline to 97% at endline (+22 percentage points) among children aged 6–16 and a similar trend was observed among younger children (6–11). Attendance gains were consistent across boys and girls. At district level, attendance ranged from 94% in Zoukougbeu to 99% in Daloa. The increased regular attendance highlights the effectiveness of support mechanisms such as learner follow-up, community engagement, and classroom support in sustaining attendance. Respondents noted that once children were enrolled in these programmes, attendance levels were generally high due to continuous engagement with learners and their families.

Figure 3: School-aged children who regularly attend school



Qualitative findings suggest that **increased enrolment, reduced child labour demands, and greater caregiver support contributed to more consistent school attendance**. Interventions such as bridging classes, awareness-raising, and complementary household support mechanisms helped reduce barriers to attendance and support sustained participation in schooling. Children mentioned that before they had been expected to do house chores, but following participation in the project activities, this was no longer expected of them.

“What I notice as a change in myself is that before, when I was at home, I used to go to the field. But now I go to school – I can read and write.” Bridging Class Girls, Zoukougbeu

Another key enabling factor supporting enrolment and attendance was the **provision of educational materials for both learners and facilitators**. Qualitative respondents frequently highlighted school kits, bags, exercise books, textbooks, and teaching materials as practical forms of support that improved learning conditions and reduced some of the financial barriers to attendance. For schools and facilitators, these inputs also helped address shortages of basic materials.

“Even at school – exercise books and bags that we should have bought, they were also given to us easily. So that made everything we had to do easier.” Female Caregivers, Daloa

Additional enablers of improved attendance included the **use of participatory and engaging activities**, which motivated children to attend learning spaces and encouraged positive study habits. Synchronising bridging class cycles with the formal school calendar was another important factor, as it contributed to improved retention.

Reading spaces, although discussed less frequently than bridging classes, emerged as an important complementary intervention. Rather than targeting out-of-school children, respondents described them as reinforcing literacy and numeracy among children already enrolled in school, helping sustain gains after reintegration and reducing risk of dropout.

"The construction of the reading space also taught children to love school, given the games we used."
Reading Space Facilitator, Daloa

Facilitator training. Facilitators linked improvements in their practice to training and support, which strengthened classroom management, child support skills, and confidence—particularly for those without formal teaching backgrounds. Respondents highlighted the role of assessment tools in improving instructional quality. In particular, ASER testing appears to have been used not only to measure children's progress, but also to monitor facilitator performance and identify areas for improvement. Findings on positive discipline within bridging classes were mixed, with some evidence of respectful, non-violent approaches alongside continued use of shouting or corporal punishment. While training and materials supported alignment with national policy, their added value was limited, though some improvements in teaching approaches were observed.

Administrative and geographic barriers to schooling were reduced through support for **birth certificates and local education infrastructure**. Respondents noted that documentation was necessary for examinations and often for school participation, and birth certificates enabled it. Additionally, project-supported schools or recognised learning centres reduced long travel distances and made attendance more feasible.

Where **school canteens** were established and functioning, they were frequently associated with higher attendance, retention, and learner motivation, particularly in food-insecure communities.

Qualitative findings further suggest that the project contributed to more positive attitudes toward education among caregivers through sensitisation and awareness-raising activities. Several respondents described shifts in parental behaviour, with caregivers placing greater value on schooling, becoming more willing to enrol or re-enrol their children, and showing stronger support for regular attendance.

"At the beginning there were parents who didn't understand, but gradually other parents adapted... and they even refused to send their children to the fields." Bridging Class Facilitator, Issia

With increased attendance, children's performance on literacy and numeracy improved. Quantitative results show that of the 165 children (84 boys and 81 girls) who were assessed at baseline and endline, 53% (male 50%; female 55%) improved their literacy and numeracy skills (LB/NB) at endline. While improvements were observed across all the domains, foundational skills saw the strongest gains. The percentage of learners who achieved 'good' in the Letter identification category for example increased from 13% to 35%, while those in the 'insufficient' category declined sharply from 69% to 30%. Word recognition also improved notably, with children in 'good' category rising from 2% to 8% and 'average' category from 10% to 30%, alongside a reduction in children in 'insufficient' category from 87.9% to 61.8%. Word recognition also improved, alongside more moderate gains in reading and comprehension. These findings suggest solid progress, though higher-level literacy skills remain weaker and require further attention. Numeracy results also improved significantly, particularly in number identification and addition, with more moderate gains in subtraction. Although the overall improvement (53%) fell short of the 80% project target,

"Last year's results: out of 14 candidates, 13 were admitted – only one person didn't pass. That gave the children the will to go to school. The results – every time, the majority pass because the teaching is good."
COGES, Daloa

several stakeholders cited strong progression outcomes, including transition into formal schooling and admittance to secondary education.

Some Bridging Class Facilitators also suggested that children who had experienced bridging classes were demonstrating high levels of educational attainment, both within the bridging class environment and once integrated into mainstream schools. These accounts suggest that bridging classes were not only access mechanisms, but also capable of producing meaningful learning gains when effectively implemented. Some participants also linked good results to teaching quality and increasing community confidence in the model.

"After just a few months, with Save the Children's techniques and the training and all – there were children who started to know how to read and write." Bridging Class Facilitator, Issia

5.1.2.3 Adoption of a national policy on bridging classes by the Ministry of Education

Côte d'Ivoire has demonstrated a strong policy commitment to inclusive education following the adoption of Law No. 2015-635, which made schooling compulsory for all children aged 6 to 16 years. Importantly, this law explicitly mandates the State to establish mechanisms for the integration or reintegration of out-of-school children, notably through bridging or "classes passerelles" for children aged 9 to 13 years. This legal provision provides the formal policy foundation for bridging classes as a recognised component of the national education system and positions them as a core instrument for implementing the compulsory education policy rather than as a parallel or ad-hoc initiative. Within this framework, responsibility for the regulation, oversight, and policy recognition of bridging classes rests with the Ministry of National Education and Literacy, particularly through the Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DENF), which is mandated to coordinate non-formal education programmes and support reintegration into formal schooling.

Save the Children did not directly contribute to the formal development or adoption of a national framework document on bridging classes. Rather, **Save the Children's contribution is best understood as supporting the operationalisation and effective implementation of an already-established policy orientation.** By supporting the implementation of bridging classes at community level, Save the Children enabled the government to give concrete expression to the intent of the 2015 compulsory education law.

"Through bridging classes, we manage to put into practice the compulsory schooling policy desired by the government of Côte d'Ivoire since 2015." SCI staff

Through technical, financial, and implementation support, Save the Children contributed to translating national policy into practice by establishing and supporting bridging classes as a second-chance education pathway for out-of-school children. Stakeholders highlighted that this support covered the full implementation cycle, from programme set-up to classroom delivery and learner transition, thereby strengthening institutional understanding of how bridging classes function within the education system.

"Save brought us... knowledge... implementation... from start to finish of a bridging class project... and understanding the importance of the bridging class in the educational system." District Level Government Official

This form of contribution is consistent with international evidence showing that pilot implementation and demonstration effects often play a critical role in reinforcing government

confidence and commitment to nonformal education models. Child Learning and Education Facility (CLEF), along with its partners, also emphasises that accelerated and bridging programmes gain policy traction not only through legal endorsement, but through demonstrated feasibility, quality, and alignment with national goals ([Bridging classes: a springboard to schooling: Interview with the Director of Non-Formal Education at the Ministry of Education in Côte d'Ivoire - CLEF](#)). By supporting implementation within this framework, Save the Children helped strengthen policy coherence and reinforce bridging classes as a recognised pathway into formal schooling. Although indirect, this **contribution is significant, as it operationalised government intent, built local administrative capacity, and generated practical evidence to inform ongoing policy dialogue.**

Its added value lies in ensuring implementation fidelity, demonstrating feasibility, and aligning with government systems—key factors for sustaining and operationalising national policy over time.

5.1.2.4 Challenges/hindering factors

Despite the strong performance across education indicators, the project did not fully achieve all targets. Respondents shared many challenges or hindering factors which had impeded progress in achieving education outcomes, or sustainability of changes. These were related to geographic distance both between communities themselves and between communities and schools, delays in materials distribution, lack of engagement with authorities, lack of support from parents and communities, language barriers, staff turnover, household poverty, season migration, uneven parental engagement and challenges linked to the transition of out-of-school children back into education. Together, these findings suggest that while the project substantially improved educational access and participation, **structural barriers continued to affect full coverage and retention in some communities.**

A major constraint was the **geographic isolation** of some communities, and the long distances children had to travel to school. This was especially evident in Issia, where both children and adults described the journey as exhausting and discouraging. **Poor road** conditions further limited supervision visits and support missions, particularly during the rainy season. **Transport challenges** also affected facilitators and education authorities responsible for implementation and monitoring. In remote areas, respondents reported relying on personal means of travel due to the lack of dedicated vehicles. These findings suggest that while project interventions improved access in some areas, structural distance barriers remained significant in others, which likely reduced the frequency and ease of outreach, supervision, and document transfer.

“The number one disabling factor is distance and access. When you look at localities like Allakonankro – when it is the rainy season, access is difficult, which means that very often when there are missions, we cannot reach them... when it rains, it is truly difficult. The places are hard to access.” Department Level Government Official

Household poverty and **food insecurity** also emerged as important barriers to attendance and concentration. Several respondents explained that hunger, lack of school meals, and inability to provide children with basic needs made it difficult for children to remain in school consistently. **In some cases, teachers reported using their own money to help children eat.**

“Often the conditions for the children to attend school are not met. When the child is hungry, they cannot concentrate. When that happens, we are forced to dig into our own pockets to buy something for the child to eat.” Teachers, Issia

Related to this, **canteen support and school WASH facilities were uneven**. While some communities reported positive canteen initiatives, others described the absence of canteens, toilets, drinking water, or insufficient food supplies. These gaps likely reduced children's wellbeing and the attractiveness of schooling. An additional challenge to retaining children within educational activities came from **seasonal migration** for work, which caused children to leave abruptly in the middle of an activity cycle.

Some **operational design issues** also reduced retention. In earlier years, bridging class cycles were out of sync with the formal school calendar, which lowered participation because bridging class children were expected to attend lessons while children in formal schools were on holiday, making it difficult to maintain motivation when their peers were playing. Participation improved once the bridging class calendar was better aligned with the formal school year.

Several respondents raised **concerns regarding the duration and progression model of bridging classes**. One felt that six months was too short for children with large learning gaps, while others noted that some children struggled after reintegration because their academic level did not always match the grade into which they were placed. These findings suggest that while bridging classes were valued, outcomes were not uniform for all learners. Another practical challenge in implementing bridging classes was found when conducting educational activities with **children who did not feel comfortable** expressing themselves in **French**. Facilitators had different experiences with using local languages to mitigate these challenges, depending on whether they themselves spoke languages which were useful in communities.

"The duration of the bridging class (six months) is too short... Six months is short. At least a full year should be planned for better catch-up."
School Principal

"We were supposed to take 15 people – today we are 42. At 6 PM, the classroom is full." Reading Space Facilitator, Daloa

Transition into formal schooling also required **sustained parental and institutional follow-up, which was not always available**. Some respondents reported that once children left bridging classes, support was reduced and families sometimes misunderstood the limits of project assistance. Respondents also highlighted that some **reading spaces faced capacity constraints**

relative to demand. In some locations, enrolment interest exceeded planned numbers, creating overcrowding, longer working hours for facilitators, and pressure on available teaching capacity. This suggests that community demand for supplementary learning support sometimes outpaced the resources allocated.

A lack of parental and community support was seen as a key barrier to improving children's education, with **men's involvement noted as particularly limited**. Engaging communities is essential for sustaining progress beyond the project. However, parental participation could be strengthened by better planning, especially by scheduling activities at times when adults are available. A *hindering factor which affected the running of COGES*, the provision of school canteens and teacher retention was the **lack of adequate government financial support**. This was cited by several stakeholders as a hindering factor. Respondents highlighted broader weaknesses in public system resourcing, including shortages of state teachers, reliance on community-paid volunteers, low COGES operating budgets, and delayed or insufficient state inputs. For canteens specifically, the resulting effect of a lack of adequate meals for students was a particular challenge.

"Well, what's a bit difficult is that the teachers aren't enough for us. We only have 2 State teachers – all the others are volunteers. So we have to pay the volunteers. In any case, it's a very, very big problem for us here." COGES, Issia



Perhaps linked to the question of financial resourcing for staffing, Save the Children staff also flagged that **turnover of teachers and facilitators** was also a hindering factor, as it led to a loss of knowledge and experience in implementing communities. Facilitators often left for better opportunities, while trained government teachers were transferred elsewhere.

Finally, one government directorate raised an additional challenge, although **one** which had not been shared by other stakeholders: **that Save the Children had not kept them adequately informed about project activities**, which resulted in a lack of oversight. This lack of clear communication with education authorities **was not a challenge raised by other education representatives interviewed for this evaluation**. The project team suggested this gap may have been the result of a period when the Education TA position was vacant in the Save the Children country office.

5.1.3 Community Development

5.1.3.1 Overview

The findings (Table 10) suggest that the project achieved its intended objectives in community development to a considerable extent. Significant improvements were observed in child nutritional outcomes, household economic resilience, and community-level service delivery, reflecting the effectiveness of a multi-dimensional approach combining behaviour change, improved access to resources, and strengthened local capacity. A key achievement was the substantial reduction in child malnutrition. Both severe and moderate stunting declined, alongside an increase in the proportion of children exhibiting normal growth, indicating meaningful progress in child well-being. These improvements were observed across both boys and girls, contributing to reduced gender disparities, although some variations in vulnerability persisted, particularly among adolescent girls, highlighting uneven progress for specific at-risk groups.

These nutritional gains were supported by improvements in knowledge and practices related to health, hygiene, and nutrition. Awareness of behaviours such as exclusive breastfeeding increased substantially, alongside better water treatment and sanitation practices. Qualitative evidence suggests that awareness-raising activities contributed to changes in household practices, including improved hygiene and water management. However, improvements in dietary diversity and feeding practices remained modest overall, indicating that increased knowledge did not fully translate into sustained behavioural change at household level. It was further observed that progress in gender-related outcomes was limited, with a decline in women's decision-making power suggesting that economic gains were not accompanied by corresponding shifts in intra-household dynamics. Finally, some nutrition outcomes, particularly among adolescent girls, showed uneven progress, pointing to gaps in reaching or effectively supporting specific vulnerable groups.

Table 13: Key Community Development Indicators

Key project Indicators	Disaggregation	BL (%)	EL (%)	Change (pp)	P-value
Prevalence of severe stunting among children under 5 years of age	All	19%	11%	-8 pp	0.00
	Male	26%	9%	-17 pp	0.00
	Female	16%	13%	-3 pp	
	All	28%	11%	-17 pp	0.00
	Male	12%	10%	-2 pp	

Key project Indicators	Disaggregation	BL (%)	EL (%)	Change (pp)	P-value
Prevalence of moderate stunting among children under 5 years of age	Female	30%	13%	-17 pp	0.00
Prevalence of children with normal growth among children under 5 years of age	All	54%	79%	+25 pp	0.00
	Male	61%	81%	20 pp	0.00
	Female	52%	75%	23 pp	0.00
	Underweight	56%	53%	-3 pp	
Body Mass Index among adolescent girls (10-17 years)	Normal weight	29%	42%	+13 pp	0.00
	Over-weight	15%	4%	-11 pp	0.00
	Obese	0%	1%	+1 pp	
	All	Excl. BF =53% IYCF =1%	Excl. BF =73% IYCF =2%	+20 pp +1 pp	0.00*** 0.18
Number and % of targeted women and men who demonstrate good knowledge of nutrition practice (exclusive breastfeeding IYCF)	Female	Excl. BF =52%	Excl. BF =76%	+20 pp	0.00***
	Male	Excl. BF =54%	Excl. BF =70%	+16 pp	0.00***
		MDDW=28% WDDS=3.7	MDDW=33% WDDS=3.7	+3 pp +0.2	0.00*** 0.29
Proportion of targeted households that have appropriate diets and practices (MDD-W and WDDS)					
Number and % of households that treat water		11%	44%	+34 pp	0.00***
Number and % of households with an annual income of less than or equal to 400,000 CFA francs		60%	42%	-18 pp	0.00***
Proportion of targeted households (women and men) supported with increased/diversified income (with ≥ 2 sources of income)		24%	65%	+41	0.00***
Number and percentage of households that spend 26% or more of their income on child-rearing		49%	54%	+5 pp	0.03**
Women's decision-making power in the allocation and management of resources		19%	15%	-4 pp	0.00***

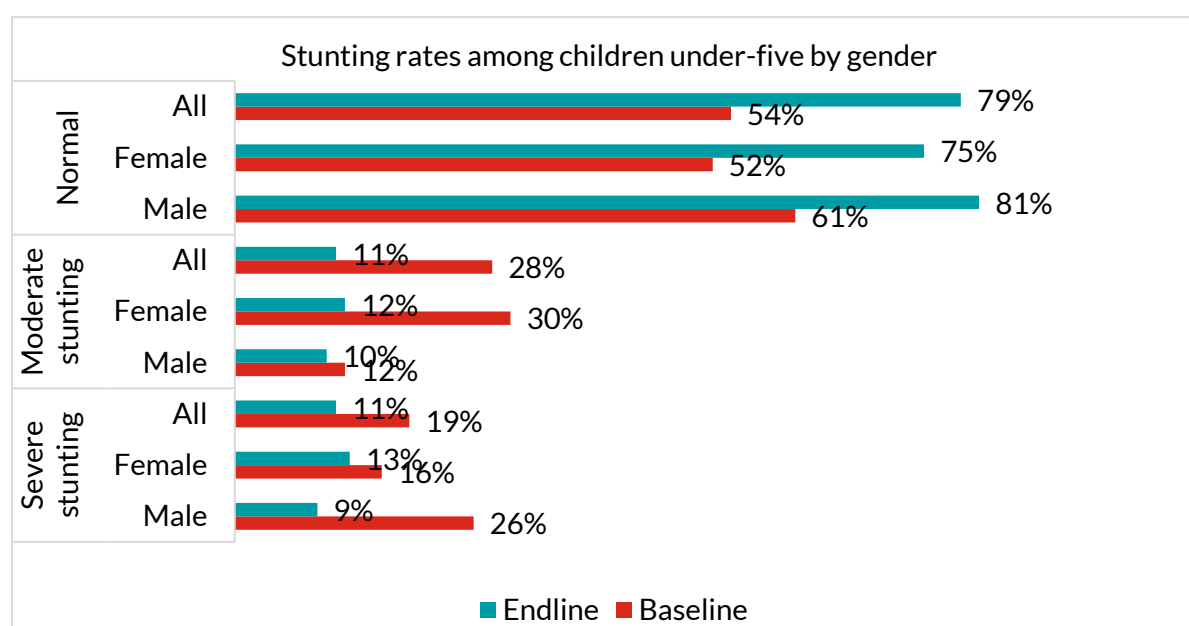
The project also achieved notable progress in strengthening household economic resilience. The proportion of households with diversified income sources increased significantly from 24% to 65%, while the share of households earning at or below 400,000 CFA francs (EUR 609.80) declined from 60% to 42%. Median household income rose from 300,000 CFA francs (EUR 457.35) to 500,000 CFA francs (EUR 762.25), reflecting broad-based economic gains. These improvements were largely driven by community-based mechanisms such as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and livelihood support activities, which enhanced access to savings, credit, and income-generating opportunities. Increased economic capacity translated into greater investment in children's wellbeing, with household expenditure on children rising substantially and a larger share of income being allocated to child-related needs such as food, health, and education.

At the community level, the project contributed to strengthening local systems and collective action. Structures such as VSLAs and Community Service Groups became more organised and functional, improving access to financial services, labour, and social support. Community Action Plans further enabled resource mobilisation and improvements in basic infrastructure and services, such as water access. These developments reflect progress toward building more resilient, locally embedded systems capable of sustaining development gains. Overall, it can be concluded that the project yielded positive and meaningful impacts and was broadly effective, having achieved or exceeded several key objectives, particularly in nutrition and livelihoods. However, partial progress in behaviour changes and gender empowerment highlights the need for more sustained and targeted efforts to translate material improvements into deeper and more equitable social outcomes.

5.1.3.2 Prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age

The nutritional status of children aged 0–5 years shows clear and statistically significant improvement over the project period. The prevalence of severe stunting declined from 19% at baseline to 11% at endline, while moderate stunting decreased more sharply from 28% to 11%. At the same time, the proportion of children exhibiting normal growth rose substantially from 54% to 79%, indicating a strong overall improvement in child nutrition outcomes.

Figure 4: Prevalence of stunting among the U5 children by gender



These gains were observed across both boys and girls, although initial gender disparities shaped the pattern of progress. At baseline, boys were more affected by severe stunting (26%) than girls (16%), whereas girls experienced much higher levels of moderate stunting (30% compared to 12% among boys). By endline, severe stunting declined significantly among boys to 9%, while the reduction among girls was more modest, reaching 13%. Moderate stunting converged across sexes, falling to approximately 10–12%, contributing to notable increases in normal growth to 81% among boys and 75% among girls. These findings suggest that although gender gaps narrowed over time, girls remain somewhat more vulnerable to chronic undernutrition, particularly in terms of severe stunting.

Further analysis by location show that improvements in child nutrition were not uniform. Zoukougbeu recorded the strongest outcomes, with 84% of children achieving normal growth

and only 4% classified as severely stunted. In contrast, Daloa showed comparatively weaker outcomes, with the lowest level of normal growth (76%) and the highest prevalence of severe stunting (14%), while Issia fell between these two areas. This uneven distribution of outcomes highlights the persistence of contextual disparities and suggests that local factors continue to influence nutritional status despite overall progress.

Evidence suggests that these improvements are likely the result of a combination of behavioural, environmental, and economic changes. Importantly, improvements in knowledge of nutrition and childcare practices emerge as a relevant contributing pathway that complements the observed quantitative gains. Quantitative data show that knowledge of exclusive breastfeeding increased substantially from 53% at baseline to 73% at endline, with improvements observed among both women (from 52% to 76%) and men (from 54% to 70%), all of which were statistically significant ($P=0.000$). Although gains in broader infant and young child feeding (IYCF) knowledge were more limited, these findings indicate that caregivers became better informed about key nutrition practices that directly influence child growth and development. This improvement in knowledge is partially reflected in qualitative accounts emphasising the role of awareness-raising and behaviour change. While this refers primarily to hygiene behaviours, it reflects a broader pattern in which increased awareness and knowledge influenced household practices, including those linked to childcare and feeding. This provides a plausible pathway through which improved caregiver knowledge may have contributed to the observed reductions in stunting.

“There are people who didn’t know that after going to the toilet, you had to wash your hands. There are people who didn’t know you shouldn’t defecate in the open. After our various visits, we saw that the living conditions of the population improved considerably.” Department Level Government Official.

Improvements in water treatment practices also reinforce this behavioural pathway. The proportion of households treating water increased from 11% at baseline to 44% at endline, indicating substantial uptake of safer practices. These behavioural changes are likely to have had indirect but important effects on child nutrition by reducing the incidence of waterborne diseases that contribute to undernutrition.

“It’s our way of managing the water that has changed. Sometimes, when the water has been sitting for at least three months, they also taught us that we should add bleach. So that’s what we’re doing. Sometimes, we add bleach to be able to kill the germs...” Water Management Committee, Zoukougbeu

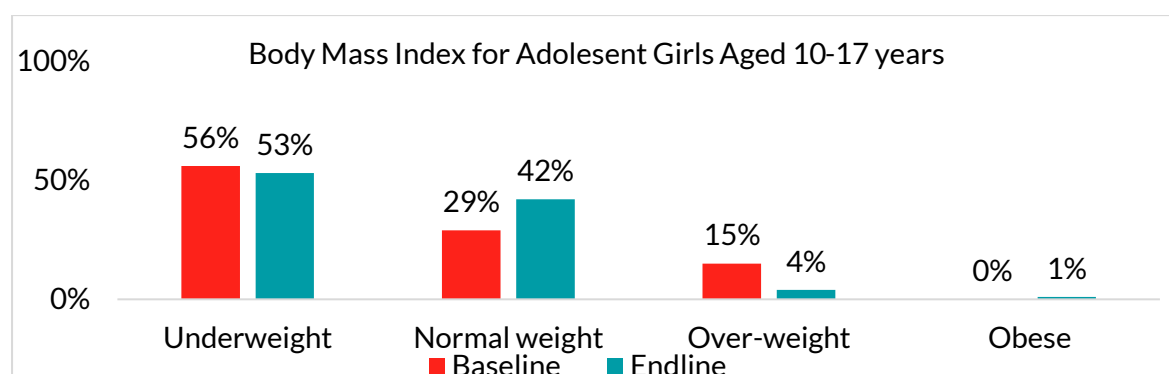
However, qualitative evidence also highlights important structural constraints that continue to limit the extent of nutritional gains. Across many communities, access to safe and reliable water sources remained a major challenge. Many community members and leaders shared that drinking water pumps were either absent or faulty in their communities, which caused a burden on women to fetch water. These accounts underline the persistence of environmental risks that can undermine improvements in child health and help explain why stunting, although reduced, still affects a proportion of children at endline.

“It is complicated, because we need drinking water. The impact is that women are forced to get up at 4am to go and draw water, and also there are chronic diarrhoeas.” Water Management Committee, Issia

5.1.3.3 Body Mass Index among adolescent girls (10-17 years)

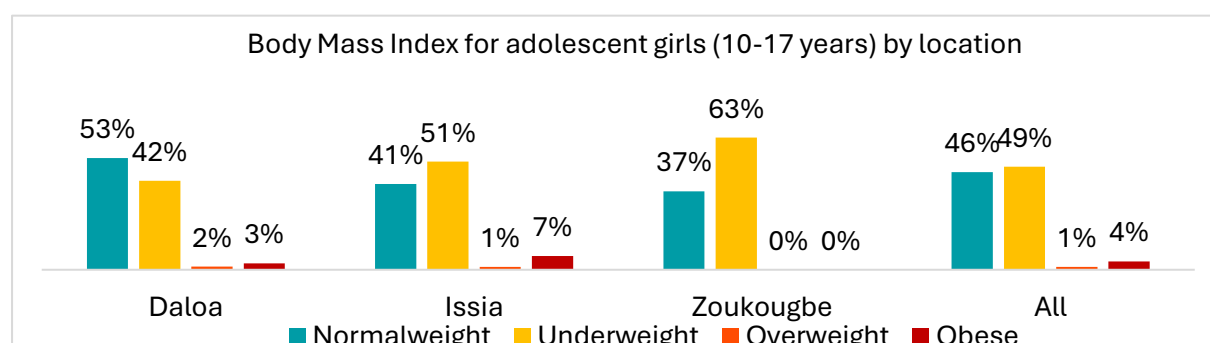
The nutritional status of adolescent girls aged 10–17 years shows a moderate but positive shift towards healthier Body Mass Index (BMI) categories, although undernutrition remains a significant concern. The proportion of girls classified as having normal weight increased substantially from 29% at baseline to 42% at endline, representing a statistically significant improvement ($p=0.00$). At the same time, the prevalence of underweight declined only slightly, from 56% to 53%, indicating that while progress has been made, undernutrition continues to affect more than half of adolescent girl. Changes in overnutrition present a contrasting trend. The proportion of girls classified as overweight decreased sharply from 15% at baseline to 4% at endline, suggesting a reduction in excess weight. However, a small increase in obesity was observed, rising from 0% to 1%, indicating the emergence, albeit at low levels, of a double burden of malnutrition. Overall, these findings point to a gradual shift toward healthier weight profiles, but one that remains dominated by persistent underweight prevalence.

Figure 5: Body Mass Index for adolescent girls (10-17)



The location-wise disaggregation indicates notable variation in nutritional status among adolescent girls across the three areas. Disaggregation by location reveals notable disparities in BMI outcomes. Daloa shows the most favourable profile, with 53% of adolescent girls classified as having normal weight, compared to 41% in Issia and 37% in Zoukougbeu. Conversely, Zoukougbeu exhibits the highest burden of undernutrition, with 63% of girls underweight, followed by Issia at 51% and Daloa at 42%. These patterns mirror, to some extent, the geographic disparities observed among younger children, suggesting that underlying contextual factors affecting nutrition operate across age groups. This suggests a need for nutrition and well-being programs to strengthen targeted interventions addressing undernutrition in the most affected locations.

Figure 6: Body Mass Index for adolescent girls (10-17) by location



Qualitative findings indicate that caregivers increasingly used income generated through savings groups and livelihood activities to meet basic household needs. This aligns with quantitative evidence which shows a substantial increase in the proportion of households with diversified income sources, rising from 24% to 65%, alongside a statistically significant increase in the share of households spending at least 26% of their income on child-rearing (from 49% to 54%). These findings suggest that households were both better able to generate income and increasingly prioritised expenditures on children's needs, including food, which may have supported the observed improvements in nutritional status.

These improvements are partially reflected in changes in dietary diversity for women of childbearing age (15-49 years). Women's Dietary Diversity Score increased significantly from 3.7 to 4.0 ($p < 0.001$), indicating some diversification of diets, particularly in areas with lower baseline scores. However, the proportion of women meeting minimum dietary diversity improved only marginally from 28% to 31% and remained statistically insignificant, suggesting that while households may have improved access to food, this did not consistently translate into sufficiently diverse diets.

5.1.3.4 Household economic and gender empowerment

Household and community economic empowerment improved substantially over the project period, as evidenced by strong and consistent gains in income levels, livelihood diversification, and household expenditure, particularly on children. **The proportion of households with diversified income sources (defined as having two or more sources of income) increased significantly from 24% at baseline to 65% at endline, representing a gain of 41 percentage points that is statistically significant ($P = 0.00$).**

This shift reflects a marked strengthening of economic resilience at the household level, reducing dependence on single income streams and increasing households' capacity to manage economic shocks.

At the same time, the proportion of households earning less than or equal to 400,000 CFA francs (EUR 609.80) annually declined significantly from 60% at baseline to 42% at endline, and the decrease is statistically significant ($P = 0.00$). Importantly, this trend is reinforced by changes in median income, which increased from 300,000 CFA francs (EUR 475.35) at baseline to 500,000 CFA francs (EUR 762.25) at endline, indicating that income gains were experienced broadly across households rather than being driven by a small number of outliers.

Table 14: Average annual household income in EUR

	Median (EUR)	Mean	Std. deviation	Min	Max
Baseline	475.35	902.68	867.56	0	9,909.19
Endline	762.25	3,307.58	37,502	0	807,980.00

While mean income increased more sharply than the median, this divergence reflects the presence of extreme high-income values at endline rather than uniform gains across all households. **The widening gap between mean and median, alongside increased standard deviations, indicates growing income inequality, with a small number of households capturing disproportionately large gains.** Nonetheless, the consistency of median increases across batches and geographic locations confirms that most households experienced improvements in their economic situation, even if the scale of gains varied.

Qualitative findings strongly support these trends, with respondents frequently attributing improvements in household income and resilience to mechanisms such as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), community service groups, and agricultural support activities. These were described as enabling households to access savings, credit, and livelihood opportunities, thereby strengthening their ability to cope with financial shocks and meet basic needs.

“Today... if we don’t have money, we don’t go looking for people anymore – we go to our fund, we withdraw, and we help the person.” Community Leaders, Issia

“We mainly carry out income-generating activities such as small-scale commerce, the processing of agricultural products and farming. We find that VSLA loans allow us to finance our crops and small commercial activities.” VSLA, Daloa

Beyond loans, groups used the VSLA solidarity fund to support members during illness, childbirth, bereavement, and occasionally productive investments. This indicates that VSLAs also functioned as an informal safety net. This convergence between qualitative and quantitative evidence reinforces the conclusion that economic strengthening interventions contributed meaningfully to household-level improvements.

“The management of savings, loans, and the solidarity fund is done according to a rule that they themselves voted on. There is assistance to women who have newborns, and to the sick as well.” VSLA Promoters, Zoukougbeu.

“Members decide to assist a member in the event of a death or something [of that kind].” VSLA Promoters, Daloa

Both qualitative and quantitative evidence show that improvements in household incomes translated into greater prioritisation of children’s needs within household expenditure patterns. The proportion of households allocating at least 26% of their income to child-rearing increased from 49% at baseline to 54% at endline, a statistically significant but modest gain. This suggests that as households’ economic capacity improved, there was a corresponding, though incremental, shift towards investing more in children, including their food, health, and wellbeing.

“When the AVEC is dissolved and shared out... there are people who did not expect what they gained. So with that, they can meet their needs.” VSLA Promoters, Daloa

“It can happen that your child is even sick and there is no cocoa harvest. You have the possibility to go and take money from the fund to get them treated.” Male Caregivers, Zoukougbeu

Disaggregated analysis shows that this increase was driven primarily by male-headed households, where allocation rose from 45% to 53%, while female-headed households experienced a decline from 65% to 55%. This suggests that while overall spending on children increased, the gains were uneven and may reflect differing economic pressures across household types.

Table 15: Average Expenditure on Children (including school related costs and health costs) in EUR

	Median	Mean	Std. deviation	Min	Max
Baseline	115.86	163.87	183.63	0	2,180.02
Endline	210.00	327.99	563.39	0	8,374.02

More direct evidence of improved investment in children is seen in household expenditure levels. Median annual expenditure on children increased significantly from 76,000 CFA (EUR 115.86) at baseline to 137,750 CFA (EUR 210) at endline, representing an increase of over 80%. Mean expenditure also rose substantially, from 107,492 CFA francs (EUR 163.87) to 215,148 CFA francs (EUR 327.99), although the faster growth in the mean again reflects the influence of a smaller group of high-spending households. The increase in median expenditure confirms that most households were able to allocate more resources to children, including education, health, and nutrition-related costs. However, as with income, the widening gap between median and mean expenditure and the increase in variability and maximum values at endline point to growing inequality in spending capacity. While many households improved their investment in children, others remained constrained, highlighting persistent disparities in the ability to translate economic gains into tangible wellbeing outcomes.

Gender and women's empowerment

Despite important gains in household economic outcomes, **progress in women's empowerment particularly in relation to decision-making power was more limited, uneven, and in some areas regressive**. The proportion of women with very weak decision-making power declined substantially— from 64% at baseline to 26% at endline—indicating a meaningful reduction in extreme exclusion. Similarly, the share of women classified as having weak decision-making power declined overall from 28% at baseline to 18% at endline. In batch 2, this decline was particularly pronounced, falling from 39% to 13%, while proportions in batch 1 remained unchanged at 23%. This suggests that, while many women moved out of the very weakest category, not all transitioned into more consolidated forms of decision-making power.

However, these gains did not translate into stronger forms of agency. The proportion of women with balanced decision-making power decreased from 19% to 15%, while those with strong decision-making power remained low and declined slightly from 11% to 9%. This suggests that while more women may now participate in decision-making in at least some domains, **progress toward meaningful influence and control over resources remains limited**. In other words, the project appears to have contributed to reducing exclusion but did not substantially shift entrenched gender power relations within households.

Table 16: Women's decision-making power over resource allocation and management by batch

	Batch 1		Batch 2		Overall	
	BL (% , SD)	EL (% , SD)	BL (% , SD)	EL (% , SD)	BL (% , SD)	EL (% , SD)
≥1 domain (Too weak)	68%, 46.7 pp	32%, 46.8 pp	54%, 49.9 pp	20%, 40.1 pp	64%, 48.2 pp	26%, 43.9 pp
≥30% (Weak)	23%, 42.1 pp	23%, 42.4 pp	39%, 48.9 pp	13%, 33.5 pp	28%, 44.9 pp	18%, 38.4 pp
≥50% (Balanced)	15%, 35.7 pp	19%, 39.1 pp	27%, 44.4 pp	12%, 33.5 pp	19%, 39.0 pp	15%, 35.8 pp
≥75% (Strong)	8.4%, 27.8 pp	11%, 31.1 pp	18%, 38.1 pp	8%, 27.2 pp	11%, 31.6 pp	9%, 29.2 pp

Domain-level analysis further reinforces this pattern. Women's participation was relatively higher in decisions related to household welfare—such as children's schooling, health, and food—where modest gains were observed. In contrast, participation in decisions related to

productive resources and economic assets (such as agricultural inputs, crop choice, livestock, and marketing of produce) remained consistently low and, in some cases, declined over time.

These patterns indicate that structural and normative constraints on women's control over productive resources persist, and that participation in savings groups alone may be insufficient to shift entrenched power relations around income and asset management.

Table 17: Women's participation in decision making by domain

Domain	Batch 1		Batch 2		Overall	
	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline
Agriculture inputs	12%	11%	21%	10%	15%	11%
Selling harvests	12%	19%	22%	9%	15%	14%
Crop choice	18%	19%	25%	9%	20%	14%
Livestock	12%	11%	23%	9%	16%	10%
Children school	19%	19%	31%	12%	23%	15%
Health care	20%	22%	34%	14%	24%	18%
Food	16%	17%	38%	12%	23%	14%
Household goods	16%	17%	33%	13%	21%	15%
Funeral participation	59%	0.21	32%	11%	50%	16%

The implications of this decline are significant, particularly given the well-established link between women's decision-making power and child wellbeing outcomes. Even where households experienced increases in income, diversification, and expenditure on children, the reduced role of women in financial decisions may have limited the effectiveness of these investments. This is especially relevant in contexts where women are typically more directly responsible for meeting children's day-to-day needs, including food, health, and care. The quantitative findings showing mixed progress in household allocation to children—particularly the decline among female-headed households—further reinforce this concern.

Importantly, the analysis also shows that **participation in VSLAs was not sufficient to drive significant improvements in women's decision-making power**. While women in households with VSLA membership showed slightly higher levels of balanced decision-making (17% compared to 13%), this difference was not statistically significant. This suggests that while VSLAs may support women's access to resources, social capital, and confidence, **their impact on intra-household power dynamics is neither automatic nor uniform**. Household-level membership does not necessarily translate into individual-level authority, particularly in contexts where decision-making over productive resources remains strongly gendered.

Qualitative findings provide important context to these results. Respondents widely reported that VSLAs and livelihood activities enhanced women's ability to earn income, contribute to household expenditures, and reduce financial dependence on men. These changes were often associated with improved household wellbeing and, in some cases, strengthened cooperation within households. However, these accounts predominantly describe **economic participation rather than shifts in decision-making authority**.

"The VSLA is the greatest help we have had in this community. It motivated the women greatly to do something — whereas before, it was us [men] they were waiting on for expenses." (Male Caregivers, Issia)

"Yes, it has helped us a great deal. Because today we manage to run AGRs — each of us manages to get by." (Female Caregivers, Issia)

More broadly, qualitative evidence points to a model in which households and communities increasingly **mobilise resources collectively**, without necessarily challenging existing gender hierarchies. Decision-making, particularly regarding larger investments or productive activities, appears to remain embedded within established household or community structures, limiting the extent to which women exercise independent control over resources.

“The VSLA project allowed us – the women – to have collective activities: growing cassava, maize, etc.” VSLA, Zoukougbeu

At the same time, contextual factors further constrain women’s empowerment. Persistent structural challenges such as limited access to services and the burden of managing household needs, including water collection continue to shape women’s roles and time use. Such pressures can constrain women’s ability to engage in income-generating activities or participate actively in financial decision-making, even where overall household economic conditions improve. Addressing this gap will require more intentional integration of gender-transformative approaches that go beyond economic strengthening to actively support women’s agency and influence within households and communities.

5.1.3.5 Community structures strengthening, service delivery and enabling environment

Qualitative findings suggest that the project contributed to strengthening a range of community-level structures, which collectively supported improvements in local service delivery and created a more enabling environment for community-led action. These effects were most visible in relation to VSLAs and, to a lesser extent, Community Service Groups (GSCs). Evidence relating to Water Management Committees (WMCs) were more mixed and less consistent. Overall, the findings point to strengthened organisation, increased functionality of community groups, and expanded access to locally delivered services, though with variation in effectiveness across different structures.

At the level of **community structures strengthening**, VSLAs stand out as the most mature and consistently functional mechanism. Qualitative data indicate that many groups progressed beyond initial formation to become self-managed financial structures, with clear rules, governance systems, multiple savings cycles, and strong member participation. Respondents described VSLAs as increasingly autonomous and capable of managing savings, loans, solidarity funds, and income-generating activities. The project’s accompaniment, follow-up visits, training, and support to establish by-laws were viewed as important factors distinguishing project-supported VSLAs from unsupported groups. This suggests that the project successfully supported the development of locally embedded financial mechanisms with strong potential for continuity beyond direct project support.

*“These are groups that have become practically autonomous and capable of managing themselves.”
SCI Staff*

Similarly, GSCs also demonstrated important strengths, particularly where they were able to organise labour services through work scheduling, task allocation, and internal rules. Some evidence suggests that groups developed internal governance systems that helped maintain discipline, cohesion, and accountability among members. Training and equipment provided through the project were repeatedly cited as key enabling factors. Members valued training on group functioning and planning, as well as agricultural practices, particularly crop production

and nursery development. Practical tools such as machetes, boots, saws, and machines were also considered useful in strengthening the groups' productivity. direct project support.

"We work in cocoa, coffee, and hevea fields, according to an established schedule. We generally intervene for one day depending on the needs." Community Service Group, Zoukougbeu

"The farmers – those who have work to be done – submit requests. Now, it goes on the list. In the week, we take 2 days. Now, on the list – when your turn comes, we go to work." Community Service Group, Daloa

While GSCs were generally active and highly valued by communities, their effectiveness was more uneven than that of VSLAs. Respondents described the groups as functioning and in demand. At the same time, some constraints limited their productivity and consistency, including insufficient equipment, malfunctioning machines, limited training coverage, and member dropout. These challenges affected productivity and, in some locations, affected members' motivation and the groups' ability to provide reliable labour services. This suggests that GSCs are a promising and relevant model, but one whose effectiveness would be strengthened by provision of higher quality and maintainable equipment, more comprehensive training coverage, and sustained member participation.

These strengthened structures also played a key role in improving local service delivery, particularly in areas where formal services are limited. VSLAs functioned as accessible financial systems, providing savings, credit, and emergency support at community level, thereby reducing reliance on informal and potentially exploitative financial arrangements. GSCs complemented this by addressing labour market gaps, offering organised and affordable adult labour for agricultural and other community tasks. Their role as a substitute for child labour further highlights their contribution to both economic and social outcomes. In this sense, community structures did not only organise members but also acted as delivery mechanisms for essential services, including financial access, labour provision, and informal social protection.

"We take this group to do the work the children would have done in the fields." Community Service Group, Issia

The project also contributed to strengthening the enabling environment for basic services, particularly through community engagement in infrastructure development and management. Through Community Action Plans (CAPs), some communities were able to identify priorities, mobilise resources, and advocate for investments such as water pumps, boreholes, schools, and health facilities. This reflects a shift towards more structured and participatory approaches to local development, with communities playing an active role in planning and resource mobilisation. Collaboration between communities, project actors, and government stakeholders further supported this process, suggesting improved alignment between local initiatives and formal systems.

"Thanks to the Community Action Plans that were put in place in certain localities, it was the PAC that enabled certain ones to obtain a borehole, a dispensary or a school. That is something we used to say we could have – but it was truly difficult for a long time before the project." Cooperative

However, the effectiveness of Water Management Committees which were intended to sustain water infrastructure investments was mixed and overall, more limited. Only one community provided a clear positive example of a WMC functioning as intended, with an organised group managing and protecting the water point, supporting maintenance, and promoting cleaner water practices. In other communities, WMCs were described as weak, inactive, or unable to

improve water access, with respondents reporting absent, faulty, incomplete, or insufficient pumps. As a result, access to safe drinking water remained one of the clearest areas where the project did not fully achieve its intended results. Women continued to bear the burden of fetching water, often from distant or unsafe sources, while reliance on unclean water raised health concerns. These challenges suggest that support to water management was sometimes inadequate, particularly where WMCs lacked the materials, technical capacity, or follow-up needed to maintain infrastructure effectively.

"We tidied up a bit around the village – that's what the water management committee managed to do. Otherwise, they talked and talked but did nothing. We even went to meet the director of hydraulics but that alone didn't yield anything." Community Leaders, Issia

In conclusion, qualitative evidence indicates that the project made a meaningful contribution to strengthening community structures and enhancing service delivery through locally embedded systems. VSLAs and GSCs emerged as particularly effective mechanisms, combining strong organisational capacity with tangible service provision. CAPs contributed to participatory planning and access to infrastructure in some areas. By contrast, WMCs showed the most limited and inconsistent results, highlighting the challenges of sustaining collective resource management. Overall, the project helped create an enabling environment characterised by improved organisation, collective action, and local ownership, though further strengthening of linkages with formal institutions would be required to consolidate and sustain these gains.

5.1.3.6 Unintended Impacts

Unintended impacts were reported only under the community development component, particularly in relation to VSLAs. Although these impacts were not central intended outcomes of the component, they provide useful insight into how participation in community structures influenced social status, household relationships, and community replication of project approaches.

First, participation in VSLAs appears to have contributed to improved social status and recognition for some VSLA promoters and members. Respondents suggested that being associated with a respected and functional community structure strengthened how they were perceived by others in the community.

"Yes – that is, effects at the family level and at my own level too. It meant that I myself am well regarded: 'There's someone who got us out of there, there's someone who helped us get here, there's someone who they spoke badly about at first.'" VSLA Promoters, Issia

Second, some respondents described positive changes in household relationships, including improved harmony between spouses and better communication within households. These changes appear to have been linked to the financial and organisational benefits of VSLAs, which may have reduced household stress and increased cooperation around children's wellbeing.

Finally, the VSLA model generated unintended replication beyond the original project-supported groups. Some communities established additional VSLAs inspired by the project model, suggesting that the approach was seen as useful, locally relevant, and adaptable beyond direct project support.

5.1.3.7 Challenges/hindering factors

Qualitative findings indicate that, despite the overall positive contribution of the project, several factors constrained the effectiveness, consistency, and sustainability of outcomes across intervention areas. These challenges were primarily related to **limited financial capacity, structural barriers to livelihoods, uneven functionality of community structures, gaps in equipment and inputs, weak integration with formal systems, and persistent infrastructure deficit.**

A key constraint concerned the **limited financial capacity of community-based savings mechanisms.** While VSLAs improved access to savings and credit, their relatively small capital base meant that demand for loans often exceeded available resources. This, in turn, restricted the scale of investments that members could undertake and created delays in accessing funds. As a result, although households benefited from improved financial inclusion, the potential for **larger or more transformative livelihood investments remained limited.**

“As for the obstacle: the savings are not enough but the demand for credit is large. For a withdrawal of less than one million [CFA francs], you have to wait 3 to 4 months for the cashbox to have the initial amount.” VSLA, Issia

Closely linked to this, the expansion and sustainability of **income-generating activities (IGAs)** were affected by broader structural constraints. Respondents highlighted challenges such as limited access to productive assets, insufficient equipment, and poor transport infrastructure. These factors reduced productivity and limited the ability of households to bring goods to market, in some cases resulting in post-harvest losses. This suggests that **access to finance alone was not sufficient**, and that complementary support—particularly in relation to market access and infrastructure—was critical for achieving sustained income growth.

“We made a cassava field that succeeded well. But due to the lack of means of transport, we lost several of our cassava [plants/harvest].” VSLA, Zoukougbeu

The findings also point to **variation in the functionality and effectiveness of community structures.** While VSLAs and Community Service Groups were generally perceived as strong and well-functioning, other structures, particularly Water Management Committees, demonstrated more limited performance. This indicates that the establishment of community structures did not automatically translate into effectiveness, and that **continued support, clarity of roles, and local capacity were important determinants of performance.**

In addition, **equipment-related constraints** affected the effectiveness of **several** interventions, particularly Community Service Groups and Water Management Committees, although the severity of these constraints was greater for WMCs. For Community Service Groups, respondents reported insufficient tools, inappropriate equipment, and limited maintenance or repair support. These issues reduced productivity and, in some cases, limited the benefits of project support. For WMCs, the challenge was more substantial because it related to the functionality of water infrastructure itself, including absent, faulty, incomplete, or insufficient pumps and limited availability of spare parts or repair support. These problems directly affected communities' access to safe drinking water and limited the ability of WMCs to fulfil their intended role. The findings highlight the importance of ensuring not only that equipment and infrastructure are provided, but that they are of **high quality, functional, maintainable, and supported by adequate follow-up over time.**

"We have a machine, but it is broken down." Community Service Group, Daloa
"The saws, the boots, the machetes, and some machines were very useful to us. But alongside that, the sprayer for the cocoa fields was no good. We tried everything, but in the end – zero."
Community Service Group, Zoukougbeu

Another important challenge relates to the **limited integration of community-based structures with formal systems and institutions**. In particular, VSLAs were reported to operate largely as self-contained systems, with minimal linkages to microfinance institutions, banks, or government programmes. This limited opportunities for scaling financial services, accessing additional capital, and ensuring longer-term sustainability. It also reflects broader systemic constraints in connecting **community-level mechanisms with formal service delivery and financial systems**.

"Well, there haven't been links with other NGOs, and really, we're not yet attached to a microfinance institution. Because the NGO had promised us that before they left, they would make sure we were linked to banks. So we were waiting for them." VSLA Promoters, Issia
"We have no direct link with microfinance institutions or banks and we operate primarily on the VSLA's internal system." VSLA, Daloa

Finally, the evidence suggests that some interventions—such as Community Action Plans—had **limited reach or visibility within the overall qualitative sample**, indicating possible inconsistencies in implementation or uneven levels of engagement across communities. This may have reduced their overall contribution relative to more prominent components such as VSLAs and GSCs.

5.1.4 Adolescent and Youth

5.1.4.1 Overview

The findings suggest that the Adolescents and Youth component achieved partial and uneven results. The strongest indication of progress relates to shifts in employment type and income generation, although changes in employment indicators were not statistically significant and should therefore be interpreted cautiously. A central achievement was the substantial shift in youth employment patterns, particularly the marked increase in wage employment. At the same time, self-employment declined, suggesting a transition away from informal or subsistence activities toward more structured forms of work.

While these shifts indicate expanded access to employment opportunities, including apprenticeships, they did not translate consistently into stable, secure, or decent work, with persistent challenges related to income adequacy, regularity, follow-up support, and access to start-up resources. Employment gains were also uneven across groups: female participation increased, suggesting some progress in supporting girls' economic engagement, while male participation declined.

Separately, the project substantially exceeded its target for adolescents and youth reporting increased income as a result of project support. A total of 126 of 342 adolescents and youth (36.8%) reported increased revenue, compared with a Life of Project target of 50 participants, representing 252% of the target achieved. This result suggests that the project successfully strengthened the income-generating capacity of a significant proportion of participants. However, progress was also more limited in relation to market-oriented outcomes. Although

some adolescents and youth were supported to generate income, relatively few producers were supported to market their products.

This suggests that while the project was effective in supporting income generation at the individual level, it was less successful in facilitating market access, commercialisation, and scaling of youth-led enterprises. This gap may reflect constraints related to market linkages, production capacity, or external economic conditions.

Table 18: Key adolescent youth indicators

Key project Indicators	Disaggregation	BL (%)	EL (%)	Change (pp)	P-value
Number and % of Adolescents and (15-24) in self-employment or paid employment, including apprenticeships or internships, paid or unpaid, in employment or decent work	All	48%	43%	-5 pp	0.86
	Self Employed	50%	29%	-21 pp	0.14
	Wage employed	0%	64%	+64 pp	0.20
	Female	30%	40%	+10 pp	0.64
	Male	59%	44%	-15 pp	0.35
Trained A&Y demonstrating knowledge on life skills (emotional management, problem solving, and decision-making) and awareness of their rights		93%	94%	+0.01	0.14
Key project Indicators	Disaggregation	BL	EL	Target	% Achieved
Percentage of trained AYs with demonstrate improved knowledge on life skills (emotional management, problem solving, and decision-making) and awareness of their rights		N/A	47%	50%	94%
Number and % of A & Y who have increased their revenue streams as a result of the project	All		126	50	252%
	Female		27		
	Male		99		
Number of A & Y producers supported that market their products	All		12	75	16%
	Female		2		
	Male		10		

The component also contributed to maintaining high levels of life skills knowledge and showed positive results in higher-order thinking skills, particularly decision-making, information gathering, and creative thinking. However, broader behavioural and emotional changes were less evident, and qualitative accounts suggest that life skills outcomes were less readily recognised and valued by participants than vocational training, equipment, or income-related benefits. Overall, the component created useful entry points for youth economic empowerment and personal development, but its effectiveness was constrained by its late start, short implementation period, small sample size, and limited post-training follow-up.

Overall, the evidence indicates that the Adolescent and Youth component was partially effective, with strong achievements in life skills development, shifts toward wage employment, and increased income for a segment of participants. However, limitations in market integration, decent work, and the lack of statistically significant changes in some indicators suggest that

progress was not uniform across all objectives. The component's effectiveness was further constrained by its late start, short implementation period, small sample size, and limited post-training follow-up.

5.1.4.2 Adolescents and youth (15-24 years) in self-employment or paid employment, including apprenticeships or internships, paid or unpaid, in employment or decent work

This indicator captures participation in employment (including wage employment, self-employment, apprenticeships, or internships). Moreover, through the decent work index, we also analyse the quality of that employment.²

The findings indicate that the project contributed to some improvements in access to employment opportunities among adolescents and youth, but with limited impact on the overall level and quality of employment, and with outcomes varying substantially across individuals and contexts. These results should be interpreted with caution given the small sample size for this component, particularly at baseline. The endline included 90 observations, of which 35 (39%) were employed, while the baseline included 37 observations, of which 27 (73%) were employed. As a result, statistical significance could not be robustly established, and the findings should be understood as indicative rather than conclusive.

The overall proportion of A&Y engaged in employment remained below half and declined slightly from 48% at baseline to 43% at endline. While this change is not statistically significant, it suggests that improvements in access to opportunities did not translate into higher overall employment rates. Wage employment increased from 0% at baseline to 64% at endline, while self-employment declined from 50% to 29%.

This shift suggests that the project supported a transition toward more structured and potentially formalised forms of work, including apprenticeships and wage labour opportunities. At the same time, female participation increased from 30% to 40%, indicating some progress in addressing gender barriers, while male participation declined from 59% to 44%, pointing to uneven outcomes across groups.

Table 19: Percentage of A&Y in employment

Groups		Percentage of AY in employment		
		Baseline	Endline	P-value
Employment type 1	Self Employed	50.00%	28.57%	0.1367
	Wage employed	0.00%	64.29%	0.2049
Gender	Female	30.00%	40.00%	0.6392
	Male	58.82%	44.00%	0.3456
Employment type 2	Full-time	46.15%	28.57%	0.3445
	Part-time	50.00%	52.38%	0.8902
Age group	15- to 17-year-olds	55.56%	25.00%	0.3077
	18 years and above	44.44%	45.16%	0.9612
Overall	Total	48.15%	42.86%	0.6781
	N	27	35	

² The Decent Work Index is calculated following a recent guide developed by SC Italy. See more at [Decent Work Measurement Tool - Save the Children's Resource Centre](#)

Qualitative findings provide important context to these changes. Adolescents and youth consistently reported that the project improved access to opportunities through practical, skills-based training, material support, and exposure to different economic activities. Many described being able to apply newly acquired skills, particularly in agriculture, and in some cases transitioning into employment or income-generating activities. The project also played a brokerage role by linking youth to existing institutional structures, including the Youth Employment Directorate, Chamber of Trades, Ministry of Agriculture, and Vocational Training services.

"We received machines, irons, sewing scissors. All of that helped us greatly in our activity." Adolescents and Youth, Zoukougbeu

"For me, it was after the training that I started the pedicure and manicure." Adolescents and Youth, Issia

Through collaboration with government actors responsible for youth employment, vocational training, agriculture, and trades, the project helped increase young people's awareness of available services and referral pathways, including apprenticeships, training schemes, agricultural support initiatives, and employment-related opportunities. This role appears to have been particularly important for young people who had previously been less visible to formal institutions or less aware of available support. However, this finding should be interpreted with caution, as evidence on increased uptake of youth support services came mainly from a small number of government and project stakeholders rather than being widely reported across the qualitative sample.

"When we went for the awareness-raising, there was the Youth Employment Directorate, the Chamber of Trades, a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, and Vocational Training – us. That is, the four ministries that were there – or rather, it's all of us who provide that." Regional Government Official

However, the alignment between training and labour market demand appears to have been partial. While training was practical and locally relevant and involved multiple institutional stakeholders, there is no clear evidence that a formal labour market assessment systematically informed the design of training activities or that curricula were consistently tailored to identified growth sectors or demand-driven opportunities. This may have limited the extent to which training translated into sustained employment. Several enabling factors contributed to the observed marginal improvements.

Strong motivation among adolescents and youth, as well as support from families and community leaders, created a favourable environment for participation. Endorsement by respected figures, such as village chiefs, increased programme credibility and mobilisation.

"There was the involvement of youth leaders, the buy-in from these groups. Sometimes when we arrived at settlements, the village chief was there – he's the moral guarantor. When the chief is there and the chief recommends to the young people – such-and-such can do this, they've done that." Regional Government Official

Inclusive programme design further enabled participation. Allowing youth without formal documentation (such as birth certificates) to enrol broadened access, particularly for marginalised populations.

Despite these gains, respondents consistently highlighted gaps in post-training support, including limited access to inputs, mentoring, and follow-up, which constrained longer-

"After training, if there's no follow-up support, it's a bit like throwing them into the deep end and asking them to manage." (SCI Staff)

term outcomes. Youth and stakeholders repeatedly pointed to the need for additional inputs, mentoring, and follow-up

These limitations are reflected in the quality of employment. While some improvements were observed in institutional aspects of work, such as an increase in written contracts (from 0% to 28%) and access to mechanisms to defend labour rights (from 8% to 28%), these gains were offset by deterioration in key dimensions of economic security. The proportion of youth reporting that their income was sufficient to meet basic needs declined sharply from 74% to 20%, while those reporting regular income fell from 92.6% to 37.15%. This indicates that many youths continued to face income instability and inadequacy even when engaged in work

The composite index of decent work further illustrates this mixed picture. Overall, the index increased modestly from 0.58 at baseline to 0.64 at endline, reflecting some improvement in working conditions across multiple dimensions, including labour market engagement, employment security, job security, and skills development. However, this positive trend was undermined by a substantial decline in income security, highlighting persistent challenges in ensuring adequate and stable earnings.

Table 20: Summary with composite index values

	Composite index value	Labour market Security	Employment Security	Job Security	Work Security	Skill Reproduction Security	Income Security	Representation Security
Self Employed								
Baseline	0.60	0.63	0.21	0.56	0.68	0.50	0.46	0.08
Endline	0.61	0.69	0.22	0.60	0.71	0.38	0.24	0.21
Wage Employed								
Baseline	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Endline	0.68	0.59	0.31	0.64	0.76	0.71	0.39	0.27
Female								
Baseline	0.46	0.53	0.25	0.52	0.53	0.20	0.28	0.00
Endline	0.62	0.60	0.23	0.60	0.75	0.50	0.20	0.25
Male								
Baseline	0.65	0.66	0.18	0.55	0.72	0.65	0.54	0.11
Endline	0.65	0.67	0.27	0.62	0.72	0.52	0.34	0.24
15 to 17 year olds								
Baseline	0.41	0.50	0.22	0.37	0.50	0.00	0.24	0.00
Endline	0.33	0.38	0.17	0.33	0.38	0.25	0.08	0.00
18 years and above								
Baseline	0.67	0.67	0.19	0.62	0.73	0.72	0.54	0.20
Endline	0.68	0.69	0.27	0.65	0.77	0.55	0.33	0.29
Overall								
Baseline	0.58	0.61	0.20	0.54	0.65	0.48	0.44	0.07
Endline	0.64	0.65	0.26	0.61	0.73	0.51	0.30	0.24
N	62	62	62	62	62	62	62	39

Differences across groups were also evident. Wage-employed youth achieved higher decent work scores at endline, suggesting relatively better outcomes across several dimensions, while self-employed youth showed only marginal improvements, with declines in income-related indicators. Female youth experienced stronger overall progress compared to males, narrowing gender gaps in employment quality, although income constraints persisted for both groups. Younger adolescents (15–17 years) saw a decline in outcomes, while older youth (18 years and above) experienced slight improvements.

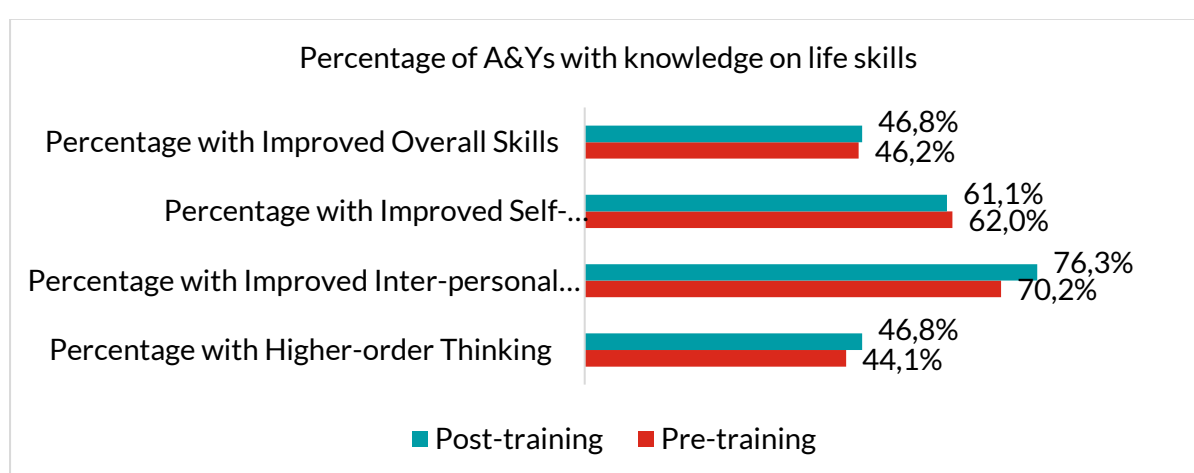
Overall, the findings suggest that the project was effective in facilitating entry into employment and improving access to opportunities, particularly where training was combined with material support and institutional linkages. However, it was less effective in ensuring that these

opportunities translated into stable, secure, and decent work. Gains in labour market participation were not matched by improvements in income security, and employment outcomes remained fragile and uneven.

5.1.4.3 Knowledge on life skills (emotional management, problem solving, and decision-making) and awareness of their rights

The findings indicate that the proportion of adolescents and youth demonstrating improved knowledge of life skills increased marginally from **46% at pre-training to 47% at post-training**, while overall knowledge of life skills and rights remained very high at **93% at pre-training and 94% at post-training**, with differences not statistically significant. These results suggest that while the project succeeded in maintaining high levels of knowledge, **the additional measurable impact over the project period was limited**.

Figure 7: Percentage of A&Y who demonstrated knowledge of life skills



Further analysis shows statistically significant improvements in the **higher-order thinking domain (p-value = 0.01)**, particularly in areas such as decision-making, information gathering, and creative thinking. In contrast, **no meaningful progress was observed in self-understanding or interpersonal skills**, with scores remaining largely unchanged over time. These findings suggest that the project was more effective in strengthening **cognitive and problem-solving capacities** than in supporting broader behavioural and emotional development. Statistically significant gains were also observed among adolescents aged **15–17 years** and among participants in **Issia**, suggesting that the effectiveness of life skills interventions varied depending on age and location. This points to the importance of contextual and implementation factors in shaping outcomes (see annex 7).

Qualitative evidence indicates that life skills outcomes were **less prominent in participants' accounts compared to vocational and economic benefits**. When reflecting on project impacts, respondents more frequently emphasised tangible outcomes such as tools, income, or employment, suggesting that **life skills improvements were less immediately visible or less prioritised by participants**. However, the qualitative data do include evidence of internal and relational changes among some participants, including **increased confidence, self-esteem, aspirations, greater respect for their own decision-making, and improved relationships within the household**. Several respondents suggested that before the intervention, some youth saw few realistic pathways beyond agricultural labour or inactivity. This suggests that the life skills component contributed to personal development for some adolescents and youth. It helped some participants recognise alternatives, gain motivation, and feel better equipped to pursue

opportunities, although the evidence is not strong enough to conclude that it generated broad or consistent behavioural change across all participants.

"I also gained confidence in myself." Adolescents and Youth, Issia

"Before, I was a student and I was looking for means to learn a trade. Thank God that Save sent the project to help children who are no longer in school so as to be able to place them in trades. That is how I was able to realise my dream of doing tailoring, thanks to Save. Even if everything is not yet perfect, things are going well." Adolescents and Youth, Zoukougbeu

Beyond employment and income-related outcomes, some adolescents and youth reported being listened to more, experiencing less pressure to follow decisions imposed by others, and feeling more respected by family members. For youth who were able to earn income, this was closely linked to greater financial independence and reduced dependence on parents or caregivers. These findings suggest that the **component contributed to personal development and agency for some participants**, even where labour market outcomes remained incomplete or fragile

Qualitative findings also highlight several implementation constraints that may have limited the depth and consistency of life skills outcomes. First, **the duration and intensity of the training were reduced** in some cases due to time limitations, which may have constrained its ability to generate sustained behavioural change. Second, delivery was affected by

"Life skills training is not something you can change overnight... the training was supposed to last six months, but due to time constraints, it was done in three months." Social Centre, Zoukougbeu

the **limited capacity and availability of social workers** who served as life skills trainers, as they were often overstretched across multiple responsibilities. Participation was also affected by the **availability of adolescents and youth themselves**, many of whom had to balance training with school, agricultural work, household responsibilities, or mobility in search of opportunities. These factors likely reduced continuity, follow-up, and the extent to which life skills learning could be reinforced over time.

Overall, the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings indicates that the project was successful in **maintaining high levels of life skills knowledge and achieving targeted improvements in higher-order thinking skills**, particularly in decision-making and problem solving. Qualitative findings also point to positive changes in confidence, self-esteem, and agency for some participants. However, **broader behavioural and emotional changes were not consistently evidenced** across the qualitative sample and were not strongly reflected in the quantitative domains of self-understanding and interpersonal skill. The **effectiveness of the life skills component appears to have been constrained by short implementation periods, competing livelihood priorities, and limited follow-up**, highlighting the need for longer-term and more intensive engagement to achieve deeper and more consistent outcomes.

5.1.4.4 Farmer Field Schools – Climate Resilience Practices

Findings suggest that Farmer Field Schools (FFS) were perceived by project and government stakeholders as a relevant approach for introducing adolescents and youth to **climate-resilient agricultural practices**. However, evidence on the extent to which these practices were applied, sustained, or scaled by young people themselves remains limited, as this finding was not strongly reflected in the accounts of adolescents, youth, or community members.

Qualitative evidence from institutional stakeholders indicates that FFS provided **practical, hands-on training opportunities**, particularly for out-of-school youth, enabling them to acquire skills directly applicable to agricultural production. These trainings were closely linked to real farming conditions and often utilised land provided by families or communities, thereby facilitating immediate application of learning. However, the evidence is strong on the relevance and practical orientation of the training than on its sustained effect on youth livelihoods or agriculture behaviour.

"Through the Farmer Field Schools, it allowed them to gain other skills in how to boost their productivity."
SCI Staff

Respondents highlighted training on composting, agroforestry, and diversification into food crops alongside cocoa production. These practices are relevant in a context of declining soil fertility and climate variability and suggest that the FFS approach introduced youth to agricultural practices beyond traditional cocoa production. However, available qualitative evidence does not allow a strong conclusion on the level or consistency of adoption among participants.

We saw young people in their communities receiving in situ training at the field schools, and improving their farming practices—whether in cocoa production or even diversifying beyond cocoa... These trainings also broadened their perspective—not focusing only on cocoa cash crops but also considering food crops. We observed improvements in their practices." SCI Staff

The findings therefore suggest that FFS created a useful entry point for exposing adolescents and youth to more sustainable and diversified agricultural practices. However, the evidence remains limited in terms of whether this exposure translated into sustained application, income generation, or broader livelihood resilience. Limited evidence of systematic follow-up and mentoring further constrains conclusions about the longer-term effectiveness or scalability of the approach.

"Follow-up and mentoring after the trainings remained limited... reducing opportunities to support sustained application of learning." Regional Government Official

5.1.4.5 Challenges/hindering factors

Several factors constrained the effectiveness of the adolescent and youth component. A key challenge was the limited capacity of life skills trainers (social workers), who were often overstretched and insufficiently prepared to deliver the programme effectively. This was compounded by broader staffing constraints, which limited follow-up and supervision.

"They were really stretched across multiple activities... sometimes we doubted whether they were really delivering the content... they didn't know the end goal of the cycle." SCI Staff

Participation was also inconsistent, as many young people had competing demands such as school, agricultural work, or migration in search of opportunities. In addition, family-related factors further affected engagement, with some parents reluctant to release youth from household or plantation responsibilities. In addition, cases of adolescent pregnancy led to dropouts. In addition, adolescent pregnancy contributed to dropout among some girls, limiting their ability to complete the programme.

Limited post-training support and unequal access to start-up materials also hindered outcomes. Some participants did not receive kits and were unclear about selection processes, while follow-up support after training was often insufficient. This suggests that the absence of clear

communication and equitable access to materials contributed to frustration among some participants and uneven outcomes across youth.

The lack of follow-up after training was another important constraint. While vocational training and equipment support were valued, respondents stressed that these inputs were not sufficient on their own. This points to a gap between initial training or material support and the sustained accompaniment needed to help young people establish viable livelihoods.

“Vocational training for those too old for formal school – donations of equipment. But that side should have been more emphasised. When you give equipment, you need to follow up. That’s the side I didn’t perceive well.” Regional Government Official

Financial barriers also constrained adolescents and youth from starting businesses or continuing training. Some participants described having the motivation to pursue an activity but lacking the resources to do so. Others described challenges in accessing or completing training where trainers required payment, which created discouragement and delays. These findings suggest that financial constraints continued to limit the transition from training to practical livelihood outcomes.

“I took the electrical course, but I have difficulties with my trainer because he is asking for 50,000 [CFA francs] to start, so I am in the process of gathering the money to send to him... My hand hurts – which is why I want to do the training to properly master the technique” Adolescents and Youth, Issia

Documentation requirements also created barriers to accessing opportunities beyond the project. Although the project itself allowed some youth without birth certificates or formal identity documents to participate, this flexibility did not extend to all government or partner-led placements.

Finally, logistical challenges affected implementation and follow-up, particularly in remote settlements. Poor road conditions made it difficult for stakeholders to reach some communities and limited the regularity of engagement. These constraints affected not only programme delivery, but also the ability to provide the sustained follow-up needed to support adolescents and youth in transitioning from training to employment or income generation.

5.1.5 Impact and Effectiveness of the Project’s Holistic Approach

To better understand whether participation in programme activities in specific as well as multiple programme components was associated with greater reduction in child labour exposure, a statistical analysis was conducted using household data collected at baseline and endline.

The analysis compared how household level child-labour exposure³ changed over time within the same households and examined whether households that participated in specific or higher number of components experienced greater reductions. Importantly, since all households in the sample took part in at least one programme activity, the analysis does not compare participants with non-participants, but rather different patterns of participation.

³ This was measured through the household child labour vulnerability module (see annex 4 for detailed questions)

Overall, the analysis suggests that while the programme as a whole is associated with meaningful improvements, it is not possible to clearly isolate the added benefit of specific or multiple components using the available data: the results show that child labour exposure decreased substantially over time across all households, indicating a strong overall improvement between baseline and endline. This general improvement, captured by a strong “time effect” in the model, indicates that child labour exposure decreased markedly over the implementation period, regardless of the specific or mix of components in which households participated. At the same time, household involvement in greater number of components does not appear to be associated with higher reductions on average. This might be due to contextual and methodological factors.

On the one hand, the observed time effect likely reflects a mix of programme-wide influences – including indirect exposure across interventions, community-level changes, and the overall presence of programme activities (as confirmed by triangulation with qualitative data)– alongside external contextual factors. On the other hand, households registering lower improvements seem to have been less vulnerable to begin with leading to smaller relative improvement. Moreover, regarding the measurement of programme participation, data used in the analysis are based on self-reporting by households and do not fully align with programme monitoring records. This discrepancy may reflect recall bias, misinterpretation of programme components, or differences in how participation was recorded across data sources. This discrepancy may result in misclassification of households’ exposure to different components, reducing the precision of the estimates and limiting the ability of the model to detect differences across programme components.

Qualitative findings on the holistic approach

The holistic approach adopted by the project was widely regarded by stakeholders as a central driver of its overall impact, particularly in reducing child labour through simultaneously addressing its multiple and interrelated causes. Rather than focusing on a single dimension, the project deliberately combined interventions in education, child protection, community development, and adolescent and youth empowerment, recognising that child labour in cocoa-growing communities is rooted in overlapping structural and household-level vulnerabilities. Across interviews, respondents consistently highlighted that this integrated model enabled more meaningful and sustained change than fragmented approaches implemented by other actors. These sentiments reflect a shared understanding that improvements in one domain—such as household income—reinforced gains in others, including school attendance and child protection outcomes.

“We made the choice of these different components because many other actors only intervene on just one of these areas – not all at the same time. We built our theory of change on these 4 areas because for us, these are areas that have a proven influence on reducing the prevalence of child labour.” SCI Staff

“But the AVECs, the CPE, and the bridging classes really allowed the reduction of child labour here.” Child Protection Committee, Zoukougbeu

One of the fundamental areas of impact was the project’s ability to reduce reliance on child labour by addressing underlying economic constraints at household level. Economic strengthening activities, particularly Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), were frequently cited as a cornerstone of this change. These mechanisms enabled caregivers to better manage financial shocks, invest in livelihoods, access adult labour, and meet the direct and

indirect costs associated with schooling. As a result, households were less dependent on children's labour contributions, particularly during peak agricultural periods.

"Everything is linked, because everything works together. In fact, when you take the VSLAs, all that money that parents put together is to meet the needs and well-being of their children, to be able to enrol them [in school]." Male Caregivers, Zoukougbeu.

However, respondents emphasised that these economic gains were not sufficient in isolation; their impact was amplified when combined with education and child protection interventions. For instance, children who might otherwise have remained out of school were able to enrol in bridging classes, while parents simultaneously gained the means to sustain their education through VSLA savings. In this way, the project contributed not only to initial school enrolment but also to improved retention, continuity, and readiness to learn.

"I think everything took place within the same communities. For example, the children of VSLA members might also be beneficiaries of remedial or bridging classes... All these elements contributed to creating a more holistic project that addressed multiple dimensions of protection. When identification of needs took place at the household level, the different components could respond accordingly—whether protection, education, or economic strengthening." SCI Staff.

The effectiveness of the holistic approach was particularly evident in the way different components interacted at both household and community levels. Education interventions, such as bridging classes, were seen as more effective when linked to community identification systems, referral pathways, birth registration support, and follow-up from social services. In parallel, community service groups helped mitigate one of the key structural drivers of child labour by providing alternative sources of affordable labour during intensive farming periods, thereby freeing children to attend school. VSLAs on the other hand enabled some households to finance labour costs and meet schooling expenses. These interconnections illustrate how the project moved beyond service delivery to create an enabling environment for change, where multiple barriers to child wellbeing were addressed simultaneously. Importantly, these complementarities were not incidental but reflected deliberate design and coordination efforts, with interventions implemented in the same communities and often targeting the same vulnerable households. This enabled a form of layered support in which needs identified through one entry point could be addressed through another, resulting in more comprehensive and context-responsive assistance.

The project's holistic approach impact was reinforced by participatory engagement and strong local ownership. Respondents indicated that involving community leaders, caregivers, and local structures in identifying needs and implementing activities contributed to greater acceptance and effectiveness of the interventions. Education and economic components were often described as key entry points that encouraged broader community participation, while child protection mechanisms helped institutionalise practices for monitoring and supporting vulnerable children. This participatory approach also facilitated clearer role distribution among stakeholders, enabling different actors such as cooperatives, protection committees, and local authorities to contribute in complementary ways. As a result, the project not only delivered services but also strengthened community-level systems that support child wellbeing.

"Thanks to Save, we collaborated with the Ministry of Family, Women and Children; the Ministry of Social Affairs; the Social Workers' Training Centre. We have a GBV platform, including security, civil society, cooperatives, communities. We sit together, discuss child protection committees, SOSTECI. It connected government actors across activities. It helped me understand social centres, entry points, reporting processes, the GBV framework, green numbers [hotlines]. We even worked with police stations and defence agencies." Regional Government Official

The holistic approach also generated systems-level benefits by strengthening collaboration across sectors and bringing state actors closer together around shared child protection and child labour objectives. Respondents described improved working relationships between education, social welfare, agriculture, health, SOSTECI, community structures, and local authorities. This cross-sector collaboration helped align activities with national systems, strengthened referral pathways, and improved understanding of available services and institutional roles. In this sense, the holistic approach did not only combine services at household and community level but also helped establish synergies and exchanges among sectors and stakeholders that had not previously worked together. Several stakeholders also highlighted operational enablers related to project duration and management flexibility. The five-year implementation period was viewed as particularly important for building structures, relationships, and results over time, while donor flexibility reportedly allowed adjustments to design and implementation as realities evolved.

"The proposal was already signed and presented to Ferrero and I mean it but many things changed during the implementation because of budget constraints, because of time constraints because of simply we realized that things would have worked better in another way and we had the flexibility with this donor to say, hey look, we change our mind because in that way is better, which is, I mean amazing." SCI Staff.

In addition, some respondents pointed to broader contextual enablers, including Save the Children's long-standing presence in the area, national prioritisation of child labour issues, and a stable socio-political environment during implementation. These factors appear to have supported trust, relevance, and uninterrupted delivery.

"Another enabling factor is that Save the Children has been present in the zone for a very long time – its presence is known in the region through other projects before Ferrero." SCI Staff.

5.1.5.1 Challenges/Hindering factors

Despite the overall strength of the holistic approach, several factors constrained its effectiveness. The most important challenge was the **persistence of social norms** that normalise children's involvement in agricultural and household work. In some communities, child protection messages were initially perceived as conflicting with local traditions, practical learning, or household economic realities. This created resistance and confusion, particularly around the distinction between acceptable children's work and hazardous labour. Although awareness-raising helped reduce resistance over time, respondents emphasised that transforming social norms is a gradual process requiring sustained engagement beyond the project period.

"The lack of understanding among communities who saw NGO actions as overturning traditions. People said NGOs give bad habits to children, make them lazy. Even teachers were confused – in schools there are cooperatives and sanitation days where children take machettes to clean. When we said children shouldn't handle sharp objects, they asked: how do we run cooperatives?" Regional Government Official

Persistent household poverty also limited the effectiveness and sustainability of the holistic model. While VSLAs, income-generating activities, and Community Service Groups helped reduce some economic pressures, financial hardship remained a central driver of child labour. This suggests that the holistic approach was relevant and effective in addressing multiple risks but could not fully overcome the structural economic conditions that continue to push households to rely on children's labour. Respondents also noted that the effectiveness of the holistic approach depended heavily on strong coordination, management, and sustained presence in the field. Ensuring that different components operated in synergy required continuous alignment, supervision, and communication among multiple actors, including implementing partners and government agencies. This **made the model operationally demanding**, particularly given the scale of implementation and the geographic dispersion of communities. While the project benefited from relatively flexible staffing arrangements and adaptive management, challenges such as geographical dispersion, poor road access, distance between central and field teams and occasional gaps in technical support were reported to affect responsiveness and consistency. These factors underscore that while holistic approaches can deliver substantial benefits, they require significant organisational capacity to function effectively in practice.

"One issue was the geographic scope and accessibility of some communities. It was not always easy to access certain localities, which limited our ability to be fully present and follow up closely." SCI Staff

"Of course there are many things to do, but yeah, if I had to say something internal to Save the children, this distance that I mentioned before between Abidjan, between the HQ and the and the areas and the rest of the countries, I think is something that sometimes limits ourselves... you have to wait for a week. Sometimes I think this is more internal, but this limited us, yeah." SCI Staff

Some internal design and management constraints also affected implementation. Respondents noted that **certain activities appeared duplicated across pillars**, creating inefficiencies and some ambiguity in implementation. In addition, **advocacy was not institutionalised through dedicated country office capacity** and was largely carried by project staff alongside implementation responsibilities. This may have limited the project's ability to translate implementation learning into more structured policy engagement, government uptake, and wider systems influence. Overall, these challenges do not undermine the relevance or effectiveness of the holistic approach, but they show that such models require substantial coordination capacity, sustained community engagement, strong field presence, and clearer linkages between implementation, advocacy, and systems strengthening. Without these conditions, the added value of integration may be reduced, particularly in contexts where poverty, social norms, and weak public service systems continue to shape child labour risks.

5.2 Sustainability

This section examines the extent to which changes and outcomes associated with Pillar 1 interventions are likely to be sustained beyond the period of direct implementation support. It addresses the following three main key question on sustainability. The available evidence addresses these questions unevenly.

- How has the cooperation among key project actors worked towards maximizing the impact and guaranteeing sustainability?
- Has the knowledge transfer to government partners, project innovations, and collaboration with national actors created sustainable change in terms of better access, offer and quality of services?
- What challenges remain to achieve sustainable reduction of child labour risks?

The first question, on cooperation among key project actors and its contribution to maximising impact and guaranteeing sustainability, was very weakly and indirectly answered by the data, as this issue was not systematically explored during interviews and focus group discussions. The section therefore does not include a separate finding on this question. Where relevant evidence emerged, it is reflected in the analysis, particularly in relation to collaboration with government actors, community ownership, institutional anchoring, and linkages with formal services.

The second question is partially answered. Available evidence provides some insight into whether knowledge transfer, project innovations, and collaboration with national actors created conditions for more sustainable access, offer, and quality of services. However, the evidence is stronger for child protection and education than for other components, and it does not allow for a firm conclusion that sustainable change has been fully secured. Because several sustainability findings relate to community structures rather than directly to government systems, this section includes a separate subsection on community-based structures and local ownership. These findings are important because community structures such as CPCs, COGES, VSLAs, Community Service Groups, and Water Management Committees are central to the continuation of activities after project closure, even though they do not directly answer the government-focused question on knowledge transfer and national actors.

The third question is answered more substantively in the final subsection, as stakeholders provided more detailed reflections on the institutional, community-level, economic, and structural challenges that may affect the sustainability of achieved reductions in child labour. However, stakeholders also identified several broader enabling factors that may support the continuation of these gains. These factors are therefore presented alongside the challenges in order to provide a more balanced analysis of the conditions that may support or undermine sustainable reductions in child labour.

5.2.1 Knowledge Transfer, Institutional Anchoring, and Sustainable Changes in Access, Offer, and Quality of Services

Findings suggest that the project contributed to some important foundations for sustainability through knowledge transfer, institutional anchoring, and collaboration with government actors. However, these gains remain uneven and highly dependent on continued government capacity, resources, and follow-up after the end of project support.

A key area of contribution lies in the strengthening of institutional knowledge and practices. The project supported the introduction and adoption of more structured approaches to service

delivery in case management, including clearer procedures, improved documentation, and more consistent follow-up mechanisms. Standardised tools and processes introduced through the project, particularly those linked to case identification, referral, assessment, documentation, and follow-up, were viewed as important contributions. These improvements contributed to greater coherence and professionalism in how services were delivered, moving away from ad hoc or informal practices toward more standardised systems, suggesting that knowledge transfer created a foundation that can endure beyond the project period. This indicates that the quality of services has improved not only through additional inputs, but through strengthened internal capacity.

In addition, the project's collaboration with government actors further reinforced this process. By working through and alongside government systems, the project contributed to a degree of institutional anchoring, where approaches and structures introduced during implementation were recognised. There were also positive indications that some government actors anticipate taking on responsibility for sustaining project-supported processes and structures. A good example were the bridging classes which in some cases were promoted to formal schools in some hard-to-reach places. Some actors described plans to include project localities and structures, including CPCs, children's groups, and VSLAs, in future government follow-up.

"I appreciate the approach: involving the technical ministries so that at the project's end, the State can also take its responsibilities. For our part, in our 2026 Annual Work Plan, we have already included Save the Children's localities for follow-up of the activities they implemented. I mean the VSLAs, the CPEs that were installed, the children's groups." Social Centre, Issia

While this reflects emerging ownership which is key for sustainability, the ability of institutions to sustain improved services and structures depends heavily on their operational capacity, which continues to be constrained by limited resources, staffing shortages, and competing priorities. Social centres continue to face chronic underfunding, limited human resources, high workloads, staff turnover, and insufficient operational resources. As a result, the project appears to have strengthened the quality and structure of services but not fully resolved the institutional capacity constraints that determine whether these services can be sustained at scale.

At the level of individual outcomes, the sustainability of change appears more robust. Many participants retained practical knowledge, skills, and competencies that they can continue to apply independently. This was evident in household knowledge, attitudes, practices on child rights and child labour, nutrition and health practices and improved youth skills. These outcomes are less dependent on institutional continuity and therefore more likely to persist.

"For me, it was after the training that I started the pedicure and manicure." Adolescent Youth

These accounts illustrate how tangible inputs combined with skills development enabled individuals to generate income and sustain activities beyond the duration of project support. At the same time, these examples also highlight a broader limitation: while individuals may continue to benefit from acquired skills, the systems that support and expand such opportunities—such as access to markets, services, or continued technical guidance—often require ongoing institutional engagement.

At policy level, the project contributed to operationalization of existing national education priorities, particularly the reintegration of out-of-school children through bridging classes. The project helped translate national policy commitments into practical implementation at

community level, strengthening local experience and institutional understanding of how bridging classes can function as a pathway into formal schooling. In a limited number of cases, access to education appeared more likely to continue where bridging classes transitioned into community schools with assigned government teachers.

“Communities transformed bridging classes into community schools, formalising them under the nearest formal school... and continued to use and keep them alive.” SCI Staff

However, this was not a widespread outcome, and the future need for bridging classes remained contested. Some stakeholders viewed bridging classes as temporary mechanisms that may no longer be needed once children are reintegrated, while others emphasised that the risk of dropout and child labour remains ongoing and may require continued second-chance education pathways.

Overall, the project successfully laid important foundations for more sustainable access, service provision, and quality by strengthening knowledge, introducing practical innovations, and fostering collaboration with national actors. It demonstrated that meaningful improvements can be achieved through system-oriented approaches and capacity-building efforts. However, these gains remain fragile and uneven. Their long-term sustainability will depend on whether institutions are able to sustain the necessary levels of funding, staffing, and operational support, and whether the innovations introduced are sufficiently embedded and resourced to continue functioning effectively over time.

5.2.2 Sustainability of Community-based Structures and Local Ownership

The findings suggest that community-based structures and local ownership represent a critical foundation for sustainability, particularly where communities have internalised project approaches and developed a sense of responsibility to continue activities beyond external support. Respondents frequently expressed a willingness to maintain structures established or strengthened through the project. However, this willingness alone does not guarantee sustainability. The durability of these mechanisms depends largely on whether they generate tangible benefits, sustain active participation, and are supported by viable financial or organisational arrangements.

Evidence shows that community structures (CPCs, VSLAs, COGES, Community service groups, Water Management Committees, among others) were more likely to endure where they provided visible and immediate value to members. In several cases, respondents linked continued engagement to the presence of practical incentives, particularly income-generating opportunities. Where such benefits existed, structures were described as more dynamic, better attended, and more likely to continue functioning. This reflects a broader pattern in which sustainability at community level is closely tied to the alignment between collective action and individual or household benefits. VSLAs for example were some of the community structures that communities considered would be sustained beyond the project life span. Similarly, CPC were also considered to be sustained.

“The CPC has been rethought – the income-generating activity component included in the CPC will make it last. Because if the project disappeared, the CPC would disappear with it. When the project is there, there are small capacity-building sessions, trips to town, small per diems, activities to do – there’s motivation. But if there’s a financial aspect through IGAs, it will endure.” Regional

At the same time, there were also indications that certain practices promoted by the project particularly those related to awareness-raising, prevention, and behaviour change had been internalised within communities. Respondents suggested that these practices could continue beyond the project period, reflecting shifts in knowledge and attitudes. However, they also emphasised that maintaining these changes would likely require periodic reinforcement and continued capacity strengthening.

Community ownership was also strengthened where structures were supported through training, linkages with local authorities, and the provision of resources. The COGES for example were seen as having strengthened ownership and capacity, especially where training, income-generating activities, and linkages with local authorities were established. Reading spaces and school canteens also showed some prospects for continuation, particularly where communities had received materials and training and where school gardens or COGES support could help sustain activities. Thus, these elements contributed to greater confidence among members and enhanced their ability to manage activities independently. However, their sustainability remains uncertain where their continued functioning depends on the ability of communities to make monetary contributions to sustain the services. Similarly, where continued services rely mainly only project support for example for social centres, their functionality beyond the project remain challenging.

"Since Save is no longer there to pay the teachers and it now falls to the parents, the educational level of the children has dropped. Because of the parents' disengagement – they find that school has become too expensive." Reading Space Facilitator, Zoukougbeu

At the same time, community structures showed potential for sustainability where multiple conditions were met. VSLAs for example demonstrated the most consistent sustainability potential. Their financial autonomy, regular savings cycles, internal rules, solidarity funds, and income-generating activities created strong incentives for continued participation. In many communities, VSLAs were already described as embedded and functioning independently. However, their sustainability and potential for expansion remain constrained by the limited linkages established with formal financial institutions or microfinance providers. VSLA members and promoters indicated that groups continued to rely primarily on their internal savings systems, despite expectations that links with banks or microfinance institutions would be established. This limits their ability to access larger productive credit, strengthen savings security, respond to loan demand, and further expand their economic role. This suggests that VSLAs are among the most likely project-supported structures to continue beyond direct project support, but that stronger formal financial linkages would be needed to further strengthen and scale their sustainability.

"Save will endure through the different committees that were put in place: the community service group, child protection committee, children's group, bridging class, water management committee, VSLA. All of that – they brought us together. We see that it is a very good thing. What we must do is continue so that it does not die." Male Caregivers, Daloa

The sustainability of Community Service Groups on the other hand appeared more uncertain. These groups were generally valued where they generated income, provided affordable labour, and contributed to reducing reliance on children's labour. However, their continuation depends on active membership, labour availability, functioning equipment, and continued demand for services. Some respondents noted difficulties related to member dropout, the labour-intensive

nature of activities, and the withdrawal of older participants. This suggests that Community Service Groups are relevant and promising, but require stronger mechanisms for maintaining participation, equipment, and productivity over time.

Evidence on the sustainability of Water Management Committees was more limited and less consistent. One community provided a positive example of a functioning committee with savings mechanisms and a bank account to support maintenance of infrastructure, but this appeared to be an exception rather than a widespread outcome. In other communities, WMCs were weaker or less active, and the functionality of water infrastructure itself remained a major constraint. Overall, the sustainability of WMCs appears to depend on local organisation, financial management capacity, access to spare parts, and technical support for maintenance, which were not consistently established across communities.

Overall, the findings indicate that community-based structures are a key asset for sustainability, particularly where they are well-integrated within local social and economic systems. The project contributed to strengthening these structures by enhancing capacity, fostering ownership, and introducing mechanisms that support continued engagement. However, sustainability is strongest where structures generate direct benefits, maintain active participation, and are underpinned by internal financial or organisational systems. It is weaker where participation is purely voluntary, where activities depend on external support, or where communities face significant economic and logistical constraints. As a result, while the project has laid important foundations for locally driven continuity, the long-term sustainability of these structures will depend on their ability to remain relevant, self-sustaining, and adaptable in the absence of ongoing external support.

5.2.3 Enablers and Challenges for Sustaining Reductions in Child Labour Risks

In addition to the sustainability dynamics observed within individual components, respondents—particularly from Save the Children and government stakeholders—identified broader factors that may enable or constrain the sustainability of achieved reductions in child labour. These relate to the degree of institutional embedding, multi-actor ownership, alignment with national systems, and wider structural constraints affecting household vulnerability in cocoa-growing communities.

A key enabling factor identified across respondents was the deliberate integration of project structures and approaches within existing government systems. Several stakeholders emphasised that community-level mechanisms such as child protection committees and VSLAs were not standalone project entities but were linked to the mandates of relevant ministries. This institutional anchoring was viewed as an important pathway for continuity beyond the project period, particularly where government actors had already begun integrating activities into their own planning frameworks.

“CPEs, GEs, and AVECs are all associated with government ministries. CPEs and GEs – it’s the Ministry of Family that should install and maintain them. AVECs – it’s the Ministry of Solidarity that manages AVEC creation. So the State will take over.” Regional Government Official

More broadly, the project’s implementation model—based on strong collaboration between communities, government actors, and private sector stakeholders—was identified as a key enabler of sustainability. Respondents emphasised that sustainability depends not only on the design of interventions, but on the extent to which different actors take ownership of processes and outcomes. This was reinforced by the project’s strong alignment with national policies,

institutional frameworks, and legal standards. This alignment went beyond compliance with internal approaches and was intentionally designed to ensure that interventions could be absorbed and continued by the State. The involvement of government actors throughout implementation was therefore seen not only as a coordination mechanism, but as a strategic approach to sustainability.

"But we are in these areas with external stakeholders – principally government actors, also the donor's supply chain, and the communities of course... because they need to take ownership of all these services and all these achievements for us to be able to qualify them as a sustainable theory of change." SCI staff

The holistic and multi-sectoral nature of the approach also supported sustainability by linking community structures and interventions. In particular, the combination of VSLAs and income-generating activities with mechanisms such as child protection committees and COGES was seen as helping sustain participation, motivation, and household resilience, thereby increasing communities' capacity to continue supporting education, child protection, and child labour prevention activities after project closure.

Despite these enabling factors, respondents also identified several significant risks that may undermine the sustainability of outcomes and achieved reductions in child labour. A central concern relates to the limited financial, human, and operational capacity of government institutions to continue activities at scale once external funding ends. While responsibilities may be formally transferred, insufficient resources, limited numbers of frontline workers, and weak operational support were seen as major constraints for social workers, teachers, and other service providers expected to cover large and remote geographical areas. This was perceived as likely to constrain the continuity, reach, and quality of child protection and education services, and ultimately weaken the sustainability of project outcomes over time.

"When the project stops... the state does not have enough resources to sustain what the NGOs have done. So inevitably... it will spread as if nothing had been done. So that could be a threat." Regional Government Official

Weaknesses in transition and handover process were also identified as a sustainability risk. In particular, insufficient transition planning and limited involvement of stakeholders in earlier phases were seen as reducing ownership and continuity. This suggests that sustainability depends not only on institutional alignment, but also on the quality and timing of transition processes.

Beyond programme-level factors, respondents highlighted broader structural constraints affecting the sustainability of child labour reduction. In particular, the complexity of the cocoa value chain, unstable and often insufficient incomes for producers, persistent household poverty, limited opportunities for economic diversification, and exposure to external economic shocks (fluctuation in cocoa prices). These factors may reduce households' ability to sustain positive changes, including hiring adult labour, keeping children in school, or contributing to community-based mechanisms. Entrenched social norms surrounding children's engagement in agricultural work remain an ongoing challenge to sustainable reductions in child labour. In many cocoa-growing communities, children's participation in farming activities has been normalised across generations and continues to be perceived by some families as an expected contribution to household livelihoods and socialisation. While respondents acknowledged that the project contributed to increased awareness of harmful child labour practices, several suggested that

sustained behavioural and normative change would require longer-term engagement and continued awareness-raising efforts beyond the duration of the project.

Overall, these findings suggest that the project incorporated strong design features to support sustainability, particularly through institutional alignment, multi-actor engagement, community ownership, and integration with government systems. However, long-term sustainability remains contingent on broader systemic factors. These include the capacity and resourcing of government institutions, the effectiveness of handover processes, persistent household poverty, entrenched social norms, and structural conditions within the cocoa sector that continue to shape household vulnerability and child labour risks.

5.3 Inclusion & Participation

This section examines qualitative findings relating to equality, inclusion, and participation across Pillar 1 components of the project. It addresses the following evaluation questions:

- Are there any differences in the participation to activities and in the results achieved by different participant groups, such as men, women, boys and girls of different ages, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable people?
- What were the barriers and enablers reported by participants in accessing the programme?
- What is the impact of the involvement of women members of the VSLA groups on gender norms in the targeted communities?

The available evidence addresses these questions unevenly. The first question is partially answered in this section. Findings on differences in results by gender, age group, and other characteristics are discussed under the relevant effectiveness and impact indicators in earlier sections. This section therefore focuses primarily on qualitative evidence related to participation, access, and inclusion across different participant groups.

The second question, on barriers and enablers to accessing the programme, is answered only to a limited extent. Barriers to participation were discussed most explicitly in relation to education activities, while some additional barriers to sustained participation and equitable access to benefits were raised in relation to adolescents and youth. This does not mean that barriers did not exist in other components, but rather that they were not systematically explored or consistently raised across interviews and focus group discussions.

The final question is addressed in the last subsection, which presents the available evidence on VSLA participation and changes in gender norms.

5.3.1 Differences in Participation Across Participant Groups

Overall, findings suggest that the project made deliberate efforts to identify and include vulnerable households and children across the targeted communities. The targeting approach was generally described as community-based and centred on identifying households affected by, or at risk of, hazardous child labour and broader vulnerability. Several stakeholders explained that the project intentionally sought to ensure that the same vulnerable households could benefit across multiple thematic components, including child protection, education, and livelihoods support, reflecting the holistic design of Pillar 1 interventions. Community respondents also generally perceived the project as inclusive, with some indicating that non-participation was more commonly linked to refusal or non-selection based on vulnerability criteria rather than deliberate exclusion.

"The chief brought everyone together to talk about the project. Those who did not benefit are the ones who refused to participate in the project." Female Caregivers, Issia

At the same time, inclusion considerations relating to gender, disability, and specific vulnerable groups were only partially integrated into project design and implementation. While some respondents described the project as generally inclusive across age groups and community categories, Save the Children staff acknowledged that **gender and disability inclusion were not systematically mainstreamed throughout implementation** and were only addressed in a limited way during earlier phases of the project. In particular, there was limited evidence of targeted approaches or tailored support for children with disabilities or children with specific needs.

"Well, on the educational side... A disabled child, perhaps deaf-mute, or without arms... In formal school, a child in those conditions... they can't follow our courses. Because for someone who can't hear and is in the bridging class, we can't... At that level, it wasn't [addressed]." Bridging Class Facilitator, Issia

Respondents indicated that attention to disability inclusion only started to receive greater focus toward the later stages of implementation, suggesting that inclusion of vulnerable groups beyond economic and child labour vulnerability remained a significant gap within the project approach.

Differences in participation were also influenced by how specific activities and structures were designed and perceived within communities. In some cases, participation was shaped by implicit norms about who "belongs" in certain groups. For example, savings groups were widely presented as open to all, yet in practice they were composed primarily of women. While this reflects positive engagement of women, it also points to underlying assumptions, as some respondents noted that young, unmarried women were sometimes excluded due to perceptions that they might leave the community. Similarly, participation in labour-oriented groups varied across locations, with some stakeholders describing these as open to all adults, while others indicated that they were primarily composed of men. This suggests that local norms continued to influence those who participated, even when formal criteria were inclusive.

"A child cannot [join], and a woman also cannot – because you have to use machetes and do complicated work." Community Service Group, Issia

Access was also constrained by eligibility conditions built into certain activities. For instance, participation in child-focused groups was sometimes linked to school attendance, which meant that out-of-school children who may be among the most vulnerable were not always included. This illustrates how design choices, even when unintended, can create barriers for specific groups. Similarly, within youth-focused interventions, participation did not always translate into equal access to benefits. Some participants received materials or equipment while others did not, and the criteria for these allocations were not always clear. This created perceptions of uneven benefit distribution despite broad participation.

*"If you don't go to school, you can't join the group."
Children's Group, Issia*

At the same time, there were positive indications of inclusive engagement in some areas. Mixed participation of different groups, including young men and women, was often described as beneficial, particularly where it encouraged interaction and exchange of ideas.

“No, there is no difference. We were put together – on the contrary, it was really great... By doing that, people manage to exchange and get good ideas.” Adolescents and Youth, Issia

In addition, there was evidence that the project reached diverse population groups, including those from different ethnic backgrounds and poorer households, suggesting that geographic and socio-economic inclusion was relatively strong.

Overall, the findings indicate that the project achieved a moderate level of inclusiveness by reaching some section vulnerable populations and promoting broad participation. However, inclusion was more effective in terms of access than in ensuring equitable participation and benefits across all groups. Structural factors, social norms, and design limitations influenced who participated and who benefited most. As a result, while the project created opportunities for diverse groups to engage, it did not fully address deeper inequalities, particularly for persons with disabilities and groups affected by entrenched gender and social norms.

5.3.2 Barriers to Participation

Evidence on barriers and enablers to programme access was limited and was discussed most explicitly in relation to education activities. This does not necessarily mean that barriers did not exist within other components, but rather that they were less explored during data collection. This may partly reflect that facilitators did not systematically ask this question across all interviews and discussions, and that respondents did not always spontaneously raise the issue.

For education activities, two main barriers were identified, first, some respondents suggested that **parents with lower levels of education** were sometimes less likely to perceive the value of schooling or educational support activities, which limited their children’s participation. Second, **demand for some education activities exceeded the number of places available.** As a result, some interested children could not be enrolled despite demand from communities.

“At the beginning, we were given a set number. When we made the selection, that excluded the others. The others would take stools to sit because their friends were there. It was frustrating.” Reading Space Facilitator, Daloa

Some additional barriers to sustained participation and equitable access to benefits were identified in relation to adolescents and youth. Pregnancy affected the ability of some adolescent girls to complete activities, while low literacy levels limited access to training or opportunities requiring basic reading and writing skills.

5.3.3 VSLA Participation and Changes in Gender Norms

Available evidence on whether women’s participation in VSLA groups influenced gender norms is limited and mixed. As discussed in the Impact and Effectiveness sections, qualitative findings suggest that VSLAs contributed to women’s economic empowerment by increasing their access to savings, loans, income-generating opportunities, and collective financial mechanisms. Respondents described women as more able to contribute to household expenses, manage income-generating activities, and reduce their financial dependence on men. In some cases, this

was associated with improved household cooperation and greater recognition of women's economic contributions.

However, the evidence does not support a conclusion that participation in VSLAs transformed gender norms or household power relations more broadly. Quantitative findings show that women's extreme exclusion from decision-making declined between baseline and endline, with fewer women classified as having very weak decision-making power. However, these gains did not translate into stronger forms of agency: the proportions of women with balanced or strong decision-making power remained low and, in some cases, declined. Domain-level findings also suggest that women's participation remained relatively stronger in household welfare decisions, such as children's schooling, health, and food, while participation in decisions related to productive resources, agricultural inputs, crop choice, livestock, and marketing remained limited.

Importantly, participation in VSLAs was not sufficient on its own to drive significant improvements in women's decision-making power. At endline, women in households with VSLA membership showed slightly higher levels of balanced decision-making than those without VSLA membership, but this difference was not statistically significant. This suggests that while VSLAs may strengthen women's access to resources, social capital, and confidence, household-level participation in savings groups does not automatically translate into individual-level authority or control over resources.

Overall, the evaluation can speak more confidently to perceived improvements in women's economic participation, financial agency, and contribution to household wellbeing than to broader changes in gender norms. The findings suggest that VSLAs helped reduce women's financial dependence and supported their role in household economic life, but they did not substantially shift entrenched gendered power relations over productive assets, income management, or household decision-making. This points to the need for more intentional gender-transformative approaches that go beyond economic strengthening to actively support women's agency, influence, and control over resources within households and communities.

Pillar 2 – Programmatic Framework

This section presents the main qualitative findings on the effectiveness and uptake of the Pillar 2: Programmatic Framework. It addresses the evaluation question:

Are suppliers and their cooperatives applying the concepts and methodologies they have learned?

Drawing on key informant interviews with Save the Children staff, suppliers, and cooperatives, it examines the level of adoption and implementation of the Framework, as well as the factors that enabled or hindered its uptake.

The section also highlights important methodological and analytical considerations, including limited direct reference to the Programmatic Framework by suppliers and cooperatives, challenges in attributing observed changes to Pillar 2, and lessons emerging from its implementation. Given these limitations, the analysis focuses primarily on adoption and implementation processes, while evidence on impact and sustainability remains limited.

5.4 Effectiveness and Uptake - Level of adoption and implementation of Pillar 2 Programmatic Framework

5.4.1 Limits in Assessing Adoption of the Programmatic Framework

Assessing the level of uptake and implementation of the Pillar 2 Programmatic Framework proved methodologically challenging because, in practice, suppliers rarely responded directly about the Programmatic Framework (Pillar 2) when asked about it. Instead, most supplier respondents referred to the Ferrero Child Labour Guidelines (The Parallel Project), particularly the ten directives and the action plans developed to implement them. As a result, direct evidence on adoption of the Programmatic Framework comes primarily from Save the Children staff, while most supplier evidence relates to The Parallel Project.

This is itself an important finding: it suggests that the Programmatic Framework was less visible and less salient to suppliers by the time of the evaluation, while the Guidelines had become the main operational reference point in their day-to-day work.

This pattern is best explained by differences in timing, intensity, and operationalisation. The Programmatic Framework was introduced earlier (2021–2022), largely through online training during COVID, with some in-person MEAL sessions and follow-up support. In contrast, the Child Labour Guidelines were implemented more recently (2023–2024) through intensive, structured engagement. This included training, development of action plans, cascading of training to cooperatives, and regular quarterly review meetings, which functioned as mechanisms for follow-up, accountability, and performance monitoring. Although a refresher on the Programmatic Framework was included in the 2024 and 2025 training, these structured mechanisms focused on the Guidelines. As a result, suppliers' engagement, learning, and reporting were anchored in The Parallel Project rather than Pillar 2.

"as I said, gradually, it's about seeing how we integrate the directives, the Ferrero guidelines, into our daily practices, since we have an action plan that we must respect, that we must implement, and also the partner cooperative with which we work – how they will integrate this action plan into their daily activities. And so we try to reorganise since even the quarterly and annual reports integrate these actions, these activities. So we are forced to adapt and see how we regularly collect information that we can share in quarterly and annual reports." Ferrero Supplier

Additional structural factors reinforced this dynamic. Staff turnover among suppliers was high, meaning many respondents had not participated in the original Pillar 2 training. At the same time, implementation of the Programmatic Framework and the Guidelines was voluntary, and not linked to Ferrero requirements. Finally, the Parallel Project was supported by clearer operational mechanisms, such as action plans, indicators, cascading training, and quarterly reviews, which made it more concrete, enforceable, and easier for respondents to recall.

5.4.2 Reported Adoption of the Programmatic Framework based on Save the Children Staff

Direct evidence from Save the Children staff nevertheless suggests that the Programmatic Framework was partially adopted by some suppliers and cooperatives, particularly those that were more engaged and receptive to technical support and implementing related child prevention activities. Save the Children staff described a package of support that went beyond training and included access to online library, field visits, tailored recommendations, and

technical meetings. According to this perspective, some suppliers did revise their methodologies and integrate elements of Save the Children's approaches into their operations.

"Not just training. We also conducted field visits... It was more to understand their working environment... to discuss with staff, to look at their indicators, the dashboard and all that, and share recommendations that are best adjusted, most consequential relative to their operations." SCI Staff

However, suppliers most clearly recalled the elements that had been operationalised under the Parallel Project, not the Programmatic Framework. They described action plans, cascading training, indicators, and quarterly reviews. These mechanisms appear to have supported uptake by creating structured follow-up, continuous engagement, and accountability. This contrast suggests that weaker recall and evidence on Pillar 2 are linked less to its relevance, and more to the absence of similarly strong operational and accountability mechanisms. It also indicates that the Programmatic Framework was not strongly institutionalised as a distinct reference point among suppliers, even where some of its concepts and methodologies may have influenced practice. Adoption was therefore uneven and selective rather than broad and systematic. Save the Children staff described strong engagement by some suppliers and cooperatives, but limited interest from others. This unevenness was linked not only to the voluntary nature of implementation, but also to the fact that some suppliers were initially more focused on budget utilisation than on methodology or quality of implementation.

"There are some suppliers, especially Tier 2... that really learned a lot and follow up with us very well... But there are some others that are really not interested in in doing so." SCI Staff

Another important constraint was the misalignment between Save the Children's technical support timeline and suppliers' annual work planning cycles for the first two years of implementation. Suppliers' workplans and budgets were often approved well in advance, leaving limited room to incorporate new approaches once training had already taken place.

The interviews also revealed an important attribution challenge. When suppliers and cooperatives described community-level interventions in child protection, community development, education, or adolescents and youth empowerment, it was often unclear whether these reflected the influence of the Pillar 2 Programmatic Framework, the Parallel Project measures, suppliers' pre-existing programming, or an interaction between these. Some suppliers described refining existing approaches, strengthening community protection committees, involving women in income-generating activities, or expanding community interventions in relation to the Child Labour Guidelines, particularly the measure on addressing root causes of child labour. This suggests that Save the Children's contribution often lay in strengthening, structuring, or expanding existing interventions rather than introducing entirely new ones, but the available evidence does not allow these changes to be attributed specifically to the Programmatic Framework.

5.4.3 Challenges Affecting Adoption and Implementation of the Programmatic Framework

It is important to note that all findings on hindering factors/challenges related to the adoption and implementation of the Programmatic Framework are based on Save the Children staff perspectives. Suppliers and cooperatives did not report directly on Pillar 2, and therefore the analysis reflects the views of those involved in delivering technical support rather than those expected to adopt the framework.

- **Limited prioritisation of methodologies and focus on budget utilisation:** Some suppliers initially prioritised budget utilisation over methodological quality, limiting uptake of the Programmatic Framework.
- **Voluntary nature of implementation limiting enforcement:** Because adoption was not mandatory, uptake depended largely on supplier willingness and commitment.
- **Early timing, limited reinforcement, and high staff turnover:** Initial training took place early in the project and was followed by limited reinforcement before the 2024 refresher. Combined with high staff turnover, this reduced institutional memory and continuity.
- **Limited realism of expectations given required investments:** Finally, respondents highlighted that full implementation of the Programmatic Framework may not be realistic given the level of investment required. From this perspective, expecting suppliers to adopt a holistic, multi-sectoral approach comparable to that of Save the Children exceeds what can reasonably be expected within their operational and commercial constraints.

The Parallel Project – The Integrated Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation model (CLMR)

The evaluation focused on only requirement 5 of the parallel project, the Integrated Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation model. This section presents the main qualitative findings on the implementation, adoption, effectiveness, and sustainability of the integrated Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation model (CLMR). Drawing on key informant interviews with Save the Children staff, suppliers, cooperatives, and other project stakeholders, it examines the extent to which the model has strengthened public-private collaboration, improved linkages with the national child protection system, and supported more coordinated approaches to identification, referral, case management, remediation, and follow-up. The section addresses the following evaluation questions:

- Did the integrated monitoring and remediation model, designed by the Save the Children team for Ferrero suppliers participating in project activities, have a positive effect on mutual understanding and collaboration between the private sector and the national protection system?
- Has the pilot adoption of this model, and therefore closer collaboration between the national system and the private sector, better supported the identification of cases of child labour or other vulnerabilities?
- Have there been more cases remedied and faster remediation?
- Has the collaboration with private sector transformed the system in the long term, bringing positive changes?

The analysis focuses on the adoption and effectiveness of the integrated CLMR, the challenges affecting its implementation, and the factors shaping its sustainability over time.

5.5 Adoption and Effectiveness of the Integrated CLMR

Overall, the integrated CLMR was effective in initiating a shift from parallel, private-led child labour monitoring and remediation (the International Cocoa Initiative promoted Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation System (CLMRS), well known and widely adopted by cocoa supply chain actors in Cote d'Ivoire), toward a more coordinated model linked to the national child

protection system. It strengthened collaboration between private actors and state services, improved understanding of roles, expanded referral practices, and demonstrated the added value of more holistic, case management-based approaches, which enabled a better understanding of underlying vulnerabilities and root causes beyond immediate child labour activities. These changes were facilitated by structured engagement processes led by Save the Children which helped align actors around a shared model and operationalise initial linkages with social services.

However, findings also show clearly that the integrated CLMR was not yet fully adopted or fully implemented. Adoption remained partial, gradual, and uneven across suppliers and cooperatives, reflecting differences in engagement and significant structural constraints, particularly the under-resourcing of social centres, which affected the timeliness and continuity of assessment, case planning, remediation, and follow-up.

These constraints are central to understanding effectiveness. The model was not contested in principle; rather, it was only partially implemented because the state system lacked the human, financial, and logistical capacity to consistently perform the case management role assigned to it. While facilitated dialogue and growing recognition of the value of social workers supported buy-in, limited responsiveness of the system slowed implementation and, in some cases, reinforced mistrust among private actors. This led to continued reliance on parallel or hybrid approaches in which identification and remediation remained largely private-led and referral to state services was selective or delayed.

In practice, the limited capacity of social centres also created dependence on suppliers to finance core operational functions, particularly transport and per diem for case assessment and follow-up, shifting part of the implementation burden onto private actors. Where such costs were not planned or budgeted, this contributed to delays and, in some cases, reluctance to refer cases.

Additional factors – including the need to align two historically separate systems, absence of direct contractual leverage over suppliers, absence of referral-related performance indicators, data management and confidentiality constraints, uneven protection platform functionality, and limited cooperative capacity – further shaped how the model was applied in practice. Together, these constraints did not simply slow implementation; they shaped how the model was applied and contributed to uneven adoption and adaptation across actors.

5.5.1 Strengthening Collaboration between Private Actors and the National Protection System

The integrated CLMR model contributed to strengthening collaboration between cooperatives, suppliers, and state child protection services, but this progress was uneven across actors and stages. Compared with traditional CLMRS, where government services were not involved in the process, the integrated model introduced more direct interaction with social centres and created new channels for communication, referral, and follow-up. Annex 9 provides a comparison between the integrated CLMR and the traditional model.

This process was facilitated by Save the Children's existing relationships with government actors and its institutional credibility within the child protection system. These relationships reduced entry barriers, accelerated trust-building, and made it easier to connect private actors with relevant state services. The willingness of many social service and government actors to engage with private-sector stakeholders also helped legitimise the integrated approach, even though their ability to participate consistently was constrained by limited resources.

In practice, this ranged from initial linkages and dialogue in some cases to more operational forms of engagement in others. These include routine exchanges, case referral, and participation in coordination platforms, and more formalised communication around case transmission and follow-up. This progression was supported by joint training sessions, workshops, regular meetings, and deliberate efforts to connect cooperative agents with decentralised social workers, which helped actors understand mandates, establish contacts, and begin working through a shared system. This facilitation role was particularly important given the historic separation between private-sector CLMRS mechanisms and public child protection services, helping reduce mistrust and create space for more structured collaboration.

“And this process, with this programme with Ferrero, has allowed us... to actually interact with state institutions like the social centres. That's not something we systematically took into account when we were fighting against child labour long before... But today, for all the training or all the cases found, we have that direct interaction with the state, and we know that to truly eradicate...” Ferrero Supplier

The model also improved clarity of roles. Suppliers and cooperatives increasingly recognised that social workers are the mandated actors for case assessment and case management, while private actors have an important role in identification, referral, and support to remediation. This represents a significant shift from traditional private-led CLMRS approaches, where remediation was often managed internally by suppliers or cooperatives.

“The social centre is the most appropriate structure for remedying child labour. Because there are certain remediation actions we carry out – but which cannot truly resolve the problem in certain cases.” Cooperative

The involvement of social workers also strengthened the perceived legitimacy and authority of interventions at community and household level. Respondents indicated that caregivers were more likely to take follow-up and remediation seriously when state representatives were involved, compared with interventions led by private actors alone. This suggests that the value of the integrated CLMR was not only procedural, but also relational and institutional: by linking cases to recognised public child protection actors, the model increased the weight and credibility of child protection messages and follow-up actions. However, improved linkages and understanding of roles did not always translate into fully operational collaboration. In practice, collaboration remained partial, it often did not progress beyond initial engagement and referral, with key components such as case assessment and joint case planning delayed and constrained by the limited capacity of social services. In some cases, suppliers reported that cooperation with social centres had not yet effectively transitioned from referral to operational case management.

“when you go to do follow-up and there's a state agent with you, parents take the matter seriously...” Ferrero Supplier

Overall, the integrated CLMR strengthened mutual understanding and made collaboration between private actors and the national protection system more structured. However, collaboration was not yet fully institutionalised, as it often remained concentrated around referral and did not consistently progress to joint assessment, case planning, and follow-up.

5.5.2 Identification, Referral, and Case Management of Child Labour Cases and other Vulnerabilities

Findings suggest that the pilot adoption of the integrated CLMR supported improved identification and referral of child labour cases and other vulnerabilities, although evidence on full remediation remains more limited. Respondents reported an increase over time not only in the number of cases referred and the number of suppliers and cooperatives engaging in referral practices, but also in the nature of referrals themselves. While referrals existed before the project and were typically limited to more complex or severe cases, respondents highlighted that between 2022 and 2025 referrals expanded and became more routine and systematic, including among actors beyond the initial project areas.

The availability of practical tools and structured guidance also supported this shift. Referral forms, documentation tools, and case management guidance helped reduce ambiguity around how cases should be transmitted, recorded, and followed up, making the integrated model easier to apply in practice. The integrated model also improved the potential completeness of support by shifting attention beyond the immediate child labour incident to the broader vulnerability of the child and household. Traditional CLMR approaches were often described as focusing mainly on the work performed by the child and on rapid remediation, sometimes through cash-based support. In contrast, the integrated model positioned social workers as case managers responsible for social inquiry, assessment of root causes, and identification of more appropriate responses.

“The social inquiry allows them to understand the deep-rooted causes within that household that caused the child to be compelled or subjected to child labour. So in principle, if you have a good social worker who carries out a proper analysis, the actions you propose should enable the problem to be resolved on a lasting basis.” Ferrero Supplier

This more comprehensive approach was viewed as a key added value of the integrated CLMR. Suppliers described examples where social workers were able to identify vulnerabilities beyond child labour itself, including neglect, lack of birth registration, household conflict, or school access barriers. In these cases, the integrated model created potential for more durable remediation because support could be linked to the child’s broader protection and welfare needs.

Evidence of concrete child-level outcomes was available but limited. Respondents cited cases where children were removed from child labour, received follow-up, or accessed services through the involvement of social centres. These examples suggest that the model can generate deeper and more appropriate responses when the full case management process functions. However, the evidence does not yet support a conclusion that remediation improved at scale. Several respondents noted that the impact on children and families remained limited in visibility, largely because implementation was still partial and because many referred cases had not yet progressed through assessment, case planning, remediation, and follow-up.

5.5.3 Timeliness of Assessment and Remediation

The evaluation did not include quantitative data measuring the time between identification, referral, assessment, and remediation. Findings on the speed of remediation are therefore based on stakeholder perceptions rather than measured timelines. These perceptions suggest that the integrated CLMR improved coordination, particularly through the introduction of joint case

management and collaborative decision-making on remediation plans between suppliers and social services. However, the process was often slowed by the limited social centre capacity.

"Among all the centres to which we sent child labour referrals, I don't think, out of 500 [referrals], more than 2 responded... so there is this slowness which can be a difficulty, and one can follow up once, 2 or 3 times." Ferrero Supplier

"The difficulty is that they really don't have the means... they don't have sufficiently trained personnel... in the execution of remediation, it can take time." Ferrero Supplier

Delays were most frequently reported at the assessment stage. Since social worker assessment is the entry point into state-led case management, delays at this stage affected the entire process, including case planning, implementation of remediation actions, and follow-up. The model's effectiveness is therefore constrained not by its design, but by the capacity of the state system to implement it. Traditional CLMRS approaches were often faster because private actors-controlled identification and remediation directly and could implement simple forms of support quickly. The integrated model offered the potential for more legitimate, comprehensive, and sustainable remediation, but relied on an under-resourced public system. This slower pace also reinforced mistrust among some private actors, who perceived traditional CLMRS as more responsive and continued to rely on them for faster remediation.

5.5.4 Partial Implementation and Deviations from the Model

Implementation deviations provide strong evidence that the integrated CLMR was not fully operational. These deviations were not isolated exceptions, but a systematic adaptation to constraints, particularly delays in assessment, case planning, and follow-up. Several respondents described cases where referral to social centres had started, but the system had not yet moved to fully integrated case management. In others, hybrid models emerged: cases were referred, but cooperatives or suppliers continued to plan and implement remediation themselves without waiting for social centres to conduct assessment and case planning. The expectation was that social workers would later review the support provided and advise whether it was sufficient or whether additional actions were required.

"We do quarterly reports for the client... when we want to do referrals, the remediation actions that have been taken for those children are recorded so that the social centres can know: 'Ah, it's true, we were referred cases, but here is what has already been done.' So for the social centre to now tell us... whether it is sufficient for the case, or... here are other things that could be added." Ferrero Supplier

These deviations do not suggest rejection of the integrated model. Rather, they show how implementation was adapted in response to delays, limited social service capacity, and the need for suppliers to continue meeting their own child labour remediation obligations. In practice, referral often functioned as an additional step alongside private-led remediation, rather than as the basis for fully state-led case management. This limited the extent to which the integrated CLMR replaced parallel systems.

5.5.5 Challenges affecting adoption and implementation of the Integrated CLMR model

- **Structural under-resourcing of social services as the primary constraint:** The most critical constraint affecting the implementation of the integrated CLMR is the structural under-resourcing of the state child protection system, particularly social centres. This results in a

system where case assessment is delayed and often dependent on supplier support, particularly for transportation and per diem. Even when such support is provided, case processing depends on the availability of overstretched social workers, leading to delays across the entire case management cycle, and accumulation of unresolved cases.

- **Dependence on suppliers to finance core state functions (transportation and per diem):** Closely linked to the above was the dependence of social centres on suppliers to finance core operational functions, particularly transportation and per diem for field visits. While this support enabled some case assessments and follow-up to take place, it also blurred roles and placed part of the burden of public service delivery on private actors. Where such costs were not planned or budgeted, implementation was delayed.

"...when we ask social services... to go and visit, they say they don't have the means... they want us to give them... money for fuel, money for per diems..." Ferrero Supplier

- **Integration of public and private systems requiring institutional alignment:** The integrated CLMR required aligning two systems that had historically operated separately and according to different mandates, incentives, and accountability structures. This created coordination challenges, especially in defining responsibilities for case management and remediation and in establishing effective collaboration between public and private actors. This challenge was intensified by the structure of the cocoa supply chain. Multinational suppliers often work with multiple buyers and operate within complex internal compliance and decision-making systems. As a result, adopting referrals to social services and integrating into a state-led system required substantial internal and external alignment, slowing implementation and reducing consistency across actors.

"Well, it should be said that we're talking about multinationals... these are large entities, and they don't allow themselves to move like that without certain internal consideration elements...being sufficiently clarified... And it's also a discussion topic on which one has to work with Ferrero. These suppliers too have emphasised that they are certainly with Ferrero the chocolate maker, but also with other chocolate makers. So any change in their operations could... affect their commercial relations, perhaps with other chocolate makers." SCI Staff

- **Lack of harmonisation across CLMR models:** The coexistence of multiple CLMR models with different tools, processes, and data requirements created inefficiencies and duplication. The absence of harmonised tools and procedures increased the operational burden on implementing actors and reduced coherence across systems.
- **Limited capacity and incentives at cooperative level:** At the cooperative level, limited human resources, lack of autonomy, unclear contractual arrangements, and absence of dedicated funding for remediation constrained active participation in the integrated CLMR. These constraints reduced cooperatives' ability to take ownership of the system and contributed to partial or slow adoption. In some cases, these challenges were further compounded by limited engagement of cooperative decision-makers in CLMR-related meetings and trainings.
- **Limited contractual clarity and leverage over suppliers:** The implementation of the integrated CLMR was constrained by the absence of direct contractual relationships between the project and Ferrero's suppliers, as well as limited contractual clarity during the pilot phase. As engagement was mediated through Ferrero, this reduced direct leverage

over suppliers, while unclear contractual arrangements created ambiguity around roles, responsibilities, and expectations. This made implementation dependent on suppliers' internal priorities and understanding, slowing progress and limiting consistency across actors.

"First, it should be said that the supply chain is very complex. There are many stakeholders who do not necessarily have the same level of understanding and commitment. So that is really a blocking point. And as I was saying earlier, although we are in the pilot phase, it is not clearly defined – especially contractually. So often when we are stuck at a given point, they do not understand what we are doing, which means we could not really advance beyond a certain level." Ferrero Supplier

- **Absence of supplier indicators on referrals limiting accountability:** The implementation of the integrated CLMR was constrained by the absence of specific indicators set by Ferrero for suppliers on referrals to social services, which would have strengthened accountability and incentivised consistent engagement. While suppliers operate within structured performance frameworks, referrals were not embedded as a monitored requirement, and therefore not systematically prioritised.
- **Data management and confidentiality constraints:** Challenges related to data sharing and confidentiality also constrained the implementation of the integrated CLMR. The system requires the exchange of sensitive case-level information across private and public actors; however, confidentiality concerns and regulatory constraints limited the fluidity of information sharing. Some private sector actors cited existing agreements with national authorities as requiring prior authorisation before making referrals, leading to inconsistent practices across suppliers. While some suppliers proceeded with referrals, others remained reluctant, affecting the implementation of the integrated CLMR.
- **Limited functionality of child protection platforms and low cooperative engagement:** The effectiveness of the integrated CLMR was further constrained by the limited functionality of child protection platforms and low participation of cooperatives. While these platforms are intended to serve as coordination and case management mechanisms linking public and private actors, in practice they were not functioning consistently across most regions. Operational constraints, including lack of budget to support meetings, reduced the regularity of platform activities and discouraged participation. Additionally, cooperative participation was limited, as some did not fully understand or prioritise the role of the platforms, resulting in irregular attendance and weak collaboration. In some cases, the limited involvement of cooperative decision-makers further weakened commitment, as staff who attended meetings or trainings did not always have the authority to translate participation into action. Together, these factors limited the use of platforms for coordinated case management and access to available remediation services.

"In many regions the platforms are not functioning, and when you ask why, it is simply because no one is going to cover the refreshments when they come to attend. So when you see that the platforms are not working, it is difficult to really get things going, because in principle the cases – yes, you are asking us to hold case management meetings with the social workers. But in principle, these cases should also be brought before the platforms, to see who can benefit from existing programmes available to the child. Because the remediation budget is not always sufficient." Ferrero Supplier

- **Limited trust in public systems and partial reliance on parallel remediation:** Limited confidence in the responsiveness of social services led some actors to bypass or complement the system with their own remediation actions, particularly for less complex cases.

5.6 Sustainability of the integrated CLMR

Overall, the sustainability of the integrated CLMR appears uncertain and uneven. The model has created important foundations for continued collaboration between private actors and the national child protection system, but its long-term effectiveness remains dependent on the capacity, resourcing, and coordination of state structures. One enabling factor is that collaboration between private actors and the state is increasingly reinforced by broader regulatory and market dynamics, rather than relying only on project support. Evolving legal and compliance requirements appear to be pushing suppliers toward greater engagement with national systems, suggesting that some level of collaboration is likely to continue beyond the project period. The involvement of trained social workers was also viewed as a valuable practice worth sustaining, as it strengthens the legitimacy of child labour responses and enables more comprehensive assessment of children's vulnerabilities.

However, the depth and regularity of collaboration may decline without continued facilitation. Joint meetings, coordination, shared follow-up, and engagement through protection platforms may weaken if they are not institutionalised within regular systems and budgets. This suggests that while the model may remain relevant in principle, its practical functioning depends on whether coordination mechanisms continue to be supported.

The main sustainability risk remains the structural under-resourcing of social centres. As discussed above, limited staffing, transport, operational budgets, and resources for follow-up constrain their ability to sustain case management functions at scale. This also creates continued reliance on suppliers and cooperatives to finance core operational needs, particularly transport and field visits. Without additional investment in frontline social services, the integrated CLMR risks remaining dependent on private-sector support rather than becoming fully embedded within the public child protection system. At local level, sustainability also depends on the capacity and commitment of cooperatives. Where cooperatives are well structured, have engaged leadership, and understand their role in referral and follow-up, they may continue to support implementation. However, where cooperative capacity, autonomy, or decision-maker engagement remains limited, continued participation is likely to be weaker.

Overall, the integrated CLMR has strong relevance and some foundations for sustainability, particularly through improved public-private linkages, growing recognition of the role of social workers, and external regulatory pressure for system-linked approaches. However, its scalability and long-term effectiveness remain uncertain unless social centres are better resourced, coordination mechanisms are institutionalised, and cooperatives are supported to maintain their role within the system.

5.7 Alignment with National Policies through Innovative Approaches

This section presents qualitative findings on the extent to which the project's design, objectives, and implementation approaches were aligned with national policies, institutional mandates, and donor priorities. It also examines the approaches that different stakeholders perceived as innovative and distinctive, and how these approaches were viewed as strengthening alignment with, and practical implementation of, national sectoral policies and systems.

The section addresses the following evaluation questions:

- To what extent was the project's design and objectives aligned with national policies and donor priorities?
- What are the distinguishing innovative approaches of the project, and how have these innovations strengthened alignment with and compliance of national sectoral policies and their modelling and operationalisation?

The analysis first examines overall alignment at project level, including the holistic approach and the project's work through government systems. It then presents findings by component, covering child protection, education, community development, and adolescents and youth programming.

5.7.1 Overall Alignment with National Priorities and Systems

Overall, findings suggest that the project was closely aligned with national priorities, particularly Côte d'Ivoire's commitment to addressing child labour. Government and Save the Children stakeholders consistently emphasised that this alignment was reflected not only in compliance with national policy frameworks, but also in the project's contribution to operationalising and strengthening of national systems and procedures. In particular, alignment was achieved by working within government structures, reinforcing existing mandates, and supporting the practical implementation of national policies at decentralised level.

"As I said, since 2012, Côte d'Ivoire has inscribed the fight against child labour as a priority in its social project. Save the Children occupies a part of this project. When an organisation intervenes in a country, its actions must align with the national protection policy." Regional Government Official

A central innovative feature of the project is the holistic approach itself, which stakeholders identified as innovative in its operationalisation rather than its conceptual design. While multi-sectoral approaches to child labour are widely promoted, the project translated this model into integrated practice across protection, education, livelihoods, and youth components, implemented in close collaboration with government actors at all levels. This was perceived as strengthening alignment by embedding interventions within national systems and institutional mandates, rather than creating parallel delivery structures.

The approach also reflects national child protection policy, which emphasises addressing the child within the family and broader environment.

"I don't know if it can be defined as 'innovative', but the holistic approach... has been operationalised, and I haven't seen this in any other project yet... the fact that it was done in close collaboration with the relevant government was... a crucial aspect." SCI Staff

"Yes – I think all these activities – Save took care of everything that is, the entire spectrum of child protection... that is truly what is called for in national protection policy." Regional Government Official

5.7.2 Alignment and Innovation – Child Protection

In the child protection component, the main innovations identified were the integrated CLMR and CPIMS+, and support to national case management and coordination systems. These innovations contributed to alignment primarily through strengthening systems, procedures, and the operationalisation of national child protection mechanisms.

The integrated CLMR was described as an innovation, particularly in how it strengthened collaboration between private actors and social services and expanded the identification of children's vulnerabilities beyond child labour alone. By linking community-level identification with formal case management structures, the approach was perceived to support a more comprehensive response aligned with national protection systems. However, as discussed in detail in the CLMR section, its effectiveness in strengthening the national system remains constrained by limitations in social centre capacity, including human resources, funding, and operational reach.

CPIMS+ was perceived as an important shift from basic data collection to a comprehensive case management system aligned with national standards, including integration of the full case management cycle and improved documentation practices among social workers. This contributed to strengthening consistency and quality of case management processes within government systems.

Stakeholders also highlighted the project's contribution, alongside UNICEF, to strengthening national child protection procedures and systems. This included support to the development and rollout of national standardised case management SOPs, training and participation of social workers in these processes, and institutionalisation of harmonised case management approaches within social centres. The project was also perceived to have supported alternative care procedures, particularly foster care, by helping translate national decrees into operational procedures and facilitating their implementation at local level.

"We also have – as evidence... the national policies or national guides to which we contributed enormously. For example, the decree on regulating foster families, also regulating transit or reception institutions." SCI Staff

In addition, the project was also perceived to have contributed to strengthening national data and monitoring systems, including harmonisation of child labour data through CGODEC and participation in national statistical processes.

Beyond procedures and systems, one government stakeholder highlighted the project's role in the operationalisation of national governance mechanisms, particularly SOSTECI. While SOSTECI existed prior to the project, the respondent emphasised that the project contributed to making it functional at decentralised level through outreach, establishment of sub-prefecture committees, and capacity building.

In addition to these contributions at system and operational levels, the project was also perceived to have supported national-level planning processes, particularly by enabling the Ministry of Women, Family and Children to convene a multi-sectoral, multi-actor process to define priorities related to women, families, and children, and to contribute to the development of the National Development Plan (PND) 2026–2030.

5.7.3 Alignment and Innovation – Education

In education, alignment was achieved through both the use of national approaches and operational support to policy implementation. Stakeholders emphasised that project-supported education activities were consistent with national teaching approaches and regulations. Stakeholders frequently described bridging classes as an innovation, particularly in their application within underserved communities. While not unique to the project, their implementation in targeted areas was perceived as enabling the practical operationalisation of the 2015 compulsory education policy, by providing pathways for out-of-school children to

reintegrate into formal education. In this sense, the project's contribution was primarily through translating existing policy commitments into accessible and context-adapted interventions.

"It remains an innovation in the sense that... through bridging classes, we manage to put into practice the compulsory schooling policy desired by the government of Côte d'Ivoire since 2015."
SCI Staff

Beyond bridging classes, stakeholders also identified a range of pedagogical approaches as innovative, including both project-specific methods such as Literacy Boost and socio-emotional learning (SEL), and nationally developed approaches such as PEC-CP and PNAPAS. The approaches perceived as most innovative varied across respondents, reflecting differences in exposure and experience. For some, innovations were associated with improved literacy outcomes and child-centred learning through Literacy Boost and SEL, while others emphasised the value of targeted teaching approaches promoted through PEC and PNAPAS. The use of national pedagogical frameworks reinforced alignment with government systems, ensuring that project-supported teaching methods remained consistent with national standards and avoided the creation of parallel models.

For some stakeholders, introduction of school canteens to educational activities was a key innovation; although as is noted elsewhere in this report, where canteens were not sustained or introduced, their lack was a hindering factor to effectiveness.

5.7.4 Alignment and Innovation – Community Development

In community development, stakeholders identified Community Service Groups (CSGs) and Community Action Planning (CAP) as distinct innovations, each contributing differently to alignment with national priorities.

Community Services Groups were considered innovative primarily due to their role in providing affordable and organised adult labour, offering a practical alternative to the use of children in agricultural work. This was perceived as directly addressing a key structural driver of child labour, while aligning with broader national priorities on rural livelihoods and labour organisation.

"There are also community service groups – that too is innovative, because by equipping them and training them, they become a labour force for the community – an adult labour force for the community. This allows them not to use their children or – what is the expression – put children in the plantations to do the work that these groups should be doing." Social Centre, Daloa

By contrast, CAP was considered innovative in the way it reconfigured planning processes, enabling communities, in partnership with state actors, to identify and prioritise their own needs. Stakeholders emphasised that this approach represented a shift from centrally driven planning towards more participatory and context-responsive processes, which could strengthen alignment by ensuring that interventions reflect local realities and could potentially inform national planning approaches.

5.7.5 Alignment and Innovation – Adolescents and Youth

For adolescents and youth, stakeholders identified Farmer Field Schools and climate-related training as innovative approaches, particularly due to their practical and context-based design. These interventions were described as aligned with national priorities on youth employment

and skills development, with the project facilitating access to existing government systems rather than creating parallel pathways.

Across components, stakeholders consistently described the project's contribution to alignment as occurring primarily through the operationalisation of existing policies, strengthening of procedures, and activation of national systems, rather than direct policy reform. The project's distinguishing contribution therefore lies in how it translated policy into practice, embedded interventions within national systems, and supported their functioning at decentralised level, while remaining dependent on the capacity of government structures for sustained implementation.

5.8 Satisfaction with Services and Project Engagement

This section presents both quantitative and qualitative findings on stakeholder satisfaction with the project activities, services and engagement process. The quantitative findings focus specifically on community-level satisfaction, capturing caregivers' perceptions of project activities and services. The qualitative findings complement this by providing perspectives from a wider range of stakeholders, including community members and structures, frontline service providers, government actors at national and regional levels, and private-sector actors involved in the implementation of the integrated Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation System (CLMRS). This section addresses the following evaluation questions:

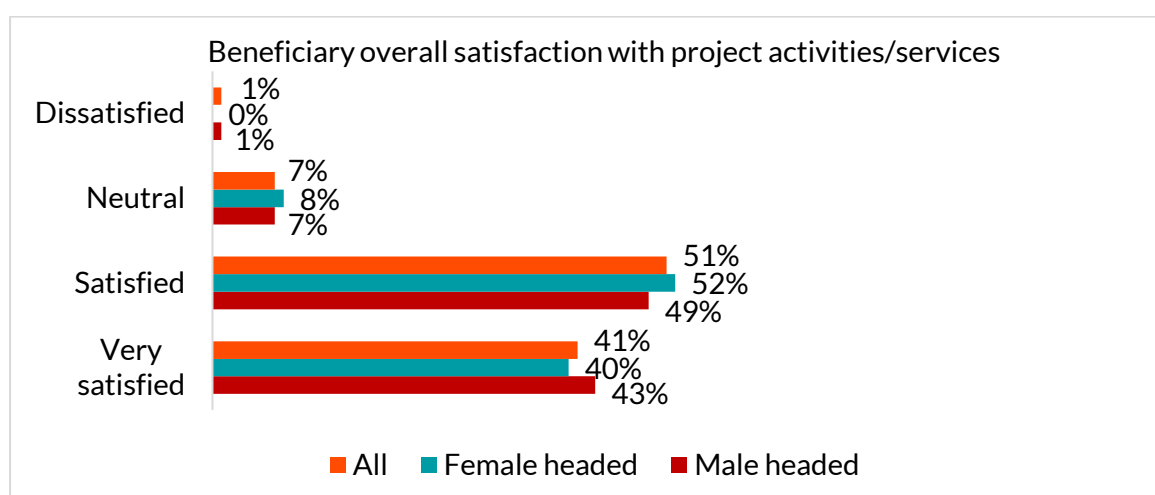
- Are participants of different target groups satisfied with the project activities?
- Do they think the project has brought a change to their lives, or to their ways of working?

The first question is addressed sufficiently. Satisfaction with activities and services was directly discussed by several respondent groups and measured quantitatively among caregivers. The second question, on changes in participants' lives and ways of working, is discussed under the relevant impact and effectiveness sections. The qualitative evidence on satisfaction with services and support should be interpreted with caution because satisfaction questions were not consistently asked or answered across all focus groups and interviews. As a result, the qualitative evidence presented reflects only the perspectives of respondents who explicitly addressed satisfaction. This limitation is particularly relevant for the CLMRS component, where direct feedback was more limited and often inferred indirectly through broader reflections on implementation and system performance.

5.8.1 Satisfaction of Community Members and Community Structures

Quantitative findings (Figure 8) indicate high levels of satisfaction with project activities and services among caregivers. Across both male- and female-headed households, more than 90% of respondents reported being either satisfied or very satisfied, with slightly higher levels of satisfaction among female-headed households. Only a small proportion of respondents reported neutral views, and dissatisfaction was minimal.

Figure 8: Beneficiary overall satisfaction with project activities/services



These results suggest that the project was broadly well-received at community level. Qualitative findings reinforce this overall positive assessment, while also providing deeper insight into which interventions drove satisfaction and where important gaps remained. Community respondents most often linked satisfaction to visible and practical benefits for children and households, particularly in relation to education support, VSLAs, and child protection awareness.

"Among the projects... what we are most satisfied with is the school creation project and the VSLA project." Female Caregivers, Zoukougbeu

Respondents expressed strong satisfaction with child protection-related interventions, particularly awareness-raising on children's rights and observed changes in how children are treated within households and communities. These changes were perceived as important shifts in attitudes and practices, contributing to improved protection and wellbeing.

Community members also expressed strong satisfaction with education-related interventions, particularly bridging classes, school construction or improvement, provision of school materials, and increased access to schooling. These interventions were seen as highly visible and directly beneficial to children.

"The establishment of the bridging class pleased me greatly, so I am satisfied." COGES, Zoukougbeu

Among community development interventions, VSLAs emerged as one of the most consistently appreciated components. Satisfaction was closely linked to the tangible and immediate economic benefits, including improved household financial stability, women's economic participation and social cohesion.

At the same time, qualitative findings highlighted areas of mixed or limited satisfaction. While community service groups were appreciated by the wider community, satisfaction among GSC members themselves was more limited due to concerns around quality, appropriateness, and functionality of equipment provided.

Satisfaction with the adolescent and youth (A&Y) activities was more mixed. Some young people expressed appreciation for training opportunities; others highlighted important gaps related to the training depth, relevance, and limited coverage of the training. Respondents also raised concerns that some youth received materials or equipment for self-employment, while others

did not, contributing to the perception of unequal support and insufficient assistance to transition to livelihood

"We did not receive any of these materials." Adolescents and Youth, Zoukougbeu

Water access emerged as one of the most consistent and significant areas of dissatisfaction across communities. Respondents expressing frustration at the lack of functional water infrastructure, incomplete interventions, and insufficient follow-up support.

"What we were least satisfied with is at the water level... we asked for help, we did not receive it." Female Caregivers, Daloa

Overall, community satisfaction was high, particularly where interventions produced visible and practical benefits for children and households. However, satisfaction was lower where support was incomplete, equipment was not functional, or expectations around water, youth livelihoods, and materials were not met.

5.8.2 Satisfaction of Frontline Service Providers

Among frontline service providers who explicitly responded to the satisfaction question, including social workers, teachers, facilitators, and other field-level actors, levels of satisfaction were generally high. Respondents particularly valued interventions that strengthened their ability to perform their roles and deliver services more effectively. Satisfaction was most strongly associated with improved operational capacity, access to resources, and the tangible results observed among children and communities.

Across respondents, frontline actors, particularly social workers, highlighted that the project significantly improved their ability to carry out their functions, especially through logistical and operational support. Access to transportation and field support enabled them to reach remote and strengthened service delivery.

"Yes, we can say that overall, we are satisfied... with their vehicles, we can travel a little more easily. It facilitated the work of the centre somewhat... it allowed us to access remote areas." Social workers, Zoukougbeu

Education stakeholders, including teachers and facilitators, consistently expressed high satisfaction with bridging classes and related material and pedagogical support. These interventions were seen as highly effective in improving children's literacy, reintegrating out-of-school children, and raising overall learning levels.

Despite generally high levels of satisfaction, frontline service providers also identified several important gaps that limited their engagement and effectiveness. Education stakeholders most often pointed to insufficient communication and involvement of teachers and school leadership in project activities, which reduced ownership and coordination. Others raised concerns about absence of food provision for school canteens, which was seen as undermining efforts to retain children in school. Resource constraints within bridging classes were also noted, particularly the insufficient number of facilitators to manage combined-level classrooms. Reading space facilitators expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of compensation for their work that required additional time beyond their regular responsibilities. This was perceived as affecting motivation and sustainability.

Finally, some social workers noted that they were not consistently included in all project activities, suggesting gaps in coordination and integration of frontline actors within implementation processes.

Overall, frontline providers were generally satisfied with the project, especially where support strengthened their operational capacity and enabled them to deliver services more effectively. However, satisfaction was reduced where communication, inclusion, compensation, or operational support were perceived as insufficient.

5.8.3 Satisfaction of Government Actors (National and Regional)

Overall, government actors who responded to the satisfaction question expressed high levels of satisfaction with the project, particularly in relation to the strong engagement, collaboration, and inclusion of state structures throughout implementation. Respondents consistently highlighted that the systematic involvement of technical ministries across activities was a key strength of the project. This approach was seen as contributing not only to effective implementation, but also to strengthening institutional relationships and reinforcing the role of government actors in service delivery. In several cases, this satisfaction appeared to translate into a sense of ownership and commitment to sustaining project outcomes.

"My greatest satisfaction is the effective involvement of State structures. I think that greatly contributed to the project's success." Social Centre, Issia

At national level, satisfaction was also linked to the quality of technical support provided, particularly in relation to capacity building and strengthening of child protection systems. Respondents from central directorates highlighted the value of training, tools, and direct support received.

However, satisfaction was not uniform, some government entities felt insufficiently informed or involved in certain aspects of project implementation. The Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DENF) reported limited visibility over bridging class activities during a significant period of implementation, which constrained its ability to fulfil its oversight role. Similarly, the Directorate of Professional Agricultural Organisations (DOPA) expressed dissatisfaction with limited involvement in implementation and lack of follow-up on recommendations. Although DOPA contributed to initial assessments of cooperatives, respondents indicated that they were not sufficiently engaged in subsequent phases, which reduced their ability to assess progress and support outcomes.

"Between 2022 and 2025, we did not have a very clear picture of the activities being carried out regarding bridging classes... whereas we should have been officially informed so that we could have oversight." National Government Official

Overall, government satisfaction was high where actors were actively involved, consulted, and supported. However, satisfaction was lower where specific government bodies felt excluded from planning, oversight, or follow-up, highlighting the importance of consistent engagement across all relevant institutional actors.

5.8.4 Satisfaction with the Integrated CLMR model

Direct responses to the satisfaction question on the integrated CLMR were limited, with only one respondent explicitly addressing satisfaction. However, broader suppliers and cooperatives' feedback indicate general satisfaction with the technical support provided around the

integrated CLMR. Respondents particularly appreciated the technical support and structural engagement process led by Save the Children, which helped clarify implementation expectations and strengthen understanding of the role and added value of social workers within the system. At the same time, an important source of dissatisfaction was the limited capacity of social centres, which affected the timeliness of assessment, case planning, and remediation, and reduced confidence in the system's operational effectiveness.

Beyond integrated CLMR-specific feedback, most respondents discussed satisfaction at the level of The Parallel Project more broadly, within which integrated CLMR is embedded. There was consistent appreciation of the quality and relevance of technical support, particularly training, guidance, and iterative engagement through quarterly meetings. Training on guidelines was also valued for its practical contribution to implementation:

Overall, while technical support under the Parallel Project is perceived as highly valuable, satisfaction with the CLMR itself is more mixed when considering implementation realities.

5.9 Fidelity of Implementation

This section examines the extent to which project was implemented in accordance with the original project design, planned activities, timelines, and intended implementation approaches. It addresses the following evaluation question:

To what extent was the project implemented with fidelity to its original design—including the logical framework, workplan, and Save the Children Common Approaches?

The analysis explores both fidelity to the overall project design and logframe, as well as fidelity to Save the Children Common Approaches applied across different components. It also identifies any major deviations or adaptations introduced during implementation and examines the extent to which these changes reflected contextual adaptation, operational constraints, or deliberate efforts to improve relevance and effectiveness.

5.9.1 Fidelity of project implementation (design, logframe, timeline)

Overall, the project was implemented with high fidelity to the original design, logframe, and workplan across most components, particularly child protection, education, and community development. However, this high level of fidelity does not apply to the Adolescents and Youth (A&Y) component, which was not fully developed at project inception and was substantially redesigned during implementation. With this exception, implementation largely followed the planned structure and sequencing, with only minor and adaptive deviations. The phased rollout approach (32 communities followed by 33) was a deliberate design choice that enabled gradual scale-up, recruitment, and capacity building, and did not constitute a deviation but rather a strategic adaptation that supported effective implementation.

Minor deviations across components were primarily adaptive improvements rather than departures from design. In the child protection component, mentoring and coaching of social workers, though not originally planned, were introduced and strengthened implementation of case management and SOPs. In education, adjustments to infrastructure standards and reallocation of budgets for building more secure bridging classes improved quality of delivery without altering objectives. In community development, introduction of group and individual income-generating activities reflected responsiveness to community demand.

External factors, including COVID-19 and presidential elections, caused **temporary slowdowns**, but did not fundamentally affect implementation fidelity.

The main deviation from the original design concerned the Adolescents and Youth (A&Y) component, which was not fully defined at project inception and was substantially redesigned during implementation. This included conducting a dedicated baseline and market study, refocusing the component on livelihoods and vocational pathways, and introducing context specific life skills training. As a result, the component experienced delays in implementation, both due to the time required to design an appropriate model and constraints related to youth availability. While this represented a significant deviation from the original design and timeline, it was an intentional corrective measure to address initial gaps and improve relevance.

Overall, this indicates that fidelity of implementation was high, with deviations largely reflecting adaptive management to improve quality and relevance, rather than failure to implement planned activities.

5.9.2 Fidelity of implementation of Common Approaches

Fidelity of implementation of Save the Children Common Approaches was uneven across components, with very high fidelity for Steps to Protect, and partial, adapted, or non-implementation for other approaches, reflecting both contextual adaptation and prioritisation decisions.

The **Steps to Protect Common Approach** was implemented with very high fidelity and constituted the most consistently applied framework, particularly within the child protection component. It directly informed case management processes, documentation, and alignment with national systems.

In contrast, other Common Approaches were implemented only partially or adapted:

- **Parenting without Violence (Safe Families Common Approach)** was not implemented in full. For communities, implementation focused primarily on awareness raising and community discussions, which represent only a limited component of the full approach. The core elements, structured parenting group sessions and children's group sessions, were not implemented. For foster families, the approach was reported as implemented, but it remains unclear whether this was done in full or only partially, as evidence does not confirm the delivery of all core components.
- **Literacy and Numeracy Boost** was either not implemented or implemented only to a very limited extent as a Common Approach, according to different respondents. Instead, the project primarily adopted the government's existing pedagogical approach (PEC – Targeted Teaching Programme) in bridging classes to avoid overloading teachers and learners with parallel methodologies. While one respondent suggested that selected elements of Literacy and Numeracy Boost may have been applied in a limited way, the overall evidence indicates that the Common Approach was not systematically implemented as originally designed.
- **Life skills programming was aligned with the Life Skills for Success Common Approach and contextualised for Côte d'Ivoire.** The curriculum developed in collaboration with the University of Zurich was reported to be aligned with the Life Skills Common Approach toolkit and guidance, while being adapted to the specific context and needs of adolescents and youth in Côte d'Ivoire. The programme reflected the core components of the Common Approach, including real-life practice, a supportive learning

environment, participatory and experiential learning, and methodologies and activities that promote equality and participation. Fidelity should therefore be understood as fidelity to a contextualised application of the Common Approach, rather than as a deviation from it

Implementation fidelity also **improved over time**, with later phases characterised by more structured application and clearer understanding of approaches.

5.10 Cost-Efficiency Analysis

5.10.1 Methodology

The cost-efficiency analysis evaluated Pillar I and its four thematic areas (Child Protection, Education, Community Development, and Adolescent and Youth Empowerment), using financial data from Save the Children's financial system and monitoring data from the Indicator Performance Tracking Table (ITPP). Direct costs were allocated primarily at the activity level based on the logframe and financial reports. For direct costs that were not yet allocated against activities (e.g., personnel, travel), project staff indicated recommended percentage allocations. Where that was not possible, costs were proportionally assigned, as were all support costs.

Activities were then aligned with monitoring indicators for each thematic area. For Child Protection and Education, indicators that are outcome indicators in the log frame were used as output indicators, enabling the following cost-efficiency ratios: "number of abuse cases identified and referred" (Child Protection) and "number of children enrolled in bridging classes" (Education). For Community Development and Adolescent and Youth Empowerment, no single indicator was suitable, cost-efficiency was therefore analyzed at the sub-area level.

The analysis was originally planned to include all project costs, including Pillar II and the parallel project, but these were excluded due to their distinct nature and inconsistent financial coding, which would have required disproportionate effort for limited additional insight.

Results are based on existing financial and monitoring data and therefore depend on the accuracy (e.g., no double counting) and consistency of these datasets. Although the project was funded in Euros, results are presented in nominal US dollars, as is common for cost-evidence.

5.10.2 Cost-efficiency results by thematic area

Pillar I total project expenditure was approximately \$7.6 million, with 74% allocated to direct costs and 26% to support costs. Most direct spending (71%) was concentrated in Child Protection and Education, while the remaining 29% went to Community Development and Adolescent and Youth Empowerment. Spending on Adolescent and Youth Empowerment was relatively low (8%), partly due to reprogramming during implementation.

For **Child Protection**, the total estimated cost – including direct and support cost – was \$1,288 per abuse case identified and referred, and \$1,406 per beneficiary receiving at least one service (1,933 out of 2,110 referred cases). Whilst the above are useful indicators, they have important limitations. The intervention sought broader benefits beyond case management, including increased awareness and knowledge of child rights within the broader community, and improved access to services such as birth registration. In addition, it included components that are not typically part of standard case management models, such as engagement with cocoa cooperatives. Existing cost evidence is limited, largely focused on case management specifically, and highly variable due to differences in scale, context, service scope, and intensity of support. Any reported cost-evidence is therefore not directly comparable.

In **Education**, the cost per enrolled student was \$803, rising to \$899 per regularly attending student, with 3,502 students enrolled and 3,127 regularly attending bridging classes. Costs were likely influenced by the relatively small scale for Education programming but aligned with the targeted focus on cocoa-growing communities. In addition, costs included significant fixed investments, such as for example for school construction and equipment (averaging approximately US\$109 per student). While fixed costs could decrease per student with increased scale, variable costs, such as teacher support, are expected to remain more stable.

For **Community Development** the following costs per output can be reported: on average it cost \$355 for a member of a Village Savings and Loan Association to be trained (1,584 individuals), \$7,288 to develop a community action plan (65 developed in total), \$2,711 to establish a water users association (63 developed in total), and \$69 to train a beneficiary on nutrition (5,572 individuals).

For **Adolescent and Youth Empowerment** estimated costs per output are estimated as follows: on average it cost \$142 to train a beneficiary on life skills (533 individuals), \$839 to train a beneficiary on vocational skills (169 individuals), \$864 to coach a beneficiary on entrepreneurship (288 individuals), \$1,060 to support a beneficiary on business planning (108 individuals), and \$196 to increase awareness on decent work for the average community member (204 individuals).

5.10.3 Recommendations

Any future program planning should use emerging cost evidence as a starting point and distinguish between fixed and variable costs; not least to more accurately consider economies of scale. In line with this, funding allocations should consider efficiencies of larger, longer-term investments, particularly where significant upfront costs can be spread across more beneficiaries. For any future cost-efficiency analysis, it would be advantageous if financial data allowed to clearly delineate between intervention-specific elements (e.g., child rights awareness raising), context-specific elements (e.g., unique to cocoa-producing communities) and those that are more broadly applicable, to better be able to compare results (e.g., cost per child protection case management) with existing cost-evidence.

Further details on the CEA are provided in Annex 10.

6 CONCLUSION

Overall Assessment

The *Stop Child Labour in Cocoa Sourcing Communities* project represents one of the most comprehensive and systems-oriented interventions implemented within Ferrero's cocoa supply chain to address child labour and broader child protection risks in cocoa-growing communities in Côte d'Ivoire. **Through a deliberate combination of direct community-level implementation (Pillar 1), technical support and harmonisation of supplier approaches (Pillar 2), and the piloting of an integrated Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation (CLMR) approach linked to national child protection systems (The Parallel Project), the project sought not only to reduce children's exposure to hazardous work, but also to address the interrelated social, economic, educational, and institutional drivers that contribute to child labour.** The integrated CLMR approach is one of ten directives under the guideline to prevent and respond to Child labour, and is the directive covered by this evaluation.

Overall, the evaluation finds that the project made meaningful and credible contributions at community, institutional, and supply-chain levels. Most importantly, the project contributed to a significant reduction in child labour and its most hazardous forms, while also strengthening key protective factors at child, household, community, and system level. These include improved school enrolment and regular attendance, stronger household economic resilience, increased community awareness and accountability for child protection, strengthened community-based protection structures, and a strengthened national child protection system. These achievements demonstrated the added value of a holistic and systems-based approach, showing that child labour risks are most effectively addressed when child protection, education, household resilience, and adolescent and youth empowerment interventions are implemented in an integrated manner.

At the same time, the findings clearly underscore the limits of project-bound interventions in confronting deeply entrenched social and structural challenges, including persistent household poverty, entrenched social norms, volatility in cocoa incomes, under-resourced public service systems, and broader constraints within the cocoa value chain.

The project therefore offers both evidence of what is possible through coordinated, multi-sectoral approaches and important lessons on what remains beyond the reach of time-bound programmes without sustained, system-level investment.

Pillar 1: Direct Community-Level Implementation

Findings relating to Pillar 1 indicate that the project contributed to positive changes across multiple dimensions of children's wellbeing and protection, particularly where interventions addressed multiple risk factors simultaneously. A defining strength of the project was its refusal to treat child labour as an isolated issue. Instead, the project addressed overlapping vulnerabilities through strengthened child protection mechanisms, improved access to education, community development and household economic support, and targeted adolescent and youth interventions. This integrated approach was consistently perceived by beneficiaries, community leaders, and implementing partners as more relevant and effective than fragmented or single-sector responses; an assessment that aligns with conclusions drawn at mid-term and reinforced by final evaluation evidence.

At community level, the project contributed to improved awareness and understanding of child rights, child protection risks, and the harmful consequences of hazardous child labour. The

establishment and strengthening of child protection committees, community-based monitoring structures, and referral mechanisms increased the visibility of child protection concerns and improved coordination between communities and formal child protection services. Importantly, the project supported greater alignment between community-level practices and national child protection standards, contributing to more consistent case identification, referral, and documentation processes in line with Save the Children's common approaches and national systems. These changes were central to the significant reduction in child labour observed over the project period.

The education component emerged as a particularly important protective factor. Evidence suggests that bridging classes, reading spaces, school reintegration efforts, and community mobilisation contributed to substantial improvements in school enrolment and regular attendance, particularly among vulnerable children who had previously been out of school or at risk of exclusion due to poverty, distance, lack of documentation, migration, or engagement in labour. The integration of education support within child protection case management strengthened the project's capacity to respond holistically to barriers affecting school attendance and retention. The systematic opening of case files for children enrolled in bridging classes was widely identified as a good practice that enhanced follow-up, accountability, and continuity of support.

Household resilience and community development interventions also contributed meaningfully to project outcomes. Participation in VSLAs, income-generating activities, and community action planning was frequently linked by respondents to reduced financial stress, improved coping capacity, and increased ability to meet children's education and basic needs. These interventions appear to have supported reductions in household reliance on children's labour by making it more feasible for families to keep children in school, cover education-related costs, and access adult labour alternatives. These findings reinforce broader evidence that household economic vulnerability is a central driver of child labour in cocoa-growing communities and that protective gains are difficult to sustain in the absence of livelihood diversification and income stability. At the same time, the evaluation finds that the scale of economic support remained modest relative to the depth and structural nature of poverty, limiting the extent to which household resilience gains could offset broader economic pressures within the cocoa sector.

The adolescent and youth component generated promising but more limited evidence of impact. Vocational training, life skills development, and empowerment activities contributed to increased confidence, skills acquisition, and aspirations among participating adolescents and youth, particularly those with limited prior access to such opportunities. However, the late rollout of several activities, combined with structural constraints in rural labour markets, meant that evidence of sustained employment, income generation, or broader economic impact remained limited at the time of the evaluation. The findings suggest that while this component holds preventive potential in relation to child labour, meaningful and durable results for youth require longer implementation horizons and deeper market integration.

Across Pillar 1 interventions, sustainability prospects remain uneven and highly contingent on system-level factors. While the project invested significantly in strengthening community structures, enhancing collaboration with state actors, and improving access to education and protection services, many public systems continue to operate under severe resource constraints. Challenges such as insufficient numbers of social workers, limited operational budgets for social centres, and shortages of teachers and learning resources were consistently cited as key risks to the continuity of case management, service quality, and follow-up once project support decreases.

These constraints were most evident in child protection case management processes. Although coordination and standardisation improved, many social centres lack the transport, staffing, and operational flexibility required to sustain timely assessments, referrals, supervision, and follow-up. Similar vulnerabilities were observed in the education sector, where limited public investment in both formal and second-chance education raises concerns about the long-term absorption of children reintegrated through project-supported mechanisms. While the immediate need for bridging classes has decreased in some communities due to project success, stakeholders cautioned that structural drivers of exclusion remain, and that gains may erode without sustained system-level investment.

Taken together, these findings reinforce that reductions in child labour risk are gradual, non-linear, and multidimensional, requiring long-term, coordinated engagement beyond the scope of individual project cycles.

Pillar 2: Technical Support and Harmonisation of Supplier Approaches

The evaluation finds that outcomes under Pillar 2 were partial and uneven, providing important insights into supplier engagement dynamics. While the Programmatic Framework offered valuable technical guidance, it was rarely cited explicitly by suppliers during interviews. In contrast, Ferrero's Child Labour Guidelines, implemented under The Parallel Project through structured action plans, mentoring and cascading trainings, and regular follow-up, were more salient in supplier narratives.

This difference appears to reflect variations in operationalisation, visibility, and accountability mechanisms, rather than the intrinsic relevance of the Framework itself. The evaluation therefore suggests that technical guidance alone is insufficient to drive institutional change unless it is embedded within supplier systems, reinforced through ongoing engagement, and linked to clear expectations, monitoring, and follow-up. Supplier capacities and levels of institutionalisation varied widely, reflecting differences in experience, resources, governance, and exposure to child protection and community programming.

These findings highlight the importance of moving beyond one-off training toward continuous, structured supplier accompaniment and accountability mechanisms if harmonisation and institutional change are to be achieved at scale.

Parallel Project: Integrated Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation model (CLMR)

The integrated CLMR stands out as one of the project's most innovative and strategically significant contributions. By linking supply-chain monitoring processes with national child protection systems, the model sought to move beyond parallel, private-sector remediation approaches toward more coordinated and legitimate responses to child labour and related vulnerabilities.

Findings suggest that the integrated approach facilitated improved collaboration between suppliers, cooperatives, and social centres through joint trainings, coordination mechanisms, and shared procedures. By connecting children identified through supply-chain monitoring to formal case management and protection services, the integrated CLMR strengthened the comprehensiveness and credibility of remediation responses and reinforced the view of child labour as part of broader child protection and social vulnerability systems.

However, the evaluation also finds that adoption and implementation of the integrated CLMR remain partial, gradual, and highly constrained by systemic bottlenecks. The most significant limitation is the chronic under-resourcing of public social services, which affects timeliness and continuity of assessments, referrals, and follow-up. Dependence on suppliers for transport, per

diem support, and operational costs underscores ongoing resource asymmetries and raises concerns about long-term institutional sustainability. Additional challenges including data-sharing, confidentiality protocols, differing institutional mandates, and uneven functioning of coordination platforms, further limit effectiveness. These findings indicate that while the integrated CLMR represents a promising systems innovation, its long-term viability depends on substantial investment in public child protection capacities and sustainable financing arrangements.

Despite these constraints, the integrated CLMR provides valuable lessons for the cocoa sector and other agricultural supply chains. It demonstrates the potential benefits of moving beyond compliance-driven monitoring toward integrated, system-linked approaches that address child labour within broader protection frameworks.

Methodological Considerations

The evaluation notes important methodological limitations, particularly regarding the measurement of child labour prevalence among children aged 5–12. The use of a non-standard child labour module requiring young children to estimate work hours over a 12-month recall period rendered findings for this age group unreliable. These data should therefore be used with caution to draw conclusions on prevalence change among younger children.

Nevertheless, triangulation of qualitative evidence, caregiver-reported data, and findings relating to adolescents aged 13–17 provides credible evidence of reductions in child labour risk and vulnerability, along with improvements in awareness, schooling, and protective behaviours. The evaluation's conclusions are therefore stronger with respect to risk reduction and system strengthening than to precise prevalence estimates, particularly for younger children.

Final Reflection

In conclusion, the Save the Children–Ferrero partnership made meaningful contributions toward strengthening child protection systems, improving educational access, supporting household resilience, and advancing more integrated approaches to child labour prevention within cocoa-growing communities and supply chains in Côte d'Ivoire. The project demonstrates that progress is possible when interventions move beyond narrow compliance models and invest in child-centred, holistic, and systems-oriented strategies.

At the same time, the findings reinforce that sustainable reductions in child labour require long-term, structural investment. Persistent poverty, volatile producer incomes, under-resourced public services, entrenched social norms, and systemic features of the cocoa economy continue to shape children's vulnerabilities and constrain the durability of project gains. Future efforts will need to deepen public-system strengthening, institutionalise supplier accountability, reinforce community ownership, and address economic drivers alongside protection and education interventions.

Ultimately, this project offers important lessons for the cocoa sector and for broader global efforts to eliminate child labour in agricultural supply chains. It shows that when child labour is addressed not as an isolated compliance failure, but as a manifestation of interconnected social and economic risks, more durable and transformative outcomes become possible.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Child Protection Recommendations

Several recommendations related to formal case management systems, collaboration between private and public actors, and strengthening social services are already presented under the integrated CLMR section and are therefore not repeated here to avoid duplication.

- **Promote stronger state ownership and continuation planning:** Future programming should include clear transition, and sustainability plans that anchor responsibilities within government systems, budgets, and mandates. Greater ownership by state institutions is essential for sustaining prevention, coordination, supervision of community structures, and service delivery beyond donor-funded projects.
- **Advocate for increased public financing for child protection services:** Engage relevant ministries to increase predictable budget allocations for social centres and child protection structures. Continued reliance on short-term project funding creates significant sustainability risks for formal protection services.
- **Strengthen the technical capacity and quality of social services for child protection case management:** Continue investing in the professional capacity of social workers through comprehensive training on case management processes, tools, and standards, ensuring full coverage beyond only a limited subset of staff. This should include induction training for new staff, regular refresher training, mentoring and supervision, and support for the effective use of digital case management systems through adequate equipment and practical training. Strengthening technical quality and consistency is essential to sustain improvements in child protection services and case outcomes beyond the project period.
- **Institutionalise structured mentoring and supervision systems for case workers:** Continue and strengthen the mentoring model established through the project, including regular technical coaching from national and regional authorities. Structured supervision can help maintain quality standards, reinforce learning, and support replication of the Haute-Sassandra experience in other regions.
- **Expand digitalisation of case management systems through equipment, simplified tools, and staff training:** Support the continued rollout of digital case management systems (e.g., SIP PLUS/CPIMS+) by providing tablets, laptops, connectivity, and practical training for staff. Tools should also be simplified where possible to reduce administrative burden and improve efficiency across the case management cycle.
- **Maintain regular outreach and follow-up by social workers in communities:** Advocate with government authorities to institutionalise periodic outreach visits by social workers to project communities after project closure to sustain trust, monitor risks, reinforce referral pathways, and maintain community confidence that protection systems remain active.
- **Strengthen sustainability and autonomy of CPCs:** Support CPCs to remain functional beyond project funding through group income-generating activities, modest operational support, and clearer empowerment strategies. As committee participation is voluntary, many respondents noted that lack of resources risks decline in activity after project closure.
- **Provide formal recognition and protection for CPC members:** Introduce simple identification mechanisms (e.g., committee ID cards or official letters of recognition) to

strengthen legitimacy, facilitate action across communities, and provide members with greater confidence when responding to sensitive child protection cases.

- **Strengthen child participation mechanisms:** Identify practical ways to sustain children's groups and improve attendance, motivation, and meaningful participation. Children's groups were valued by children, but some indicated declining participation without continued mobilisation support.

7.2 Community Development Recommendations

- **Deepen and sustain household livelihood support as a core child labour prevention strategy:** Future programming should continue and strengthen household economic resilience interventions, particularly VSLAs, IGAs, GSCs, and other livelihood diversification activities. These should remain explicitly linked to child protection objectives, including children's school attendance, care, health, and reduced reliance on child labour.
- **Maintain and expand VSLAs while strengthening links to child protection outcomes:** Sustain VSLAs as a key community-based financial mechanism, but ensure that savings, loans, and solidarity funds remain connected to children's priority needs, including schooling, healthcare, and protection from harmful work.
- **Formalise and strengthen VSLAs' access to financial institutions:** Support VSLAs to obtain legal recognition, formal documents, and structured linkages with banks or microfinance institutions. This would help address current constraints where internal savings are insufficient to meet loan demand, while enabling groups to access larger productive credit, safer savings options, and broader financial inclusion pathways. Graduation support should be phased according to each group's maturity and governance capacity.
- **Strengthen the profitability and sustainability of VSLA-supported IGAs:** Complement access to finance with stronger support for income-generating activities, including business skills training, market analysis, climate-smart agriculture, transport solutions, productive equipment, and mentoring. Future support should also encourage diversification so members do not concentrate in the same low-return activities and should help groups identify profitable local value chains. This would increase returns, reduce business failure, and strengthen loan repayment capacity.
- **Strengthen GSCs through equipment, training, voluntary participation, and market linkages:** Continue supporting Community Service Groups with functional and appropriate equipment, refresher training, occupational safety guidance, and stronger business organisation. Where participation has weakened, groups should be restructured around genuinely voluntary and motivated membership. Future programming should also help GSCs connect with cooperatives, farmer groups, or service markets so they can secure regular contracts and remain financially viable over time.
- **Expand access to affordable adult labour and labour-saving equipment to reduce reliance on children:** Future programming should strengthen practical alternatives to child labour by increasing access to organised adult labour through GSCs and by supporting vulnerable households with labour-saving tools, mechanised services, or seasonal labour support. This is particularly important during peak agricultural periods when families face pressure to use children for physically demanding work.
- **Strengthen community water infrastructure and maintenance systems:** Future programming should prioritise access to safe and reliable water through the installation,

rehabilitation, or expansion of water points, especially in large or underserved settlements where existing access is insufficient. Support should combine community ownership with sustained technical, material, and financial assistance, including access to spare parts, qualified repair services, and maintenance financing mechanisms. While community engagement and ownership are essential for sustainability, responsibility for water access should not rest primarily on community structures alone, as volunteer committees often lack the resources and technical capacity to address major breakdowns or infrastructure gaps. Greater external investment and institutional support are therefore needed to ensure durable results. Strengthening support for water infrastructure can improve access to clean water, reduce burdens on women and girls, enhance children's health and wellbeing, and ensure that communities tangibly benefit from project intervention

- **Adapt community training formats to local realities and strengthen practical follow-up:** Review community training approaches to make them more practical, contextualised, and easier for community members to retain and apply. Training should rely more on demonstrations, peer learning, repetition, and action planning rather than one-off classroom-style sessions. Regular follow-up visits should reinforce learning and help communities apply new knowledge in practice.
- **Keep volunteer-based community structures motivated and functional:** Develop clearer strategies to sustain engagement of CPCs, GSCs, COGES, and other community structures after project support ends. This could include clearer mandates, recognition systems, modest operational support, refresher coaching, opportunities to access public programmes, and stronger links with local authorities. Without such support, volunteer fatigue may reduce participation and effectiveness over time.
- **Strengthen coordination and follow-up with government technical services:** Improve early planning, communication, and joint implementation with government counterparts involved in agriculture, water, forestry, health, and community development. Partners should be informed well in advance, supported logistically, and involved not only in training delivery but also in follow-up supervision. Stronger collaboration would improve continuity after project closure and reinforce state ownership of successful approaches.

7.3 Education Recommendations

- **Advocate for stronger public financing of rural education systems:** Engage relevant education authorities to increase predictable public financing for underserved cocoa-growing communities, including recruitment and deployment of state teachers, adequate operating budgets for COGES, timely school grants, and sufficient school feeding allocations. Many reported gains appeared to rely partly on community contributions and volunteer labour, which may be difficult to sustain over time without stronger state support.
- **Strengthen coordination with national education authorities:** Improve regular information sharing and joint planning with the Directorate of Non-Formal Education and other education authorities, including on bridging class locations, results, transition outcomes, and learning materials. This should also include support to government-led development of dedicated materials for the CPU/bridging class system and alignment with current national pedagogical approaches such as PENAPASS.
- **Strengthen access to formal schooling in remote communities:** Support highly remote communities that benefited from bridging classes to transition toward more durable formal education provision. Where feasible, this could include facilitating the construction or

upgrading of schools, supporting communities to be placed on the official school map, and advocating with education authorities for teacher assignment. This would help sustain gains from bridging classes and reduce the risk that children return to work because formal schools remain too far away.

- **Support the Government to develop dedicated learning materials for the CPU/bridging class system:** support the design, testing, and rollout of dedicated teaching and learning materials for the Cours Primaire Unique (CPU) system used in bridging classes. At present, CPU classes reportedly rely on combining materials from CP1 and CP2, which may not fully reflect the accelerated and adapted nature of bridging education. Supporting the Directorate of Non-Formal Education (DENF) in the development of specialised materials would help improve instructional quality, standardisation, and long-term institutionalisation of bridging classes within the national system.
- **Maintain and improve bridging classes as a pathway for out-of-school children:** Continue bridging classes in communities where children remain excluded from formal schooling, while improving their design. Future cycles should start in line with the formal school calendar, allow sufficient time for catch-up where learning gaps are large, and include clearer criteria for grade placement when children transition into formal schools. This would help reduce dropout, improve reintegration, and avoid placing children in grades that do not match their learning level.
- **Strengthen follow-up after transition into formal school:** Establish a structured follow-up mechanism for children who complete bridging classes and enter formal schools, involving teachers, COGES, parents, and education advisers. This should include monitoring attendance, identifying children at risk of dropout, providing encouragement and remedial support where needed, and ensuring children have basic materials such as textbooks and school supplies.
- **Expand and better resource reading spaces:** Increase the capacity of reading spaces where demand exceeds available places, and ensure facilitators have adequate materials, preparation time, and support. Reading spaces should continue to reinforce literacy and numeracy for children already in school, especially those recently reintegrated from bridging classes, while avoiding overcrowding and excessive reliance on facilitators' unpaid time.
- **Strengthen facilitator and teacher capacity through longer, more practical training and supervision:** Extend and deepen facilitator training, including inclusive? pedagogy, classroom management, positive discipline, and use of assessment tools such as ASER. Training should be complemented by regular coaching from school directors, literacy advisers, and education authorities, especially given concerns that short facilitator training may be insufficient for children with significant learning gaps.
- **Integrate positive discipline more systematically into education training and monitoring:** support the integration of positive discipline within the standard training package for bridging class facilitators delivered by the Directors of Non-formal education, and reinforce it through coaching, classroom observation, and follow-up with formal schoolteachers and COGES. This is important because evidence suggests awareness improved in some settings, but practices remained inconsistent.
- **Improve the learning environment through minimum material, canteen, and WASH support:** Ensure that future education programming includes minimum learning materials for children, adequate teaching supplies, desks/benches, and support to school canteens and

WASH facilities. Where canteens are included, sustainability arrangements should be planned with COGES, parents, school gardens, and relevant government services from the outset.

- **Strengthen COGES and local monitoring committees as sustainability mechanisms:** Continue supporting COGES and school/community committees to monitor attendance, mediate between schools and families, mobilise resources, support canteens, and follow up with children at risk of dropout. This should include clearer roles, refresher training, and practical tools for planning and monitoring school support activities.
- **Deepen parent and community engagement beyond one-off awareness-raising:** Develop more sustained parent education programmes focused on the value of schooling, home follow-up, attendance, and prevention of child labour. Engagement should include mothers, fathers, COGES, parent associations, and neutral community representatives, with activities scheduled around agricultural work patterns to improve participation.

7.4 Adolescent and Youth Recommendations

- **Design youth pathways earlier and allow sufficient implementation time:** Future programming should define the adolescent and youth component clearly from project inception, with realistic timelines for market assessments, partnership development, training delivery, placement support, and follow-up. Sufficient implementation time should be preserved so activities can mature and demonstrate results before project closure.
- **Provide targeted and demand-driven training pathways:** Training should be better tailored to the interests, education levels, and livelihood aspirations of different young people rather than relying on generic packages. This should include practical trade options, entrepreneurship, project management, financial literacy, and sector-specific skills linked to real labour market opportunities. More tailored pathways can improve motivation, retention, and relevance.
- **Strengthen the transition from training to decent work:** Training alone was often insufficient to generate sustainable livelihoods. Future programming should include structured transition support such as start-up kits, tools, seed capital, apprenticeships, coaching, business incubation, and job placement assistance. Clear post-training pathways can help youth convert skills into stable income opportunities.
- **Expand access to productive assets and financial support for youth enterprises:** Many young people highlighted the need for equipment or finance to start activities. Future interventions should combine training with access to tools, grants, revolving funds, savings mechanisms, or matched start-up support, particularly for vulnerable youth with no capital base. This can reduce the gap between training completion and income generation.
- **Strengthen partnerships with employers and external opportunity providers:** Build more formal partnerships with vocational centres, chambers of trades, civic service programmes, government employment agencies, agricultural initiatives, and private-sector actors. Where possible, establish written agreements or quotas for internships, placements, or referrals so youth can access opportunities beyond the project's direct resources.
- **Reinforce linkages with public employment and training systems:** Continue connecting adolescents and youth to state services such as the Youth Employment Agency and public vocational training centres. Many eligible young people may lack awareness of existing

programmes. Stronger referral systems and joint outreach can improve long-term inclusion beyond project duration.

- **Adapt outreach and scheduling to youth realities:** Community mobilisation and training schedules should better reflect agricultural seasons, rainfall patterns, schooling timetables, and work commitments. Activities should be planned with local leaders and focal points so young people are informed in advance and able to attend without sacrificing key livelihood responsibilities.
- **Reduce geographic barriers to participation:** For youth in remote communities, consider decentralised training closer to villages, mobile training models, transport support, bicycles for school-going adolescents, or temporary safe accommodation for those attending training or internships in towns. Distance and mobility constraints can otherwise exclude the most vulnerable rural youth.
- **Strengthen trainer capacity, staffing, and supervision:** Increase the number of trainers and support staff to reduce overload and improve quality assurance. Trainers should be fully briefed on programme objectives, participant pathways, and expected outcomes. Regular supervision and refresher support can improve consistency and participant confidence in training quality.
- **Invest more deeply in life skills through longer-duration delivery:** Life skills components should be delivered over sufficient time and reinforced through mentoring, practice sessions, and coaching rather than compressed into short cycles. Behavioural change, confidence, communication, and decision-making skills typically require sustained engagement to take root.
- **Address foundational barriers – literacy and documentation:** Integrate support for reading, writing, numeracy, birth certificates, and identity documents early in programming. These barriers can prevent young people from accessing placements, training schemes, and formal opportunities even when motivation is high.
- **Strengthen Farmer Field Schools for resilient livelihoods:** Continue practical agricultural pathways for youth, but expand beyond cash crops to include food crops, climate-smart agriculture, diversification, agroforestry, and off-season income options. Ensure sustained technical support from government agencies while developing community trainers who can continue support after project closure.
- **Maintain structured post-project follow-up:** Establish a follow-up mechanism after completion to track participants, refresh referrals, troubleshoot business or employment barriers, and reconnect youth to emerging opportunities. Continued accompaniment can help prevent drop-off after training and sustain momentum.
- **Keep child labour prevention explicit within youth programming:** Youth empowerment activities should remain clearly linked to child labour reduction by promoting schooling, safe transitions to adulthood, decent work pathways, and awareness of the importance of children's education. Supporting older youth livelihoods can also reduce household dependence on younger children's labour.

7.5 Holistic Approach and Project Recommendations

- **Maintain and scale the holistic model as the core strategy for child labour reduction:** Continue implementing child labour prevention through a holistic model that combines

education, child protection, community development, and youth empowerment interventions within the same communities. The findings strongly suggest that addressing overlapping drivers of child labour through coordinated multi-sector responses is more effective than isolated single-sector approaches.

- **Strengthen ownership and sustainability through earlier handover planning with the State:** Because the project intentionally worked through government systems, future phases should include a formal sustainability and transition plan from inception. This should identify which functions can be absorbed by ministries, communes, social centres, schools, and local structures; what resources are needed; and what commitments are required before donor exit. Transition discussions should begin early rather than at the end of the project cycle.
- **Strengthen institutional advocacy capacity:** Save the Children should establish or strengthen dedicated advocacy capacity at country office level, rather than relying mainly on project staff to conduct advocacy alongside implementation. Advocacy should be systematically linked to implementation evidence to influence government and private sector practice, support sustainability, and strengthen policy-level positioning.
- **Institutionalise stronger linkages and sequencing between components:** While respondents praised complementarities between components, future phases should make these synergies more systematic rather than dependent on strong field teams alone. A formal integration framework should be developed at community level showing how households can move across services. This should include joint planning at community level, shared referral pathways, and indicators that capture cross-component outcomes rather than only component-specific outputs.
- **Strengthen economic resilience as a core prevention pillar:** Respondents noted that poverty remains one of the strongest structural drivers of child labour. Future phases should therefore reinforce the livelihoods dimension of the holistic model through stronger income diversification, women's economic empowerment, youth employment pathways, financial inclusion, savings groups, agricultural productivity support, and links to government social protection schemes.
- **Continue prioritising the most vulnerable households through robust needs assessment:** Future programming should retain the practice of identifying vulnerable households through community-level assessments and prioritising them for layered support, including bridging classes, VSLAs, IGAs, and protection services. This will help ensure that the holistic approach remains targeted to households most exposed to child labour risks.
- **Strengthen gender equity, disability inclusion, and broader inclusion mainstreaming across all project components.** Future programming should more systematically integrate gender equity and disability inclusion into project design, implementation, monitoring, and learning. This should include dedicated analysis of barriers faced by girls, women, children and adults with disabilities, out-of-school children, migrant households, and other vulnerable groups; targeted strategies to support their participation; and practical adaptations to ensure accessibility of activities and services.
- **Sustain community mobilisation and participation:** Maintain community mobilisation and participatory implementation as a central feature of the approach. Continued engagement of chiefs, women leaders, youth leaders, parents, and community structures can reinforce ownership, acceptance, and behavioural change regarding children's education and protection.

- **Strengthen consistent technical advisory accompaniment:** Improve the regularity and responsiveness of technical assistance to field teams by reducing delays linked to distance, turnover, or competing priorities. More consistent advisory support can strengthen quality assurance, troubleshooting, and adaptive management.
- **Integrate health more strongly into the holistic approach:** Future programming should strengthen the health dimension of the model, particularly in remote communities where lack of health access affects children's wellbeing and household vulnerability. This could include stronger linkages with health services, community health outreach, and support for access to basic health infrastructure where feasible.

7.6 Programmatic Framework (Pillar 2) Recommendations

Recommendations for stronger adoption and sustainability of the Pillar 2 Programmatic Framework

- **Operationalise the Programmatic Framework through structured implementation mechanisms:** Move beyond one-off training by introducing implementation tools similar to those successfully used under The Parallel Project. This should include supplier action plans for Framework adoption, cascading plans to cooperatives, regular technical accompaniment, coaching, and quarterly review meetings to track progress, solve bottlenecks, and sustain engagement. Findings suggests that these mechanisms were central to stronger uptake of The Parallel Project and are largely what was missing under Pillar 2.
- **Strengthen accountability by integrating the Programmatic Framework into supplier contractual requirements:** Include key commitments related to the Programmatic Framework within supplier agreements and sustainability expectations alongside The Parallel Project requirements. Making adoption mandatory rather than voluntary would increase consistency of implementation, strengthen accountability, and allow monitoring through existing supplier oversight and audit systems.
- **Define a realistic and tiered model of supplier adoption:** Reframe expectations so suppliers are not expected to replicate Save the Children's full holistic programming model. Instead, establish a tiered approach that identifies realistic minimum, intermediate, and advanced standards of adoption based on supplier size, capacity, and resources. This could prioritise practical areas such as child protection systems strengthening, community prevention, livelihoods linkages, and cooperative engagement.
- **Institutionalise refresher training and onboarding systems to address staff turnover:** Establish recurring refresher training and induction packages for new supplier and cooperative staff. High turnover significantly reduced continuity of learning and weakened retention of earlier Pillar 2 capacity-building efforts.
- **Align Pillar 2 support with supplier planning and budgeting cycles:** Deliver training and planning support before suppliers finalise annual workplans and budgets, enabling them to translate Framework principles into funded and operational activities.

7.7 The integrated CLMR model recommendations

Recommendations for enhanced and sustainable the integrated CLMR

The recommendations address the key structural, operational, and institutional bottlenecks identified during implementation, particularly the limited capacity of social services, gaps in

coordination and accountability, and constraints affecting referral and case management processes. Together, they aim to strengthen collaboration between public and private actors, improve the timeliness and quality of case management, and support the institutionalisation of the model within national systems in line with Ivorian legal and policy frameworks.

- **Strengthen the operational capacity of social services to deliver case management at scale:** Advocate for increased government investment in social centres, including recruitment of additional social workers, expansion of geographic coverage, and provision of dedicated budgets for transport, logistics, and case management. Addressing these structural gaps is essential to reduce delays in assessment, case planning, and follow-up, which currently constrain the effectiveness of the integrated CLMR.
- **Strengthen the technical capacity of social workers in case management and ensure full coverage:** Expand and institutionalise training on case management processes, tools, and standards for all social workers involved in the CLMR, rather than a limited subset. This should include initial training, refresher training, and ongoing coaching or supervision mechanisms to ensure consistent application of case management approaches across regions.
- **Improve the efficiency and design of social worker engagement within the CLMR:** Complement resource investments with adjustments to how social workers are engaged in the system. This includes introducing prioritisation mechanisms, differentiating involvement based on case complexity, and strengthening coordination with cooperatives to streamline referral, assessment, and follow-up processes. The objective is to reduce bottlenecks at the assessment stage while maintaining the quality of case management.
- **Advocate for institutionalisation of the integrated CLMR within national regulation and policy frameworks:** Engage with government authorities to formalise the integrated CLMR within national child protection systems and regulatory frameworks. This would help ensure that referral to and collaboration with social services becomes a standard requirement across the cocoa sector, not only for Ferrero suppliers but for all actors, thereby strengthening consistency, accountability, and sustainability of the model.
- **Strengthen centralised alignment of CLMR tools and procedures:** National authorities should lead the standardisation and harmonisation of CLMR tools, procedures, and data requirements across actors. This should include aligning questionnaires, referral and case management processes, and reporting systems, while allowing space for actor-specific needs. Stronger central coordination would improve coherence, reduce duplication and fragmentation, facilitate information sharing, and enhance the efficiency and timeliness of case processing and remediation.
- **Establish clear, compliant mechanisms for financing collaboration between private actors and social services:** Develop agreed frameworks that allow suppliers to support operational aspects of case management (e.g. transport, field visits) within approved and auditable budget structures. This includes integrating dedicated budget lines and ensuring flexibility to respond to case management needs without delays, while maintaining compliance with financial and contractual requirements.
- **Strengthen institutionalisation of cooperative participation in child protection platforms:** Support cooperatives to formalise and embed their participation in child protection platforms within their internal procedures, roles, and operational planning. This should include clarifying responsibilities, encouraging proactive engagement (e.g. co-convening or hosting platforms), and strengthening ownership of coordination processes.

Institutionalising this engagement can improve consistency of participation, reinforce collaboration with social services, and enhance the functioning of platforms as effective case coordination mechanisms, rather than ad hoc or externally driven spaces.

- **Establish shared accountability mechanisms across the full case management chain:** Introduce clear, time-bound indicators that cover not only referral, but also assessment, case planning, remediation, and follow-up, and apply these jointly to both suppliers/cooperatives and social services. This is critical to ensure that increased referrals translate into completed and timely case management, addressing the current gap where cases are referred but not processed. Strengthened feedback loops between actors should complement these mechanisms to improve coordination and transparency.
- **Formalise collaboration between the Ministry of Women, Family and Children and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development:** Institutionalise coordination between the Ministry of Women, Family and Children (in charge of social centres) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (in charge of cooperatives) through formal agreements, joint frameworks, or coordination platforms. This should clarify roles, enable systematic information sharing, and ensure sustained engagement between child protection services and cooperative structures. Strengthening this alignment is essential to move from project-based collaboration to a nationally anchored system and to ensure consistency across regions and supply chains.
- **Strengthen the role and capacity of cooperatives in case identification, referral, and coordination:** Enhance the capacity of cooperative operational agents to identify, document, and pre-screen cases of child labour and vulnerability, and engage consistently with social centres throughout the case management process. This should include clearer internal procedures, strengthened participation in coordination mechanisms (e.g. protection platforms), and improved documentation and follow-up practices. Strengthening cooperatives' operational role can improve referral quality, reduce pressure on social centres through better case filtering, and support more efficient and coordinated case management.
- **Address data-sharing and confidentiality constraints to enable effective referrals:** Engage with relevant national authorities, including the national telecommunications regulatory agency, to clarify and, where needed, adapt data-sharing protocols governing case referrals. Establishing clear, compliant procedures for handling sensitive information would reduce supplier reluctance to refer cases and enable more consistent functioning of the integrated CLMR.

7.8 Sustainability Recommendations

The following recommendations focus on strengthening the overall sustainability of the project's outcomes in future programming. While this section presents broader, cross-cutting recommendations, the component-specific ones are included within their respective sections.

- **Develop a project-wide sustainability and transition plan from inception:** Future phases should include a clearly articulated sustainability strategy from the outset, with defined roles, responsibilities, timelines, and resource commitments across government actors, community structures, private-sector partners, and Save the Children. This should move beyond a final handover moment and instead include phased transition milestones embedded throughout implementation. The plan should specify which functions are

expected to be sustained at community, decentralised, and national levels, and outline the conditions required for this to occur.

- **Secure formal government commitments and budget allocation for continuation of key functions:** Future phases should proactively engage relevant ministries and decentralised services to ensure that priority functions are formally integrated into government workplans and budgets. This includes child protection case management and follow-up, social centre outreach, support to schools and bridging classes, COGES accompaniment, youth referrals, and supervision of community structures. Where full absorption is not immediately feasible, phased co-financing or cost-sharing arrangements should be explored to gradually transition responsibilities.
- **Ensure sustainability planning addresses operational feasibility, not only technical capacity:** Future programming should systematically plan for the operational requirements needed to sustain activities alongside capacity building. This includes recurrent costs such as transport, fuel, facilitator incentives, equipment maintenance, communication, supervision, and case follow-up. Without addressing these practical constraints, trained actors may be unable to apply acquired skills, particularly within under-resourced government systems and remote communities.
- **Strengthen the use of implementation evidence for strategic advocacy on structural drivers of child labour:** Future phases should more systematically use programme evidence to inform advocacy with government, donors, and private-sector actors. This is particularly important given that sustainability of outcomes remains constrained by broader structural factors, including persistent poverty, unstable incomes in the cocoa sector, and limited opportunities for economic diversification. Advocacy efforts should focus on improving livelihoods, stabilising producer incomes, strengthening rural services, and addressing structural inequalities within the value chain.
- **Integrate sustainability monitoring into the programme results framework:** Future programmes should include explicit indicators to monitor whether key structures, services, and outcomes continue functioning after direct support is reduced. Given the mixed sustainability observed across components, systematic tracking would allow early identification of gaps and enable targeted corrective action to sustain gains over time

7.9 Evaluation methodology recommendations

- **Use standardised methodological tools which are age and developmental stage-appropriate for children.** Measurement of child labour prevalence should be conducted using standardised tools which are validated wherever possible – specifically tools which use the question modules promoted by the ILO or UNICEF. For children aged under 12, quantitative questions regarding child labour should be asked to a parent or caregiver, to take account of developmentally typical capacity for recall over a previous time period. Where a team wishes to engage children under 12, participatory, qualitative methods which are child-friendly and adapted to their developmental stage should be used.

7.10 MEAL recommendations

- **Strengthen the clarity and standardisation of indicator definitions and reporting guidance:** Future programming should ensure that indicators are accompanied by precise operational definitions, clear measurement thresholds, and standardised reporting

guidance across all implementing actors. This is particularly important for indicators that can be interpreted differently depending on the stage, intensity, or completeness of support or participation being measured. Clearer definitions and harmonised reporting protocols would improve the consistency, reliability, comparability, and interpretability of monitoring data, while reducing the risk of variation in how achievements are understood and reported across locations and stakeholders.

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