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## **World Cocoa Foundation Partners with USAID to Improve Education in West African Cocoa Communities**

### **“ECHOES” Alliance to Expand Opportunities for Young People**

Vienna, VA – The World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) today announced a significant, multi-year partnership to provide greater opportunities and a brighter future for young people living on cocoa farms in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.

The new partnership, known as the ECHOES (Empowering Cocoa Households with Opportunities and Education Solutions) Alliance, brings together the WCF and its member companies with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Africa Education Initiative. Through teacher training, and curriculum development, agricultural and life skills training, the ECHOES Alliance will improve access to quality, relevant education for thousands of children living in cocoa farming communities in West Africa.

“Education is a critical issue in cocoa farming communities, affecting everything from farmer labor practices to urban migration and the future of cocoa farming,” said Bill Guyton, president, World Cocoa Foundation. “The ECHOES Alliance will provide children on cocoa farms with educational content, better teaching and ultimately, a better future.”

Independent surveys identified education as a major challenge facing cocoa farming communities in West Africa. While recent government efforts have improved enrollment rates, three major problems confront cocoa farming communities:

- The relevancy of education to cocoa farming families
- The lack of adequately trained teachers for primary and secondary schools
- The low level of functional literacy among out-of-school youth and adults

The ECHOES Alliance will build upon and expand programs sponsored by the WCF, Mars, Incorporated, The Hershey Company, Cloetta Fazer, Kraft Foods, ED&F Man, OLAM International and the Norwegian Association of Chocolate Manufacturers.

These programs, led by Winrock International and the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH), are making a real difference in the quality of education available to young people on cocoa farms.

“In Ghana, we have made education a top priority, as part of a broader commitment to offering a better future for our children,” said Ambassador Kwame Bawuah-Edusei from the Republic of Ghana. “Moreover, the well-being of cocoa farming communities is a critical issue for our nation, one where education plays a great role. The ECHOES Alliance will help us make greater progress, more quickly.”

A multi-year effort, programs supported by the ECHOES Alliance will increase school attendance, raise the number of trained teachers, increase livelihood opportunities for young people, and improve literacy levels throughout West African cocoa farming communities.

In addition, the initiative will use education to address important health issues like HIV/AIDS and malaria.

To achieve these results, programs supported by the ECHOES Alliance will:

- Establish teacher resource centers to improve teaching and learning materials
- Increase community participation in decision making
- Address HIV/AIDS through testing and counseling
- Provide agricultural curriculum and training for in and out of school youth
- Raise awareness of malaria and help communities implement prevention strategies
- Develop teaching and learning materials to provide young people with a better livelihood

“Cocoa farming families are the backbone of our economy and our nation, yet they face many challenges,” said Ambassador Diabate, with the government of the Ivory Coast. “We welcome the partnership with the World Cocoa Foundation and USAID, because it will bring new ideas, energy and resources to our farmers to better face these challenges.”

In the Ivory Coast, the Alliance will work with communities of Aboisso, Adzope, Alepe, Daloa and Gagnoa. In Ghana, the Alliance will be active in Akrokeri, Bechem, Kumasi and Sefwi Wiawso.

Established in 2000, the World Cocoa Foundation plays a leading role in strengthening the partnership between industry and cocoa farmers. With nearly 60 member companies, the WCF supports a range of economic, social and environmental programs in cocoa communities in Africa, Asia, Central America and South America. World Cocoa Foundation programs focus on raising farm incomes, encouraging responsible, sustainable cocoa growing and strengthening communities.

For more information about the World Cocoa Foundation, or to find out how you can help support cocoa farmers, contact Bill Guyton or Robert Peck at (703) 790-5012 or via

e-mail at [Bill.Guyton@worldcocoa.org](mailto:Bill.Guyton@worldcocoa.org). or [Robert.Peck@worldcocoa.org](mailto:Robert.Peck@worldcocoa.org). Also, visit the WCF online at: [www.WorldCocoaFoundation.org](http://www.WorldCocoaFoundation.org).

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