

Learning Brief

Lessons from implementing the Cocoa Household Income Study (CHIS) for living income measurement

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Executive Summary

The Cocoa Household Income Study (CHIS) is a sector-wide initiative providing a harmonised methodology for monitoring and assessing living income in the cocoa sector. Published in 2024, the CHIS Methodology offers guidance for collecting representative and comparable household income data across all cocoa-producing households.

Since its publication, the CHIS approach has been adopted across the cocoa sector by consortia of cocoa and chocolate companies, public organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs) and research partners. This Learning Brief presents key takeaways from five recent studies conducted in Côte d'Ivoire between 2024 and 2025 and provides guidance for conducting living income assessments using CHIS.

1.

Full adoption strengthens decision value: Applying the recommended CHIS approach improves the reliability, comparability, and usefulness of living income data.

2.

Inclusive and robust implementation matters: Design choices related to sampling, measurement, and data quality materially influence study conclusions.

3.

Inclusion can materially change conclusions: Evidence from the indirect supply chain in Côte d'Ivoire challenges common assumptions and highlights the importance of more effective and inclusive study designs.

4.

Use CHIS to move from measurement to impact: Closing the living income gap requires evidence on which interventions effectively raise incomes.

5.

Sector-wide learning is essential: Sharing of results and better coordination of research priorities can accelerate progress toward closing the living income gap.



1 Introduction

The Cocoa Household Income Study (CHIS) programme is a sector-wide initiative that provides a harmonised methodology for monitoring and assessing living income in the cocoa sector. It has been developed to improve the quality and comparability of living income data, enabling organisations to better understand progress and take more coordinated action to close the living income gap in the cocoa sector.

The CHIS Methodology¹ was published in 2024 and provides step-by-step guidance for collecting and assessing representative, comparable and high-quality household income data for all cocoa-producing households. It includes a detailed assessment of both cocoa and non-cocoa (other farm and non-farm activities) income sources as well as associated production costs (labour, material costs) across all household members. The methodology also accounts for sharecropping and other land tenure arrangements to reflect the realities of smallholder cocoa producers.

Since its publication, the CHIS methodology has been implemented by consortia of cocoa and chocolate companies, public organisations, CSOs and research partners. This Learning Brief presents key lessons from five recent studies



in Côte d'Ivoire implemented between 2024 and 2025. It demonstrates that effective CHIS implementation extends beyond harmonising questions and indicators to include high-quality data collection, representative sampling, robust analysis, and the deliberate inclusion of all cocoa producers, including households in the indirect supply chain. Based on these findings, the brief provides guidelines for conducting living income assessment using the CHIS.

The CHIS Initiative

CHIS has been developed through a multi-stakeholder partnership bringing together sector organisations, research institutions, and implementation partners. The CHIS programme was led and funded by World Cocoa Foundation (WCF) with support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), in collaboration with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa. The CHIS Methodology has been developed by KIT Institute and Wageningen University & Research (WUR), in partnership with the Ivorian Center for Economic and Social Research (CIRES) and Etudes de Marche et Conseils (EMC) of Côte d'Ivoire. The methodology was completed with guidance from the Alliance on Living Income in Cocoa (ALICO), Living Income Community of Practice (LICoP), the Voice Network, IDH, and with inputs from numerous stakeholders across the cocoa sector including representatives from producing country governments, other NGOs and civil society organizations and WCF member companies.

1 van der Haar et al. 2024. See also the CHIS questionnaire: <https://www.kit.nl/institute/project/kit-cocoa-living-income-questionnaire/>

2 Household incomes: more precise measurement of non-cocoa income

Key messages

1.

Extrapolation risk: Estimating total income by extrapolating from cocoa income and a self-reported share of cocoa income can lead to inaccurate estimates of non-cocoa income and, therefore, total household income.

2.

Respondent risk: Living income is a household concept. Single-respondent surveys (often the registered farmer) may systematically miss or underreport income managed by spouses and other household members, especially non-cocoa income.

3.

Lesson from first CHIS studies: Households interviewed with two respondents report significantly higher non-cocoa income and around 20% higher total household income, suggesting that single-respondent approaches likely underestimate progress towards living income. Direct measurement of non-cocoa incomes provides more precise estimates

Living income compares the combined annual net income of all household members with the income required to provide a decent standard of living for the entire household. One of the key contributions of CHIS is its improved measurement of non-cocoa income. This income is difficult to capture because it is typically generated through multiple activities such as other crops, small businesses, wage labour, and remittances. These income streams are often irregular and managed by different household members.

2.1 Direct measurement of non-cocoa income improves income estimates

Why this matters

Many living income studies in the cocoa sector estimate total household income by extrapolating from cocoa income, based on respondents' estimate of the share of total income derived from cocoa.

However, accurately estimating income shares across different income sources is challenging for farmers, as these proportions vary from year to year due to changes in productivity, prices and investments in farming and other productive activities. As a result, this method that relies on extrapolation can lead to biased estimates of non-cocoa income and, consequently, total household income.

Evidence from first CHIS studies

Results from CHIS studies in Côte d'Ivoire show that the share of household income derived from cocoa varies significantly across regions and over time. Across the five different studies conducted between 2022 and 2024, the average share of cocoa income per region ranged from 52% to 81%, illustrating the high variability in income composition among cocoa-producing households.

These income shares also fluctuate from year to year in response to changes in production, prices, and household investment strategies. For example, in one longitudinal income study among 290² households in East and West Côte d'Ivoire, the average share of income derived from cocoa declined from 71% in the 2022-2023 production season to 51% in 2023-2024.

² We only included the results of the comparison households, so they are not influenced by the interventions evaluated by the study.

CHIS approaches to measuring non-cocoa income

The CHIS methodology accommodates different data collection objectives. Its 'minimum requirements' specify the level of detail needed to measure income levels and living income gaps for basic monitoring purposes, while the 'recommended approach' sets out best practices for more accurate income assessment, analysis of income drivers, and calculation of additional indicators (e.g. yield, labour allocation).

While the minimum approach allows estimation of non-cocoa income through extrapolation, the recommended approach is to measure non-cocoa income directly. This enables a more complete assessment of revenue and investments across major income sources, including other farm and off-farm activities and transfers such as remittances or cash payments.

To keep the survey feasible, data collection focuses on the two most important non-cocoa crops. The questionnaire includes an adaptable list of income-generating activities and records revenue, labour use, and key costs such as inputs, equipment, fuel, and transport for each selected activity.

The 2023-2024 season was historically poor with cocoa production across Côte d'Ivoire almost 25% lower due to unfavourable weather, ageing trees, and disease.³ At the same time, the cost of living increased by 8%.⁴ Although higher prices partly compensated for lower production, net cocoa income nevertheless declined.

At the same time, farmers invested more in other income-generating activities. Although this was an exceptionally low production year and the share of cocoa income rebounded in the 2024-2025 season,⁵ changes in household investment strategies and farm-gate prices are likely to continue affecting the share of income derived from cocoa in the coming years as well.

In one CHIS study covering 1700 households in West Côte d'Ivoire, both methods were applied. Direct measurement yielded lower average net non-cocoa income estimates than extrapolation,⁶ suggesting that extrapolation may overestimate household income and underestimate the living income gap. Further systematic comparison of the two approaches is needed to determine whether this is a consistent trend.

Until more information is available, we recommend clearly reporting which approach was used and,

where feasible, combining both methods. Direct measurement of non-cocoa income provides not only more detailed but also more precise estimates. When combined with interviews with two household members, this approach is likely to provide a more accurate reflection of true household income. Although this method requires additional effort and resources it provides much stronger decision value.

Implementation: stronger quality control and enumerator training

Direct measurement provides more detailed and precise estimates but increases risk of enumeration and data-entry errors, particularly when working with large monetary values.⁷ To mitigate these risks, the CHIS questionnaire includes built-in consistency checks that automatically calculate days worked, revenue, costs, and profits for each income source. Enumerators are expected to review these figures with respondents during the interview.

In addition, questions on estimated income shares are retained as a cross-check during data cleaning. Land-use questions for the two highest-earning non-cocoa crops also help validate reported crop income.

Strong enumerator training is essential. Training should focus on the flow of questions, the use of consistency checks, and what constitutes realistic

3 Fountain and Huetz-Adams, 2025.

4 Between 2022 and 2024. Anker Research Institute, 2024.

5 Preliminary findings.

6 Both sections were answered by the lead farmer instead of the person most knowledgeable about the non-cocoa income.

7 For example, in Côte d'Ivoire the 2023-2024 exchange rate was 604.204 CFA per 1 USD.

income levels in the local context to ensure accurate and reliable data collection. Furthermore, data should be checked thoroughly during fieldwork by a supervisor, as well as during cleaning, to identify and address any data quality issues at an early stage.

2.2 Interviewing two household members improves income reporting

Why this matters

Income from different sources is typically managed by different household members. Women often control different income streams than men, such as small businesses, trade, or processing. Relying on a single respondent, often the registered farmer or household head, risks missing or underreporting income managed by spouses or other members, especially non-cocoa income.

CHIS approach: two respondents as a practical minimum

The CHIS methodology therefore recommends interviewing two household members: the person most knowledgeable about cocoa production and the person most knowledgeable about other income sources. This approach strikes a practical balance between data quality and feasibility. It substantially improves the completeness and accuracy of income data while avoiding the high cost and complexity of interviewing all household members.

Evidence from first CHIS studies

In one study covering 1,400 cocoa-producing households in West Côte d'Ivoire during 2023-2024, two respondents were interviewed in 72% of households. The first respondent was mostly male (94%) and self-identified as head of household (95%), while the second respondent was mostly female (90%) and usually the spouse. This reflects common patterns observed elsewhere, where men are often considered most knowledgeable about cocoa production and women about other income activities. However, this division of roles can differ across countries and should not be assumed in advance.

Regression analysis from the same study shows

that, after controlling for household and farm characteristics, households with two respondents reported significantly higher non-cocoa income than those with only one respondent. On average, total household income was around 20% higher. This finding reinforces the importance of interviewing more than one household member.

Implementation: identifying the right respondents

Correctly identifying respondents is a key element of enumerator training. Enumerators should aim to interview two household members and allow the household to identify who is most knowledgeable about cocoa production and other income sources, as the “registered farmer” does not always have a complete overview of household income, as is often assumed.

Implementation guidelines

1. Use the full CHIS non-cocoa income module and combine it with extrapolation based on cocoa income shares.
2. Plan the fieldwork time and logistics so that interviewing two respondents is feasible in most households.
3. Train enumerators to ask the household who is most knowledgeable about cocoa production and who is most knowledgeable about other income, rather than selecting respondents solely based on registration status or headship.
4. Require enumerators to use and discuss the built-in consistency checks during the interview.
5. Retain income share questions and land-use questions as validation tools, and document how cross-checks were applied in cleaning and analysis
6. Perform thorough data quality checks during data collection to identify and address any issues at an early stage.
7. In reporting, be explicit about whether the minimum approach (one respondent, extrapolation) or the recommended CHIS approach (two respondents, direct measurement) was used for measuring non-cocoa income.

² We only included the results of the comparison households, so they are not influenced by the interventions evaluated by the study.

3 Sampling: improving representation of cocoa farming households

Key messages

1.

Precision risk: If the sample is too small (or clustering is ignored), living income estimates are too uncertain to guide policy, investment, or programme design.

2.

Coverage risk: If the sampling frame excludes less visible groups of cocoa farming households, results may be systematically biased and not fully representative.

3.

Lesson from first CHIS studies: Including underrepresented groups provides greater insight into the diverse realities and needs of cocoa-producing households, enabling the design of more effective and inclusive living income strategies.

Sampling is critical to living income studies because the results inform policy, investment, and programme design. To be credible, samples must be large enough to capture income variability and sufficiently inclusive to represent the diversity of cocoa-producing households.

3.1 Precision: robust sample size and sampling design

Why this matters

Living income studies require sufficiently large samples because household income is highly variable. If the sample is too small, the estimated average income can be influenced by a few unusually high or low earners. This results in wide margins of error and makes it unclear whether households are truly above or below the living income benchmark. In such cases, results are less credible and less useful for targeting, investment decisions, and accountability.

CHIS minimum standards

The CHIS methodology recommends working with a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%. For a finite population of 10,000 individuals, this can correspond to a sample size of 1,332 households.⁸ In practice, this is often only the starting point, as the sample size must be adjusted for the sampling design. When households are clustered in villages and a two-stage sampling strategy is used (random

selection of villages followed by random selection of households within villages), the required sample size increases due to clustering (the design effect). If this adjustment is not made, the actual precision of the estimates will be lower than expected.

Many living income studies report not only an overall average but also compare different groups (for example female and male farmers, landowners and sharecroppers, direct and indirect supply chain households, and programme participants and non-participants). For these comparisons, each subgroup must have a sufficient sample size; otherwise, the study will not be able to detect meaningful differences and the results will be inconclusive.

The same principle applies to impact evaluations. Larger sample sizes are typically required to reliably distinguish real programme effects from random income variation, particularly when income data are clustered within villages. For example, detecting a minimum effect size of 20% may require a sample of 1,338 households (669 treatment and 669 comparison), before further adjustments for clustering and non-response.

⁸ see Chapter 4 of the CHIS Methodology



For quasi-experimental designs that track the same households over time (baseline and endline, or more often), sample size calculations must also account for attrition (loss of respondents over time). Attrition can be high, for example 10%, and, if not anticipated, the endline sample may become too small, reducing the study's ability to detect programme effects when it matters most.

Common pitfall: partial adoption undermines harmonization

While we have not systematically collected information on CHIS adoption, anecdotal evidence suggests that some actors adopt the methodology only partially. They adjust the questionnaire and indicators but do not always comply with recommended sample sizes and design adjustments. This weakens comparability across studies and reduces the credibility of reported living income results.

3.2 Inclusion: the sampling frame must cover all cocoa farmers

Why this matters

Inclusiveness is at the heart of the CHIS approach. CHIS recognises anyone who cultivates cocoa as a cocoa farmer, irrespective of gender or tenure status. However, many households that CHIS acknowledges as cocoa farmers are underrepresented in existing living income data collection efforts, including sharecroppers, workers, female farmers, caretakers, youth, and farmers in the indirect supply chain.

When these groups are not included, important information about a large share of the cocoa-producing population is missed, and the overall results may be biased. This also limits understanding of which groups are, or are not, being reached by support programmes.

First experience with CHIS shows that additional effort is required to include these less visible groups.

Lesson 1: Local definitions can limit inclusion

Inclusion requires a thorough contextual understanding of local tenure and labour arrangements, as well as cultural norms and language around who is considered a cocoa farmer. This is illustrated by the experience in Côte d'Ivoire. In one study, it proved difficult to reach sharecroppers. Although 29% of the population reported allocating land to sharecroppers, only 2% of the sampled farmers were sharecroppers. Hence, even though enumerators were explicitly instructed to include sharecroppers, they were unable to do so.

One potential explanation is that local communities did not recognise sharecroppers as cocoa farmers. There are different sharecropping arrangements, and these have evolved over the years. In the past, sharecroppers often established a plantation in exchange for a share of the land (e.g. planter-partager or abunu). More recently, now less land is available, sharecropping has increasingly become more of a short-term informal labour contract in exchange for a share of production.⁹

A strong understanding of these relationships and local customs is key in order to reach sharecroppers and other less visible farmers. In addition, careful explanation of the research purpose is critical to address potential resistance within communities.

We also learned that definitions of the direct and indirect supply chain vary by context and therefore need to be defined clearly before sampling and reporting. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, indirect supply refers to cocoa purchased through intermediaries where the producer(s) identity, farm location(s), and production volume are unknown or not shared with the purchasing company. Direct supply typically involves cocoa marketed through cooperatives. In Ghana, by contrast, indirect supply may refer to cocoa that is smuggled or aggregated by farmers before being sold to a purchasing company.

⁹ See for example Amanor, 2010 and Collins & Ruf, 2011.

Lesson 2: Alternative sampling approaches for less visible groups

In most countries, there are no existing lists of sharecroppers or farmers in the indirect supply chain, so alternative sampling methods are required. In Côte d'Ivoire, two approaches were used to sample households in the indirect supply chain.

In the first approach, a census was undertaken to collect basic information on all households in selected communities, including whether they were cocoa farmers, sharecroppers and part of the direct or indirect supply chain. These lists were then used to randomly select a predetermined number of respondents for each farmer group (direct, indirect, sharecroppers) and to calculate sampling weights for data analysis.

In the second approach, spatial sampling using satellite imaging was used to sample indirect supply chain households. In randomly selected sampling areas in the landscape, enumerators performed transect walks to select every *n*th household for inclusion in the sample.

Why this matters: less visible groups can be large and relevant for risk management

The first CHIS results suggest that less visible farmers may represent a significant share of both the total population of cocoa-producing households and overall cocoa volume. In one study landscape in West Côte d'Ivoire, around 50% of farmers were estimated to sell through the indirect supply chain. These households are currently not reached by most sustainability programmes and therefore do not receive support.

At the same time, less visible groups may present risks for companies related to traceability and deforestation. When companies do not know the exact location of cocoa farms and cannot prove that cocoa is not sourced from a forest, they risk a ban on their cocoa. As a result, farmers and intermediary buyers may also risk having their cocoa rejected in the future. This is another reason why sampling cannot only focus on the visible part of the supply chain.

3.3 When inclusion challenges assumptions: lessons from the indirect supply chain in Côte d'Ivoire

Why this matters

Cocoa-producing households in the indirect supply chain are often excluded from living income estimates, and relatively little is known about their incomes, livelihood strategies, or access to services. One study in West Côte d'Ivoire was able to shed light on this. At the start of the study, researchers expected households in the indirect supply chain to be a more vulnerable group with lower incomes and less access to services, or to be less dependent on cocoa than farmers in the direct supply chain. However, initial results suggested otherwise.

Findings from Côte d'Ivoire

The study was conducted among 1,400 cocoa producing households (700 direct, 700 indirect), covering the 2023-2024 production season. Results showed that indirect supply chain households had higher incomes (USD 3,844) than those in the direct supply chain (USD 3,112) (Figure 1). Nineteen percent of indirect supply chain households reached a living income compared with 8% of direct supply chain households. This difference can be explained by the fact that, on average, indirect supply chain households had larger total landholdings, higher cocoa productivity, and more non-cocoa crop income.¹⁰

Indirect supply chain households' livelihoods were not less dependent on cocoa than those of direct supply chain households. While in the selected landscape indirect supply chain households had smaller cocoa farms (2.8 ha compared with 4 ha), they achieved higher productivity (478 kg/ha compared with 358 kg/ha) and higher total annual production volume (1,283 kg compared with 1,190 kg). As a result, no significant differences were found in average net cocoa income (USD 1,591) or in the share of income derived from cocoa (52%).

A segmentation analysis demonstrated similar livelihood strategies amongst direct and indirect

¹⁰ After correcting for farm- and household characteristics there is no significant difference between households in the direct and those in the indirect supply chain. This means that the difference in income is explained by differences in farm and livelihood characteristics between the two groups rather than being part of the direct or indirect supply chain.

supply chain farmers. In both groups, some households were highly dependent on cocoa, while others prioritised different crops. The analysis also found that focusing on other income-generating activities, such as rubber or non-cocoa crops, can coexist with relatively high cocoa investments. For example, rubber-focussed households did not diversify away from cocoa entirely, as they either invested in young cocoa trees or other cocoa related activities.

Indirect supply chain households had less access to cocoa-focussed interventions than those in the direct supply chain. Although direct supply chain households had relatively more access to services such as training and capacity building, most households in both groups (84% indirect supply chain and 73% direct supply chain) did not benefit from any interventions during the 2023-2024 production cycle. Households that did benefit from an intervention had, on average, 16% higher total household income than those who did not.

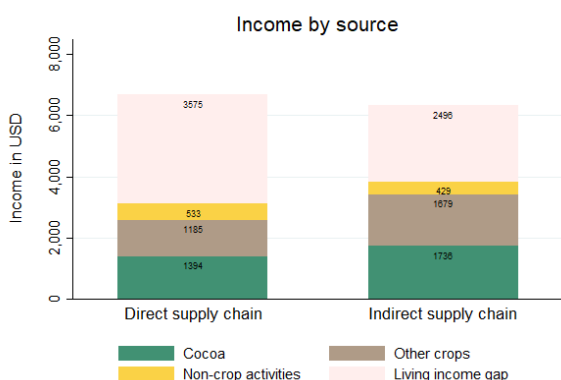


Figure 1 Income size and distribution for direct and indirect supply households in Côte d'Ivoire

Implications and open questions

These results raise several questions. The study did not shed light on why indirect supply chain households are not selling to (and are not members of) cooperatives. One possible explanation is that the services offered by cooperatives do not meet farmers' needs – a challenge that is well documented in the cocoa sector in Côte d'Ivoire.¹¹ It is also possible that cooperatives attract farmers who require more support, or those located further from main roads or markets. Strategies aimed at formalising indirect supply chain farmers would

benefit from a better understanding of their specific needs, interests, and barriers to joining the direct supply chain.

A further question is whether similar income patterns will be observed in other landscapes. The data of this study were collected in a relatively central area with significant rubber production. Different results may emerge in more remote or less diversified areas. The findings do, however, suggest that other cash crops with different cropping and payment cycles may provide promising opportunities for income diversification and risk management among cocoa-producing households.

Overall, these results underline why inclusive sampling is not only a methodological issue but can materially change conclusions about living income, service gaps, and priorities for action. They also highlight the need for further exploration of indirect supply chain farmers and other less visible groups.

Implementation guidelines

1. Define the target population using the CHIS definition of a cocoa farmer, including less visible groups, adapted to the country context.
2. Select a sampling strategy that achieves decision-grade precision: calculate sample size for overall estimates and for key subgroup comparisons and adjust for clustering when sampling is done via villages or communities.
3. For impact evaluations, conduct power calculations and plan for attrition in panel designs.
4. Build or validate the sampling frame. If lists do not exist (for example, for sharecroppers or indirect supply chain farmers), apply census-based listing and/or geo-spatial sampling approaches.
5. Where less visible groups are small, plan for oversampling and apply appropriate sampling weights in the analysis.
6. Document transparently the sampling frame, response rates, design effect assumptions, weighting approach, and any groups that may remain uncovered.

¹¹ Ruf et al. 2019

4 Interventions: monitoring and assessing income interventions with CHIS

Key messages

1.

Tailoring to interventions: The standard CHIS intervention list provides a comparable overview across contexts. For impact evaluations, the intervention questions should be tailored to the specific programme.

2.

Diving deeper: CHIS can be expanded through optional modules, agronomic data, and qualitative or participatory research to triangulate survey findings, explain observed changes, capture farmers' perspectives on interventions, and co-design more targeted support for less visible groups.

Why this matters

The aim of CHIS is to contribute to closing the living income gap in the cocoa sector. It is therefore not only a monitoring tool, but also a means of assessing the impact of interventions designed to raise household incomes, so that these interventions can be made more effective and better tailored to different groups of cocoa-producing households. To do this well, surveys must capture what support households received, in what form, and whether implementation was of sufficient quality.

CHIS approach: a standardised intervention list for baseline monitoring

The CHIS Methodology includes questions based on a standardised list of interventions, covering:

- prices and payments (e.g. premiums, cash transfers)
- financial products (e.g. credit, VSLAs, banking services)
- cocoa production interventions (e.g. GAP training, inputs, coaching)
- farm and income diversification support (e.g. processing facilities, planting material for other crops, payments for environmental services)

This list provides a baseline overview of the interventions received by households and enables assessment of the relationship between intervention access and household income. It also supports comparability across studies, as the categories and definitions are harmonised.

Using CHIS for impact assessment: adapting the intervention module

For impact assessment, intervention questions typically need to be adjusted to the specific programme being evaluated. Cocoa-producing households often do not know which programme or organisation is behind the support they receive. It is therefore often preferable to ask whether they have received specific interventions (e.g. pruning support or business training), rather than whether they participated in a named programme.

In addition, questions on the quality of implementation are relevant. For example, if cash transfers are part of the programme, it is important to assess whether they were received in time to cover major expenses such as farm inputs or school fees. Similar questions may also be relevant for training, coaching, inputs, or other services, depending on programme objectives.



Who to ask: include multiple household members

It is important to consider who should respond to intervention questions. In many living income studies, these questions are often asked to the registered (often male) farmer. However, findings from Côte d'Ivoire showed that 81% of second respondents (mainly women) were also involved in cocoa farming, and 17% had their own cocoa farm, either individually or jointly. This indicates that women are actively engaged in cocoa production. To understand whether they are reached by interventions, intervention questions should therefore be asked to them as well.

Extending CHIS beyond income: optional modules

Depending on the specific objectives of the evaluated programme, additional modules can be added to assess impacts beyond incomes. For example, modules on financial literacy, resilience, and women's empowerment may be relevant. The household survey can also be combined with an agronomic survey to assess the adoption of agricultural practices or examine the quality of implementation in more detail.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that the CHIS survey already takes around 1.5 hours to complete under the recommended approach with two respondents. When adding modules, practitioners should be mindful of the burden on respondents and the risk that interview quality may decline if interviews become too long.

Using mixed methods: qualitative research to triangulate findings

CHIS can also be combined with qualitative research to triangulate and interpret survey findings. Qualitative approaches can provide insights into how and why observed changes did or did not occur, and which factors enabled or constrained progress.

In addition, focus group discussions can provide insights into farmers' perspectives on interventions and assess whether these align with their needs.

Less visible groups: using a mixed-method approach

Combining the CHIS survey with qualitative or participatory techniques can help identify the specific challenges these households face in achieving a living income (for example, contract insecurity, or limited access to services) and support the co-design of more targeted interventions.

Implementation guidelines

1. Use the CHIS standard intervention list for baseline monitoring, so results remain comparable across studies.
2. For impact assessments, adapt the intervention module to the programme being evaluated and ask about specific interventions rather than programme names alone.
3. Include questions on implementation quality where relevant for outcomes (e.g. timeliness of cash transfers or frequency of coaching).
4. Ask intervention questions to all relevant household members, not only the registered farmer. Where two respondents are interviewed, include both when measuring intervention exposure.
5. If adding modules or combining with agronomic surveys, keep respondent burden manageable and adjust field protocols accordingly.
6. Combine CHIS with qualitative research when the objective is to understand mechanisms, barriers, and farmer preferences, particularly when designing or adapting interventions for less visible groups

5 Going forward: broadening the use of CHIS

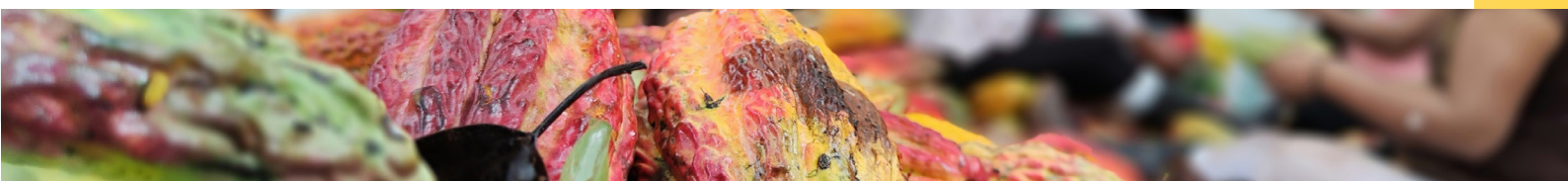
CHIS should be understood as a harmonised approach that is continuously refined based on evidence and implementation experience, rather than as a fixed set of questions. Robust living income data are essential to inform policy, investment, and programme decisions. Initial results from living income studies applying the CHIS approach highlight the following lessons:

- › **Measurement quality depends more on design choices than on indicators:** Using the same indicators does not guarantee comparable results if core design choices differ.
- › **Inclusion can materially change conclusions:** Who is included in the sample can significantly affect estimates of income levels, vulnerability, and intervention reach (it isn't just an ethical choice).
- › **Partial adoption undermines comparability:** Partial CHIS adoption can create a false sense of comparability and lead to misleading conclusions.
- › **Implementation costs are higher—but so is decision value:** CHIS trades simplicity for decision-grade accuracy, and this trade-off should be made explicit.

Going forward, living income measurement using CHIS should aim to:

- › **Adopt the full CHIS approach:** Use the 'recommended approach' combined with strong enumerator training and data quality control practices. Transparently document sampling and data processing choices to enhance comparability of results.
- › **Apply an inclusive sampling approach:** Include less visible groups to reduce the uncertainty and address incorrect assumptions that may hinder the development of effective and inclusive living income strategies.
- › **Adjust CHIS to the local context:** Cultural definitions of 'cocoa farmers', 'sharecroppers' and 'direct/-indirect supply chain' differ by country and region. A strong understanding of these contexts, along with appropriate adaptation of sampling strategies and question phrasing, is essential to collecting locally relevant information.
- › **Move from baselines to impact:** Early CHIS efforts have focused on measuring prevailing income levels in specific geographies. While these studies provide valuable baseline insights, closing the living income gap also requires evidence on which interventions raise incomes effectively.
- › **Share results for sector-wide learning:** Sharing key results transparently and in a timely manner can reduce duplication, improve comparability, and accelerate learning across different initiatives. Improved coordination of research questions across organisations would also enable more strategic allocation of resources and greater efficiency. Jointly defined priorities and research questions can help ensure that data collection efforts address the most relevant gaps while remaining aligned with sector-wide objectives.

Taken together, these actions will help strengthen CHIS as a shared, evidence-based approach for understanding and closing the living income gap across the cocoa sector.



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Colophon

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