

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION PACK



About the VOICE Network

The VOICE Network has been the **“best practice” advocacy organisation in the cocoa sector** since its creation in 2010. We are a watchdog and catalyst for a reformed cocoa sector. Our job is to address blind spots and underrepresented issues in cocoa.

We believe that an industry that is linked to pleasure and luxury – generating over 100 billion dollars in revenue annually – should ensure that all stakeholders are able to earn a living income, and live under decent conditions where human rights – and especially child rights – are respected, within a thriving and healthy environment.

How we deliver – three complementary levers of action

1. An informed and coordinated civil society in producing and consuming countries



We create spaces where global civil society can exchange information and stay up to date about current events in the cocoa sector and each other's activities, and through this, can increase their effectiveness, synergies, and alignment.

Beyond our own membership, we regularly host workshops and meetings, and facilitate discussions on relevant topics with all actors in the cocoa supply chain. **Building trust** is a critical principle for us and strategic partnerships have been established with a variety of CSO coalitions throughout West Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe, and the United States.

2. Ground breaking research



We provide ground-breaking research on under-represented topics. Information is one of the most effective tools for improvement, and a public and informed debate on the most pressing issues is essential. Published every 3 years, our Cocoa Barometer is the key reference point of sustainability for the cocoa sector and **innovative thinking**.

Our other publications, especially on [living income](#) and the role of [purchasing practices](#), have also become agenda setting for the cocoa sector and beyond. Our **bottom-up approach** to our publications is a key tool for alignment of VOICE members on identifying joint priorities and recommendations.

3. Joint effective advocacy



We engage in joint advocacy: raising the voice and concerns of farmers and addressing blind spots and underrepresented issues in the value chain. Appreciated for our **constructive criticism** and **open dialogue**, we are the go-to civil society platform for all major global conversations on sustainability in the cocoa sector, providing key input and pressure to governments in both producing and consuming nations, international and multistakeholder organisations, and all the major cocoa and chocolate multinationals.

What we focus on

- ✓ **Living Income:** Unless farmers' poverty is addressed, we won't tackle the environmental and human rights challenges or have sustainable cocoa. We advocate for the development of living income strategies and better business practices.
- ✓ **Environmental Protection:** we are addressing cocoa production as a driver of deforestation and source of pollution (agrochemicals), promoting solutions (diverse agroforestry systems, organic farming, limiting gold mining etc.).
- ✓ **Transparency & Accountability** across the supply chain: there have been many changes in the legislative environment in both consuming and producing countries, we work to ensure those can be leveraged to make cocoa more sustainable and improve cocoa farmers' livelihoods.
- ✓ **Human Rights:** besides the well know issue of child labour, cocoa producing communities face a wide range of problems: gender inequality, (infant) malnutrition, lack of access to education, human trafficking, insufficient health care facilities and sanitation, insecurity of land and tree tenure, rule of law, labour rights violations, etc.

How we work with our members

Regular meetings

We host regular meetings for our members to share updates from the sector and activities, and organize additional meetings (learning sessions, topic-specific meetings, events) on a per-need basis.

Mailing list

Our general mailing list is our best way to share information about the cocoa sector and stay-up-to-date about recent developments. The full membership has access to the mailing list.

Bi-annual General Assembly

The full membership meets twice a year to adopt long-term strategies and annual workplans and budgets.

Board

Consisting of 5 members, our Board includes representatives of members and one treasurer. The full Board generally meets four times a year to provide oversight and direction.

Secretariat

The VOICE Secretariat provides support to the members and is currently composed of 3 persons working on policy, advocacy, finance and administration, project management, and communications.

Our Membership Categories

The VOICE Network has two membership categories: core members and associate members. Only core members have formal decision-making powers, while associate members have an advisory role.

Criteria for Inclusion

(An applicant must comply with at least three of these criteria, of which the first two are mandatory)

- Organisation supports the mission of VOICE
- Organisation is involved in the cocoa sector at an international level
- Organisation has a track record of influencing in cocoa sector
- Organisation has technical expertise that adds to VOICE's mission
- Organisation has experience working in cocoa producing countries (directly or through local partners)

Criteria for Exclusion

(Any of the following criteria exclude an applicant from membership)

- For-profit organisations and multi-stakeholder organisations that have for-profit and government members
- Organisations with the objective of standardisation (VSS)
- Organisations without a legal entity
- Individuals

Role and responsibilities

	Core Members	Associate Members
Involved in VOICE governance	Yes (consensus-based)	No
Involved in VOICE strategy	Yes (consensus-based)	Advisory role
Involved in decision making	Yes (consensus-based)	Advisory role
Participation in annual general meetings	Yes	Advisory role
Veto power for new members	Yes (2-week consultation period)	No
Access to VOICE mailing list	Yes	Yes
Access to learning sessions	Yes	Depending on topics
Participation in joint publications/statements*	Yes	Opt in
Financial contribution to VOICE (depending on organization's budget/location)	Yes	Yes

**Joint publications, statements, etc., would include the following disclaimer "The views expressed here are those of the authors and VOICE Core Members, and are not necessarily shared by all the Associate Members of the VOICE network".*

Membership fees

In order to fund its core work, the VOICE Secretariat is partly dependent upon membership fees. Fees are based on the member organisation's annual turnover and are indicative, especially for smaller organisations and those based in producing countries. Members who are able to contribute more are encouraged to do so.

Total amount of annual turnover (in €)	Annual membership fee in €	
	Core member	Associate member (50%)
Under 500k	500 €	250 €
500k-1Mn	1,000 €	500 €
1-5Mn	3,000 €	1,500 €
5-10 Mn	7,000 €	3,500 €
10-20Mn	10,000 €	5,000 €
20-40Mn	20,000 €	10,000 €
40Mn+	30,000 €	15,000 €

What we offer

- ✓ Collaboration with other civil society organisations working on cocoa in both consuming and producing countries and facilitation of alignment for increased impact.
- ✓ Access to information and developments in the cocoa sector both in consuming and producing countries to inform your work and identify synergies with other members.
- ✓ Ability to contribute to and co-sign research pieces and advocacy documents that are shaping sustainability discussions in cocoa.
- ✓ Access to the VOICE Secretariat and expertise.
- ✓ Visibility on our website and possibility to promote your activities or research via the VOICE newsletter.

Interested in becoming a VOICE Associate Member?

Membership application procedure

- If criteria for inclusion are met, applicant organisations shall send a letter to the [VOICE secretariat](#) laying out: 1. Their motivation for joining; and 2. Their proposed contribution to the network (in terms of content and engagement).
- The secretariat will share the letter with core members, who will have two weeks to voice their concerns, if any, or ask questions about the applicant. In case of any issues, the decision will be made based on consensus at the following monthly meeting.
- Once the applicant organisation signs a contract with VOICE, it will officially be an associate member.

Associate members' responsibilities

VOICE associate members are expected to:

- Appoint two VOICE contact persons (a main and one alternate).
- Regularly attend meetings and calls they are invited to, especially general assemblies.
- Respond to requests from VOICE and provide active input on strategies and other documents.
- Regularly share information on cocoa and member activities in cocoa.
- Provide financial and/or in-kind (activities/expertise) support, commensurate to the size and budget of the member's organisation.

Associate members are also encouraged to join VOICE publications and statements when appropriate (explicit approval from the member will be required).

In the case of extended non-activity, the Board has the right to discuss (dis)continuation of membership.

For questions about membership, please contact Claire Biason Lohier at claire@voicenetwork.cc.

How to become a core member?

Organisation can't apply directly to become a core member of VOICE. New core members will be only invited to join by the VOICE Secretariat after consultation with/or recommendation from core members and the Board, and after having been an insightful and active associate member. This is to ensure that core members are a diverse group of organizations in terms of geography, expertise, and approach.