

Fact Sheet 11**Child Workers in the Cocoa Industry**

Save the Children Canada reports¹⁰⁰ on child labour conditions on cocoa farms indicate that in some cases children under the age of 14 have worked three to five years for 10 to 12 hours a day and had not been paid a wage. In other cases, children also reported being beaten and denied food because their work output did not meet the farmer's expectations. Other children indicated that they had to carry heavy loads on their backs, which often caused open wounds, which are still visible today. Some children also told stories of how they were beaten if they tried to escape from cocoa farms and some even faced death and were left by the side of the field where others worked as a warning to them.¹⁰¹

On the very first day, he [farmer] took our luggage and locked it away. He ordered us to move heavy sacks of cocoa. They were so heavy I could barely lift it. [One boy] could not lift his sacks. The owner took a branch off a tree and started whipping him. He beat him until all his body was covered in cuts and blood. At that moment, I know he would beat us, too...(Sylla, 15 year old boy)¹⁰²

We have never tasted chocolate... our bosses [farmers] never tasted chocolate...we work hard to pick the [cocoa] beans in the hot suns for 12 hours...no breaks...if we sit...we are dead...carry 40 kg bags on our shoulders...look at the scar here...this is because I carried bags and bags on my shoulder...no time to stop it [bleeding]...we had to carry it...otherwise bosses [farmers]...will beat us... If we run away and they always catch you...they cut our feet with razors. (Drissa, 14 year old boy)

One day I was really sick...I could not stand up and I could not open my eyes...the boss came in and I told him that I am sick...he shouted at me...took a stick and cracked it behind my leg and said do you feel better now...all day he put his eyes on me to see if I will sit down...(Traore, 13 year old boy)

I was thinking I would go to Côte d'Ivoire...work on cocoa farms...and one day...I could own my farm...I left here [Mali] because there was nothing to do...no money... on the first day of work...I knew my dream will not happen...I had to pay the man who brought me here...the boss [farmer] told me he can't pay me for one year...what I earned he had to pay the man who brought me here by truck...I cried all night...I tried to escape but they caught me beat me...I was bleeding... I had nothing to cover my wounds...(Diabaté, 14 year old boy)¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Reports are based on child workers who have gone through Save the Children Canada's Transit Center

¹⁰¹ Nadine Grant, West African Country Program Field Visit Notes, Save the Children Canada, 2002

¹⁰² Corinna Schuler, "Child Slaves Caught in Glittering Traps." National Post, April 17, 2002

¹⁰³ Sudarsan Raghavan, and Sumana Chatterjee, "A Taste of Slavery: How Your Chocolate May be Tainted." Knight Ridder Series, June 24, 2001

Source: *Children Still In the Chocolate Trade: The Buying, Selling, and Toiling of West African Child Workers in the Multi-Billion Dollar Industry* (A Working Paper Series: Children in Global Trade, Number 1, April 7, 2003).

<http://www.savethechildren.ca/whatwedo/advocate/cocoa2003.pdf>