

The Coast of Shame

How cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire are using slave child labour

Côte d'Ivoire is the world's biggest cocoa producer. It used to be one of the richer countries in Africa. Many farmers now are poor, often earning less than £100 a year.

Travelling deep into the plantations of the Côte d'Ivoire - the West African nation that produces half the world's cocoa - children carrying machetes are a common sight.

They are being kept out of school and many have untreated wounds on their legs, where they have cut themselves when working in the cocoa plantations.

Stop the Traffik is one organisation which is trying to help the problem.

I used to go to school, but my father has no-one to work on the farm, so he took me out of school. Now I work with my Uncle Fabrice and my father on this remote farm. My mother's a long way from here. I haven't seen her for 10 years - since I was two years old.

Marc Yao Kwame,
cocoa worker, aged
12

It is hard work and you have to be careful with the machetes. We all cut ourselves sometimes.



We sell the cocoa to a merchant. The payments to me are always late and sometime we don't get a fair deal from the merchants. Money is always short. I find it hard to plan for the future as we don't know how much money we'll get and the price of things like fertilizer and seeds keeps on going up. I am too poor to be able to afford school fees for my children.

Amouan Acquah,
cocoa farmer

Eugene Djedje,
cocoa farmer

No one is obliged to send a child to school. If you don't have money you don't go. You can't leave a child in the village. If you go to the farm and leave him behind, he will pick up bad habits. It is part of his education and also he can learn the technique of growing. That way he will be able to work the farm himself when he is older and make money for his family.

Up to 12,000 children are working as slaves on cocoa farms in Cote d'Ivoire. Often what will happen is the parents are starving, they're poor, they have nothing and somebody comes along and says 'I'll take your son, he'll work on my farm and I'll give you some money. They think 'We'll get money so we can eat and our son gets a job'. They don't know what he's going to is a living hell.

Steve Chalke, chairman Stop the Traffik – a charity campaigning to stop child slave workers.

The price of cocoa today is the same as it was in 1975 - but the prices of the things cocoa farmers need to buy have all gone up. Poverty is a major problem.

