

# Child Labor in Cocoa Plantations: Between Socialization Issues and Health Issues in Rural Areas of Eastern Ivory Coast

Fofana Memon\* and Traoré Kassoum

Sociologist  
University Peleforo Gon Coulibaly Korhogo - Ivory Coast

\*Corresponding author's email : Fofanamemon20 [AT] yahoo.fr

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**ABSTRACT---** *For several years, child<sup>1</sup> labor in cocoa plantations became a major issue. This ancient practice that is part of cultural values has become the point of convergence of the struggle of the international and national community. To this end, the fight actions and policies<sup>2</sup> against the phenomenon in Ivory Coast progress, but much remains to be done. On this basis, this article analyzes social media manufacturing and structuring of child labor in Côte d'Ivoire, leading producer of cocoa' beans in the world. Specifically, the article highlights the social issues that legitimize child labor in cocoa plantations in rural areas of the east of the country and the structural modalities that implies.*

**Keywords---** child labor, issues, cocoa

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Côte d'Ivoire, cocoa represents 40% of export earnings and contributes for 10% to the gross domestic product (GDP). In the aftermath of the coup of 1999, the reforms carried out in the coffee-cocoa sector which is particularly reflected by the deletion of the Fund have led to mixed results. One of the highlights resulting from this failure is the silting of the producers in the precariousness and poverty. The Strategic Document for Poverty Reduction (PRSP) statistics (2009), although support this assertion. According to the PRSP (2009), the poverty rate in the cocoa sector increased from 52.4% in 2002/2003 to 60% in 2006/2007.

Taking this situation into account, the Ivorian government has undertaken further reforms. which are: (i) strengthening of good governance and transparency in resource management; (ii) development of a sustainable coffee and cocoa economy through the reorganization of production; (iii) securing the income of producers by establishing a minimum guaranteed price and the improvement of internal and external marketing; (iv) the establishment of a strong inter-profession base on credible producer organizations; (v) improvement of productivity and the fight against the worst forms of child labor.

These last years, in agricultural policies, Ivory Coast state focus on the fight against child labor in plantations. That's why, it has established the National Monitoring Committee against child labor. However, despite these policies and the ratification of several conventions, the child labor phenomenon still existing. This assertion is supported by the speech below in these terms « Côte d'Ivoire, the leading producer of cocoa, is "determined "to eliminate the" scourge "of child labor in plantations, even if it still more to be done<sup>3</sup>». On this basis, this paper attempts to question the social issues of the persistence of such practices in cocoa production areas.

In methodology terms, this article is essentially based on a qualitative approach with comprehensive goal focus on context understanding as well as individual and collective interactions about child labor in Ivory Coast rural town. In the field of this study, we have avoided every bias by taking informations directly from those (people) who are concerned through interviews guide which we have elaborated. The individual and group interviews dealt with 107 people involving children from 10 to 17 years, Community leaders, traditional leaders, women leaders, youth, civil servants and religious

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<sup>1</sup> Note that as part of this study, is called child, the child whose age is between 12 and 17 years.

<sup>2</sup> To this end, say that Côte d'Ivoire ratified all conventions namely, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), conventions 138 and 182 of the ILO, respectively on the minimum age for admission to employment and the worst forms of child labor, and all other legal instruments ratified by the States, Côte d'Ivoire, all include provisions for the integration of child development as an area for the strengthening of human resources (National Committee for the Fight against actions Monitoring Trafficking, Exploitation and child Labour (national Plan of Action 2012-2014 fight against trafficking, exploitation and child labor pp 7).

<sup>3</sup> Dominique Ouattara was speaking on the occasion of the opening of the 20th Paris Chocolate Fair, an anniversary edition leading to an exhibition on the history of this "universal heritage". October 28, 2014

authorities. The choice of these actors was motivated by the need to observe and understand the children's relation to agricultural production and issues that shape this relation

Multiple data source: formal and informal individual interviews, group interviews, documentation and observation in situ were mobilized. The interviews recorded using a digital Dictaphone (IC recorder Sony ICD-P520) has been transcribed according to the structure of the interview guide. These elaborate records were the subject of a cross analysis which help to consolidate informations. Content analysis was chosen as technical and analytical categories constructed.

## 2. CHILD LABOR: BETWEEN SOCIALIZATION AND RESPONSE TO THE LACK OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR

The observations and interviews suggest that one cannot understand the practice of child labor without referring to the pillars of structuring norms and values of family and cultural life of the societies concerned. These norms and values are supply by a major fact which is socialization. Socialization is the process by which a group transmits its cultural heritage to its members to ensure its economic and spiritual survival (Dedy S. Gozé. 1994: 21-45). This assertion of the author is supported by the speech of a community leader Abengourou's department in these terms "*«All the work we submit to children follow socialization logic »*". This speech intends to justify and legitimize child labor. However, the child is seen by most actors as a vector of socialization.

Based on observations, it is important to clarify that, the need of socialization symbolically founded the legitimacy of child labor and gives it its distinctive characteristic (rural areas). Through the rural activity, in fact, values like making effort, courage and perseverance are inculcated to the child to integrate easily the active life (job) later. That's what legitimizes, according to 53% of respondents, child labor in the plantation "*«A child without training will be nothing tomorrow »*« they say.

Even if most of opinion support that children are not really submit to hard work, it is important to notice that, they all have a "rewarding" conception of child labor. This fact is highlighted by the speech of one participant in these terms "*«Our children go to school, but on Saturdays and Sundays they accompany us to farms in our cocoa, okra and groundnut plantations. We go with them to prevent them from being lazy. That's a way for us to give them an education and increase their courage so that they could take care of themselves if they failed at school. They do not really work at farm because we are aware that a child should not work »*."

Also, we have to notice that, the internal speeches and practices on the social field operation bring to light the socialization as a key issue. The needs of community and family socialization such as good manners, knowhow and courage are some elements which legitimize child labor. In other words, socialization structured imperceptibly agricultural habit of parents. Therefore, a clear understanding of this phenomenon involves a deconstruction of a posteriori of this agricultural habit.

This investigation shows also according to 24.33% of respondents that the presence of children in plantations is due to the lack of agricultural workforce in this department. In fact, the military and political crisis which happened in Ivory Coast has provoked the departure of workforces to their origin country causing suddenly the increasing of workforce cost in the Department.

**Table 1: Evolution of workforce cost**

Type of labor	Before 2002	From 2002 to the present day
Daily	1000 FCFA	2000 FCFA
Annual	100.000 FCFA	180000 to 200.000 FCFA

**Source:** Author's survey

The table shows that the cost of labor has relatively doubled, while household income has not increased. This situation characterized by the lack and the high cost of agricultural labor, will further legitimize the phenomenon of child labor in plantations. This assertion is supported by the words of this investigated person, community leader, saying, "*People sensitize us about child labor, but they have also to understand us. You cannot do all the farm work alone. We need the support of the children in the way that the workforce becomes rare and expensive. There is no money, and then we have to use our children*"

In regard to these facts, it is significant to note that it reinforces the legitimacy of the phenomenon. It is the presence of individual and collective poverty in the population. To reinforce this claim, the extent of endowment of the population was carried out. To this end, indicators such as external signs of wealth were selected. In absence of a measure of cash flow, it is the lasting material traces of their existence we measured. Observations have shown that there is a collective socio-economic status of the household, different from that of the household head. Regarding the collective socioeconomic level of the household, we referred to certain material traces such as the roof of the house and the building materials of the house. At this point three main categories of households have been distinguished: First, the poor households about 44.13% (+ mud house sheet of metal roof (old and perforated)), then the middle level households about 35.37% (+ mud house new roof plate) and finally richest households 20.5% (cement brick home + sheet metal roof).

To measure the socioeconomic level of the household head, the study considered the possession of certain goods such as radio, television, telephone, in the brief the means of expression of a certain economic ease expression. At this level again three major categories of household heads were distinguished: first some poor household heads about 33.12% (without commodity), then medium household heads about 38.18% (with few means of well economic expression) and finally the rich household heads about 28.7% (with all the means of well economic expression). Following the above, the various indicators permit to find that the proportion of poor households in the district is much higher. On this basis, the mobilization of children in plantations is seen as a bypass strategy of the situation of precarious households. Furthermore, the data has identified that the phenomenon of child labor is more accentuated in households where the father and mother are farmers and poor. Almost poor households classified in this study said they were mobilizing the help of their children not only to outline labor which became expensive but to solve the vulnerability of the household. It must therefore be said that child labor is underpinned by social and cultural constraints and is worn by the actors through a social strategy focused on bypassing the high cost of labor.

To this end, Laetitia bazzi-veil (2002: 8) showed in a study in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana that " Most experienced child workers are family helpers, thing that limit, but not excluding the risks of emotional and social deprivation.» Most certainly households that drive this phenomenon are strategists and rational, but their rationality is limited and in contradiction to the logic of the child protection in which the international and national community claim for

### 3. THE CHILD LABOR IN PLANTATIONS: SOCIAL PROTECTION ACTION

What is the purpose of the commitment of national and international policy makers in the fight for the effective elimination of child participation in the work on cocoa plantations? In the same vein, what is the objective that seeks parents to use children in cocoa plantations despite the authorities' fight against the phenomenon?

At the first poll, we can say that the operation of the National Action Plan 2012-2014 to fight against trafficking, exploitation and child labor suggest that the subject which leads actions of national and international communities is the development, the protection of the physical and psychological health of children. It is to achieve this goal that the phenomenon has become the focal point of the struggle of the international and national community in order to engage all States for "a future without child labor".

Based on observations and the functioning of the national and international community, this objective requires the formal education of children. Indeed, the idea of a community cannot depart from that of formal education one is to the other what the content is to the container. Formal education as a system of learning (instruction) and of conduct has always played a decisive role in a nation's development process. That's why instead of formal education is always at the first lodge of the priorities of nations. But this design is reduced, in the opinion of those who share what is laconically called "agricultural culture" at the parent's level of the areas study.

The observations and interviews revealed that the parents of children are indeed aware of the place of formal education in the child development and protection. This assertion is supported by the words of one interviewee, farmer, in these terms "We know that white people school is important for children even if it is to become farmers. For if you can read and write, although you can use the products to maintain the cocoa field and produce more. But all are not only school. The greatest farmers in France are literate!!! ". However, parents believe that formal education (school) is coupled to an education by working the land where the effort required correspond to the child's age at least for two modality.

The first method is that for the majority of parents of children, or 74.78%, the work on the land is an alternative to the school that does not always offer the guarantee of success and independence. And as modern Côte d'Ivoire does not control its destiny, for reasons of both historical, cultural, political and economic (Dedy S. Gozé. 1994: 125), the training of children to work in the land becomes conclusive in this regard. To reinforce this mindset, the words of one interviewee, great farmer, are reported as follows "Yes, children should help their relatives because in life, everything should be learnt, if you do not go with your child to the farm to teach him what you do tomorrow if he does not have office work, what he will become? So you have to show him what you do; but they do not work the same way like us even because they don't have the strength like us, they say; What they are doing is learning now, things are not like before, everything becomes difficult, there is no jobs". This state of mind is present in the collective consciousness of the parents. Indeed, they believe that before 1990 the advent of multiparty politics, "All children went to school and not in farms. On days when there was no class they were left at home because at that time Côte d'Ivoire was soft and there was job and money, today this is no longer possible ".

The strong presence of this logic "rewarding" of child labor in the collective consciousness of the social actors (indigenous or foreign-born parent), thrives in part from a trivially accepted ideology that " school does not give more job to children "" they go to school up is to come and manage cellular cabin in Abidjan ". On analysis, despite government efforts to improve access for all children to school at the national plan, the high rate of graduate youth unemployment reinforces certainly this ideology of parents in choosing to combine school and work in the fields. Indeed, the

examination of the employment situation shows that public employment policy is still struggling to curb youth unemployment. Young people are the first victims of unemployment and among those who work a small proportion occupy precarious jobs. For example, the youth unemployment rate in Abidjan, the largest employment area is 28.6% against 21.3% for the whole of the working population (AGEPE, 2008). Youth unemployment is mainly insertion unemployment, because the majority of the unemployed are young first-job seekers. As a proof, in 2008, first-time job seekers accounted for approximately 78.7% of the unemployed; against 55.4% in 2002. For the year 2008 in Abidjan, about 84% of young unemployed were first job seekers. Seeing this high unemployment rate, one can say like Dedy. S. & Gozé (1994: 54), that the Ivorian school produces huge social waste and almost all of these school waste is recruited from poor families.

It is therefore important to clarify that the ideology that the work of the Earth is an alternative to the school which no longer provides the guarantee of success with the high unemployment seen here and there helps to maintain and legitimize the work children in the plantations. This makes social issue timid response of public power against the phenomenon; answer that, because of its weakness, sounds like a premium to its perpetuation. This assertion is supported by a speech investigated, official, saying "I think it is better and dignified work to the field to manage a cell cabin and sleep in a slum in Abidjan after a long year of study!! The earth does not betray her man. «Child labor is seen by social actors as a response to stoppages and school failure that the authorities are struggling to provide solution for more than a decade. The woman interviewed says the same thing when he says «Our children go to school, but on Saturdays and Sundays they accompany us to farms in our cocoa, okra and groundnut plantations. We go with them to prevent them from being lazy. That's a way for us to give them an education and increase their courage so that they could take care of themselves if they failed at school. They do not really work at farm because we are aware that a child should not work ».

It is under this perspective Dedy. S. and Tapé. G. (1994: 29-30) think that;"socialization through productive work cannot be equated with exploitation of children to the extent that the effort correspond to the age of children; a dosed effort is symbolically ask which allow them to realize early on the danger of idleness; in fact, no parent takes up the cause of the child who refuses to accompany him to farm and involves unfortunate way in a case due to his presence in the village; this boredom is seen as a logical consequence of his conduct. "this assertion of the author is strengthened by about a woman farmer in these terms "*Children should help their relatives because in life all should be learned, if you do not go with your child to farm to teach him what you do tomorrow if he does not have office work, what will he become? But they do not work at the same level like us we even because they have not the strength. What they're doing is learning.* "

To this end, Laetitia bazzi-veil (2002: 6) demonstrated on the basis of a study that "82% of child labor are family assistants and the majority (57%) of children working full time. Among the family aides, almost half (48%) work full time, as well as 19% of permanent paid workers children. The status of caregiver concerns mainly Ivorian children met (100% of Aboriginal children and 80% of foreign-born children), while children paid workers are mostly foreigners. "Therefore, over 50% of farmers interviewed for this study reported using a workforce essentially structured caregivers (children aged 12-17 years).

The second method is part of socio-economic logic contract between the actors who animate this modality. This logic is underpinned by a strategy usually mobilized by non-indigenous and indigenous unable, or unwilling to resort to adult workforce much more expensive. This situation came to be manufactured or symbolically build a form of child labor. It involves soliciting child labor for the development of newly acquired land. In this opinion, the age of children is 14 and even 17 years. Obtaining this labor is done through mechanisms that rely on one or more social capital networks full of relatives, mentoring, friendship or marriage. It is as if the individual, Y, a rural activity. An activity that requires agricultural labor. Network or membership group of the individual X mobilizes a child labor force for the individual Y. This socio-economic logic has a local context marked by tolerance of communities across all sensitivities vis-à-vis child labor.

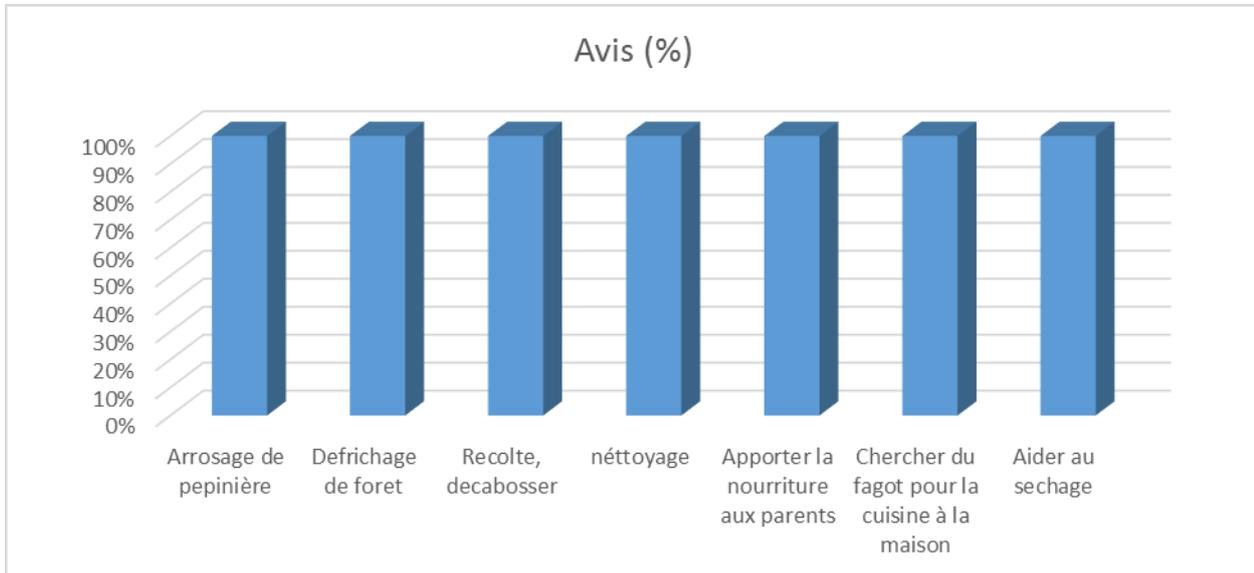
#### 4. FROM THE OCCASIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE PHYSICAL SECURITY OF THE CHILD

The majority of the actors interviewed on child labor and their entourage are the phenomenon as a practice of "physical safety of the child" and "occasional contribution", so "normal" because accepted by the community. The actors devote themselves or are encouraged to do so in the socio-cultural environment strongly marked by honorary work design of the earth, "the land never betrays", "we cannot leave them alone in the village," they say.

Child labor, in the imagination of parents and children themselves, as is link to social life as well as religiously, customarily and traditionally act. For the majority of men and women, parents, children are mobilized morning to go to the field because traditionally in the village, all children go to farms with the exception of some invalid elderly. On these conditions, leaving the children at village should not protect them against any danger that can befall to them as they are only unable to protect themselves from danger because they are too young. This thought is supported by a woman who said that "*If you leave your children at village, they could hurt themselves or have accidents while we're at farms. But,*

when they are with us at farm we can look after them. We bring them and they learn little by little for tomorrow''. Such a conception contributes to encourage child labor because once at farms children work or learn to work. Do not they say that «it is down the wall that we can see the great mason» To this end, the investigation has identified percentage by the activities performed by children in the plantations of their parents or others (Chart 1).

**Graph 1.** What are the activities that children (12-17 years) often do when they are with you in the field?



**Source:** Author's survey

The graph shows that children from 12 to 17 years are used in almost all farm activities quoted in these surveys. In the imagination of the respondents going to farm every day with the children is an essential mechanism of their education. It is however what Dedy S. and Tapé. G, (1994: 29-30) have proved saying that "the daily work is considered by traditional society as an essential mode of education. According to African wisdom, " a child who does not walk with his father is a lost child for the family " and this saying is also valid for girl in relation with her mother: " walk " here means to be constantly in alongside his father or his mother with him at farms, wherever he goes because education is informal.

The child cannot learn to agricultural activities or other activities practiced by his father only if he lives with them. But as other knowledge is acquired 'along the way' (medicine plants, men, clans and villages history, etc.), work becomes a must ". On this basis, it is essential to say that child labor in rural areas plantations is very strategic for parents (native, non-native or alien) who find on it a justification for physical security, supervision and education of child from a young age. But this rationality of the actors involved is limited by a collective ignorance of the impact that this practice could have on the psychological development of the child. For example, at Kouaméziakro village located 1km from Propronou most children go to school, but on holidays they are converted to farmers (caregivers). During the holidays, dabs and machete replace pens, books and notebooks. This is so true that interviews conducted with children have shown that the majority of them are owner of " small field " of " Kplâ-lâ". This gives us " pocket money every week " they say. This practice is only the materialization of the crystallization of the phenomenon.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This article was intended to provide answers to the social issues that shape and perpetuate child labor in eastern Côte d'Ivoire, leading producer of cocoa in the world. In the sociological debate between the authors of the comprehensive approach (Weber, 1997) to those of the explanatory approach (Durkheime, 1950), Bourdieu (1993) points out that "understanding and explaining are one." On this basis, the study tried to explain, on the one hand, by what social processes people adopt a particular behavior and on the other hand, the meaning they give to their actions.

Thus, the comprehensive perspective taken in this study allowed us to realize that the social issues of child labor have a malleability and elasticity characteristic. The facts observed and social functioning of their leaders have revealed the structural features of child labor despite the ratification of several agreements by the State of Ivory Coast. We were able to show references to socialization patterns (i), protection (ii), Physical security of children (iii) operating as perpetuating elements or not child labor in rural areas. These were identified as the pillar of norms and values of social and cultural life of different communities which therefore legitimate child labor. The lack of workforce due to the strong crisis reinforces this legitimacy of child labor in plantations. The convening of several significant events has strengthened this assertion.

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