Comparative analysis of child labour decrees in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana

Key concepts and definitions

Light Work

Not all work done by children is classified as child labour targeted for elimination. Children's or adolescents' participation in economic work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with or prejudice their schooling or their participation in vocational orientation or training programmes is generally regarded as positive.

This includes activities such as helping their parents around the home, assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays for a few hours and under adult supervision. These kinds of activities contribute to children's development and the welfare of their families. They provide children with skills and experience and prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life.

Child Labour

The term "child labour" is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially and/or morally harmful to children. It interferes with their schooling by:

- depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
- obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
- requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Worst Forms of Child labour (WFCL)

The "worst forms of child labour" cover four major categories:

- All forms of **slavery** or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for **prostitution**, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for **illicit activities**, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children **(hazardous work**).

This document compares legislation on **hazardous activities** for Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Cameroon. It draws on the following documents:

- Ghana: Hazardous child labour activity framework for Ghana (HAF), 2026
- Côte d'Ivoire: Ivorian Decree N°2017-016 and 017 MEPS/CAB (2017)
- Cameroon: Order 1993: list of hazardous work prohibited for children in Cameroon, 2025

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Ghana: Hazardous Child Labor Activity Framework for Ghana, 2026</th><th>Côte d'Ivoire: Decree N°2017-016 and 017 MEPS/CAB (2017)</th><th>Cameroon: Order 001993, list of hazardous work prohibited for children, 2025</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Minimum age</td></tr>
<tr><td>Socializing light work under adult guidance</td><td>5-12 years</td><td>13-15 years</td><td>-</td></tr>
<tr><td>Light work</td><td>13-14 years
(cannot be employed)</td><td>13-15 years
(cannot be employed)</td><td>14-17 years
(can be employed)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Normal/non-hazardous work (can be employed)</td><td>15-17 years</td><td>16-17 years
(apprenticeship possible from 14 years)</td><td>14-17 years</td></tr>
<tr><td>Hazardous activities</td><td>> 18 years</td><td>> 18 years[1]</td><td>> 18 years [2]</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Working hours for light work</td></tr>
<tr><td>for children aged
hours per day
hours per week</td><td>13-14 years
2 h per day on a school day, outside school hours. Work during school hours is prohibited.
15 h per week during a school week</td><td>13-15 years
2 h per day on school day (4 h per day on non-school day)
10 h per week during school term (14 h per week during school holidays)</td><td>14-17 years
8 h per day (for children under 16 this must include a cumulative rest period of 2 hours for each 8-hour period worked)</td></tr>
<tr><td>for children aged
hours per day / per week</td><td>15-17 years
4 h per day in agriculture / 25 h per week
8 h per day in sedentary work / 42 h per week</td><td>16-17 years
8 h per day / 40 h per week</td><td>16-17 years
8 h per day</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Night work</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Prohibited between 6 PM and 6 AM for work in field, bush or farm; and between 8 PM and 6 AM in community.</td><td>Prohibited between 7 PM and 7 AM</td><td>Prohibited between 8 PM and 6 AM[3]</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Carrying Weight</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Up to 30% body weight for up to 3km.
Up to 50% of body weight for shorter distance (less than 1km).</td><td colspan="3">
<table>
<tr><th rowspan="3">Types of loads (vehicle included)</th><th colspan="4">Côte d'Ivoire</th><th colspan="4">Cameroon</th></tr>
<tr><th colspan="2">Boys</th><th colspan="2">Girls</th><th colspan="2">Boys</th><th colspan="2">Girls</th></tr>
<tr><th>14-15 years</th><th>16-17 years</th><th>14-15 years</th><th>16-17 years</th><th>14-15 years</th><th>16-17 years</th><th>14-15 years</th><th>16-17 years</th></tr>
<tr><td>Carrying heavy loads</td><td>15 kg</td><td>20 kg</td><td>8 kg</td><td>10 kg</td><td>15 kg</td><td>20 kg</td><td>8 kg</td><td>10 kg</td></tr>
<tr><td>Trnsprt by railway cart</td><td colspan="2">500 kg</td><td colspan="2">300 kg</td><td colspan="2">500 kg</td><td>15 kg</td><td>300 kg</td></tr>
<tr><td>...by wheelbarrow</td><td colspan="2">40 kg</td><td colspan="2">30 kg</td><td colspan="2">40 kg</td><td>Prohibited</td><td>30 kg</td></tr>
<tr><td>...by 3 / 4-wheel vehicle</td><td colspan="2">60 kg</td><td colspan="2">35 kg</td><td colspan="2">60 kg</td><td colspan="2">35 kg</td></tr>
<tr><td>...by handcart</td><td colspan="2">130 kg</td><td colspan="2">Prohibited</td><td colspan="2">130 kg</td><td colspan="2">Prohibited</td></tr>
<tr><td>...by cargo tricycle</td><td>50 kg</td><td>75 kg</td><td colspan="2">Prohibited</td><td>50 kg</td><td>75 kg</td><td colspan="2">Prohibited</td></tr>
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</td></tr>
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[1] The Côte d'Ivoire decree states that hazardous activities can be undertaken by children aged 16-17 under the condition that: i) "their health, safety, and morals are guaranteed"; and ii) they have received a specific and adequate (vocational) training in relation to the activity.

[2] The Cameroon decree states that some hazardous activities can be undertaken if supervised by an adult, see table below.

[3] Cameroon's *Arrêté n° 017/MTLS/DEGRE du 27 mai 1969 relatif au travail des enfants* prohibits night work in industry.

Hazardous Activities in Cocoa			
List of Activities	**Ghana** Hazardous Child Labor Activity Framework for Ghana (HAF) 2026	**Côte d'Ivoire** Decree N°2017-016 and 017 MEPS/CAB, 2017	**Cameroon** Order 001993, laying down the list of hazardous work prohibited for children, 2025
Clearing of forest, scrubland and felling of trees	X	X	X*
Removing tree stumps	X	X	X*
Digging holes		X	X*
Bush burning	X	X	X
Exposure to agrochemicals or manipulation of agrochemicals (sale, transportation, storage, handling, application and cleaning)	X	X	X
Being present or working in the vicinity of farm during spraying of agrochemicals or re-entering a sprayed farm within less than approved re-entry periods[4]	X		
Using machetes/long cutlass for weeding or pruning	X	X	X*
Climbing trees higher than 2.5 metres	X		
Working with motorized farm machinery	X	X	X
Harvesting overhead cocoa pods with sharp tools	X	X	X*
Breaking cocoa pods with sharp tools	X	X	X*
Working without adequate basic foot and body protective clothing (e.g. long sleeves, trousers and 'Afro Moses,' wellington boots, overalls)	X		
Carrying heavy loads beyond permissible carrying weight	X	X	X
Child working alone on the farm in isolation (i.e. beyond the visible or audible range of the nearest adult)	X		
Charcoal production		X	X
Game hunting with a weapon or trap		X	X
Working long hours	X *long hours = >4h per day in agriculture, >25h per week*	X	X
Work during school hours	X		
Night work	X	X	X[5]

Cameroon's Order 001993 laying down the list of hazardous work prohibited for children prohibits any use of a sharp and/or blunt object and/or weapon* ***without adult supervision.*

[4] Insecticides-two to seven days, fungicides-three to six hours and fertilizers-one to two hours.

[5] Cameroon's *Arrêté n° 017/MTLS/DEGRE du 27 mai 1969 relatif au travail des enfants* prohibits night work in industry.