

CONFLICT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy in Conflict-Affected Contexts Programme

This report summarizes findings from an analysis undertaken as part of the UNICEF Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy Programme (PBEA) funded by the Government of the Netherlands. The purpose of the analysis was to explore the underlying causes of the Ivorian crisis, to investigate the effect of the multiple crises on the country's educational system, and to identify ways to support national efforts to consolidate peace in the country, particularly through education. It should be noted that the final Côte d'Ivoire conflict analysis focused heavily on the impact of the conflict on the formal education system and the peacebuilding efforts within the formal education sector. Therefore, it is sector specific and in many ways more an impact analysis rather than a causal analysis.

The analysis included a document review of studies on education and conflict in the Ivorian context, as well as interviews and surveys of government officials and citizens in Yamoussoukro, Abidjan and 15 other areas. Interviews were conducted with government officials at the national and decentralized levels, university leaders, union representatives, teachers, students, school administrators, school management committees, and community, religious and traditional leaders. A total of 1,450 students at 26 schools in 16 regions completed a survey that looked at their socio-demographic information, educational/professional trajectories, perceptions of the crises, and personal reflections on conflict, violence and the promotion of peace. In addition, primary school students were invited to draw their impressions of their school before, during and after the crises.

The PBEA programme, 2012-2016, seeks to build peaceful societies by strengthening the role of education in peacebuilding and integrating peacebuilding within the education system.



Context

During the 30-year regime of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny, which followed the country's independence from France, Côte d'Ivoire experienced enormous economic growth and modernization as one of the largest exporters of coffee and cocoa beans in the world. However, it did not substantially modernize or diversify its economy and remained dependent on a few export crops. During the 1980s, declining terms of trade for its exports, the global recession and structural adjustment programmes devastated the economy.

As economic stability declined, social dissatisfaction increased – particularly because, during economic growth, labour migration from the north and neighbouring countries increased, and foreign nationals were allowed to settle and own property. Subsequently, there was an upsurge of ethnic tensions based on shifting concepts of citizenship and identity, and linked to the control of resources, as settlers came to be viewed as foreigners who should not have property rights. Following protests, Houphouët-Boigny was forced to hold elections in 1990, which he won with 81 per cent of the vote. He led the country until his death in 1993, which was followed by a period of intense political struggle and instrumentalization of the notion of Ivorité (versus foreigners) in mainstream politics. This was set against a backdrop of rising inequalities, unemployment and inequitable access to social services – particularly education – which fuelled grievances and intensified conflict, especially between the north and south of the country.

The first military coup in the nation's history took place in December 1999, driven by poor material conditions for the army and concerns of corruption and authoritarianism in the Bédié Government. General Guei, who ruled the transitional Government, rigged elections and declared himself president in 2000. Protests forced him from office, and Laurent Gbagbo assumed leadership of a coalition Government in 2001, ushering in a brief period of peace and national reconciliation. In September 2002, a coup attempt led by dissidents and disaffected military devolved into civil war.

In 2003, a ceasefire ended the war but left the country divided, with the northern half under rebel control and a United Nations peacekeeping force between the north and south. The years between 2003 and 2010 have been described as a period of 'no war, no peace'. In March 2007, Gbagbo and former rebel forces leader Guillaume Soro signed an agreement that made Soro the Prime Minister and reunited the Government. The rebel forces were integrated into the national armed forces and elections were called, though delayed until 2010. Alassane Dramane Ouattara won the November 2010 elections, but Gbagbo refused to concede, and a five-month stand-off began. In April 2011, Gbagbo was forced from office by Ouattara's supporters with the help of French and United Nations troops. The post-election crisis had disastrous effects in Abidjan and the west. Many of Gbagbo's supporters fled to Ghana; currently, Gbagbo is in The Hague, where he faces charges of crimes against humanity.

Key conflict drivers at the national level

Côte d'Ivoire is emerging from periodic conflict and violence that began in 2002 and lasted until May 2011, with the end of the post-electoral crisis. The root causes of conflict and conflict drivers that contributed to the crises include those outlined in the following boxes.

SECURITY AND JUSTICE

- **Insecurity:** Insecurity due to inter-communitarian violence, the legitimization of violence to address local disputes, checkpoints, physical threats and the absence of the rule of law was a key conflict driver. Within the education system, checkpoints prevented the free movement of students and access to education. Some parents were afraid to send their children to school, while others fled the areas experiencing conflict. In some localities, relations between militaries and teachers and students were tense. Teachers were attacked by parents or driven out of villages due to their political affiliations, creating a general environment of insecurity. While Abidjan has experienced a return to normalcy, periodic violence and insecurity persist in rural areas, particularly in the western part of the country.
- **Lack of reparations:** Reparations to Ivorians for losses or suffering experienced during the conflict, such as looting of homes or suspended pay for civil servants, have not been provided. Respondents to the analysis indicated they are weary of repeated promises for reparations that remain unfulfilled. They have also noted the need to end the culture of impunity, particularly at the local level.

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

- **Ethnic divisions:** Historical divisions between autochthons (indigenous Ivorians) and non-autochthons (foreigners, as well as Ivorians who live and work in regions other than their region of origin), continue to define the political landscape in Côte d'Ivoire. Rooted in issues of land ownership and competition for resources, these divisions were aggravated by colonial influences that privileged migrants and divided power and economic resources based on ethnicity and territoriality. They continued under the Houphouët-Boigny regime's 'cosmopolitan policies' that gave political and economic rights to foreigners and famously declared that "the land belongs to those who cultivate it." The concept of Ivorité – which gained political ground in the 1990s and continued under the Front populaire ivoirien (Ivorian Popular Front) through its national identification policies and programme – was used as a political tool and exacerbated the fragmentation of society. These divisions created an atmosphere of distrust and were mirrored at the school level between teachers and administrators, as well as among students.
- **Political corruption and exclusion:** A lack of multiparty freedom dates back to independence, with a history of violent repression and criminalization of political opponents, often based on changing concepts of citizenship. Corruption and nepotism became quite common among the Ivorian elite. The 1990s, in particular, were characterized by intense power struggles between political parties, drawn along territorial and autochthonous ideological lines, and was a key factor in the 2010 crisis.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- **Poverty and unequal economic development:** Following a booming growth period and modernization during the 1970s, liberalization of global markets and economic recession in the early 1980s were catastrophic. The State was unable to meet increasing demands for employment, social services and salary increases for the civil service and military, resulting in mass protests. Dependency on foreign funding grew. High unemployment drove youth to rural areas, where land was held by non-autochthons. This contributed to xenophobia and strengthening of nationalist sentiments. After the 1980s' recession and the introduction of structural adjustment programmes, the Government stopped covering many costs of learning, and expenses were shifted to parents. Although there is renewed commitment to free education, for many, it is taking time for that promise to become a reality. Recently, there has been a return to high levels of economic growth – at 9.8 per cent in 2012 – bringing the prospect of improved living standards for the population and a return to investment in social services, including education.

SOCIAL ISSUES

- **Poor quality and relevance of education:** Côte d'Ivoire's education system has grown increasingly unfair, with disparities in access and quality marked by geography and economic status. Most schools have been concentrated in urban areas. Disruptions in education and closure of schools and universities have contributed to an increase in private schooling for those who can afford it.
- **Violence:** Several localities in Côte d'Ivoire have suffered from a generalized climate of violence. While the sources of tension are not new, the presence of conflict gave legitimacy to the use of violence as a means to resolve conflicts. During the crises, schools were implicated in the spread of violence. The leading student union – Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire (Ivorian Federation of Students and School Pupils) – became a highly politicized, or politically manipulated, organization. As a result, it spread hatred and stigma, engaged in intimidation and killings, and extorted school management committee funds and scholarships.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- **Land disputes:** Tensions between traditional ideas of land ownership and government policies have existed since the turn of the twentieth century. Disputes centre on boundaries between villages and individuals and around the illegal sale or resale of land. Policies have shifted repeatedly to either support traditional autochthonous systems or to favour foreigners. These shifts are largely in response to changing socio-economic conditions that lead political elites to favour certain population groups over others. Most recent government policies support autochthons but have not been operationalized, and much of the rural land is managed informally according to traditional concepts of ownership. Land issues have been the primary factor fuelling ethnic polarization and nationalistic concepts of Ivorian citizenship.

The role of education in peacebuilding

Wide variations in the effects of the crises across Côte d'Ivoire were noted. In the education system, the crises added a number of underlying challenges, including a crisis in authority, frequent teacher strikes, changes to pedagogy, underinvestment in teacher training, the burden of school fees and lack of transparency in the management of school committees. In 2002, when the country was split in two, entire educational institutions were delocalized from the north to the south and hosted elsewhere. A parallel system of education based on double shifts was created in government-controlled areas, contributing to a decline in education quality. In Adidjan, there was a large influx of students into the city to take their exams; in other areas, schools were disconnected from the Ministry of Education's financial and administrative support. Parents in these areas had to shoulder the cost of operating schools, and students had to make due with volunteer teachers. Funds available to operate schools varied widely, depending on the ability of parents and communities to raise contributions.

In 2010, many people fled Abidjan for the interior in the wake of post-election upheaval. Courses were interrupted or suspended for days or weeks during times of violence. Schools were occasionally used as shelters or were subject to looting and arson, resulting in physical damage as well as the permanent closure of some schools. Students lost identity documents. The insecure environment and politically divisive nature of the conflict created an overly politicized environment in schools and was disruptive for teachers and students. The conflict also impeded the collection of local taxes used, in part, to fund education.

Despite these challenges, Côte d'Ivoire has demonstrated tremendous resilience, launching initiatives in response to each crisis to ensure a rapid return to normalcy. The Ministry of Education adjusted the curricula and school calendar so that no exam cycles were missed at the primary and secondary levels; the creation of 'relay' (double-shift) and backup schools, the *écoles relais* and *écoles de sauvegarde*, helped accommodate displaced students. In 2010–2011, the Government and administration were very involved in awareness campaigns and practical efforts to get schools back on track, including recruiting volunteer teachers in the north into full-time employment and incorporating Muslim schools under the Ministry of Education.

To curb violence, the Government forbade secondary-level student unions that had historically been violent. It installed parents as the heads of local school councils (previously, local officials held these posts, making collection of fees controversial and reducing trust in the councils). The Programme Présidentiel d'Urgence (Presidential Emergency Programme) made funds available to rebuild and rehabilitate schools. To allow for stabilization, the Ministry of Education asked teachers to avoid striking right after the regime change, a request that was granted for more than a year. Universities were closed for 18 months in 2011 in order to update the public university system, reduce corruption and the influence of violent student unions, reconstruct buildings and update technology to reduce enrolment abuses. Strong efforts have been made to rid the curriculum of stereotypes and other controversial content, and this perception was reinforced in interviews with parents, students and teachers. The Government has also introduced Education on Human Rights and Citizenship as a component of the curriculum that focuses on child rights, protection and learning to live together, though efforts to prepare teachers for instruction and inclusion of citizenship in final examinations have been lacking.

The most notable factor regarding Côte d'Ivoire's education system today is disillusionment with schooling as an avenue to advancement. School is no longer seen as a path to social mobility or finding work, as employment is seen as linked more to the informal sector or social capital. Cheating and grade manipulation in schools is common, contributing to a devaluing of accomplishment. There is a universal perception among teachers, parents, community and religious leaders that the pedagogy and teaching style are negative, and a perceived decline in education standards, due in part to a decrease in teacher's authority, rapid pedagogic changes over the past decade, weak teacher training and high levels of violence at schools.

Peacebuilding entry points in education and learning

Côte d'Ivoire's education system reflects the conflicts and tensions experienced within broader society, and the analysis identified a strong sentiment that peace promotion must engage all levels of society, not just the school. It also called for promoting an Ivorian approach to peace promotion, drawing on traditional alliances and a culture of forgiveness to promote peace.

Political and policy responses

- **Teacher training:** Invest significantly in teacher training and expand the quality and length of professional development for teachers at primary and secondary schools. The introduction of three new pedagogies during periods of crises and the legacy of structural adjustment and recession have resulted in varying levels of skills among teachers and a decline in education standards. In addition, strengthen teachers' capacities to deliver the human rights and citizenship curriculum.
- **Curriculum:** Create space within the current curriculum for arts, sports, human rights and citizenship. These subjects are generally put aside when the curriculum is seen as overloaded. Teaching concepts of Ivoirité and autochthony was a contested area, with some respondents keen on explaining these concepts at school and others believing they should be banished. In general, however, the curriculum itself is not seen as a divider.

Structural reforms

- **Security:** Provide improved security both within and around schools, such as fencing, street lighting and regular night patrols. Involvement of area commanders and community leaders in promoting security at the school and beyond is also essential.
- **School neutrality:** Maintain schools as neutral sites and ensure they are not used for political meetings or as military bases.

Individual and interpersonal changes

- **Values education:** Emphasize the promotion of values within school, recognizing that morality and respect can be taught but on its own is insufficient. There is a need to promote and enable active engagement with students in dialogue, critical thinking and reflection with regard to understanding the conflict dynamics and encouraging values of tolerance, respect and conflict resolution, and to link learning and dialogue to the larger society and political sphere.
- **Culture of excellence:** Publicly celebrate merit and excellence of students as a way to promote a social model based on valuing work and personal investment.