

**WEST AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY  
STRENGTHENING FOR CONFLICT  
PREVENTION STUDY**

***Francophone Civil Society Organization Assessment:  
Côte d'Ivoire Synthesis Report***

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**Team Members**

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ACROYMINS	NAME	LOCATION
AADeC	Association d'Appui à l'Auto Développement Communautaire	Mali
ACAT	Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture)	Côte d'Ivoire
ACOD	Association Conseil pour le Développement	Mali
ACHS	African Center for Human Security	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
ACTN	Association des Chefs traditionnels du Nord	Korhogo, Côte d'Ivoire
ADC	Association pour le Développement et l'Appui aux Communautés	Bamako, Mali
AEC	l'Aide à l'Enfance Canada	Canadian NGO operating in Mali
ADAC	Association pour le Développement et l'Appui aux Communautés (ADAC)	Works in Kadiolo and Kolondiéba cercles mainly on sustainable agriculture
ADG	Association pour l'appui au développement global	Mali
AECI	Association des Amis des Enfants de CI	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire I
AEDEM	Agence évangélique de développement du Mali	Sévaré, Mali
AFIP	Association des femmes pour les initiatives de paix.	Bamako, Mali
AID-CI	Association International pour la Démocratie Section Cote d'Ivoire	Cocody, Côte d'Ivoire
APSD	Association pour la survie du delta	Djenne, Mali
AMDH	Association Malienne des Droits de l'homme	Bamako, Mali
ASG	Association subaahi gumo	Badalabougou, Mali
AI/ CI	Amnesty International-C.I	Côte d'Ivoire
AID	Association Internationale pour la Démocratie	Côte d'Ivoire
ASERNI	Association d'étude et de mise en valeur des ressources naturelles et des institutions).	Mali
CCCI	La Compagnie Cotonnière de Côte d'Ivoire	Côte d'Ivoire I
COBAS	Coopérative de Commercialisation de Bétaïls et d'Approvisionnement de l'Abattoir de Sikasso	Sikasso, Mali
CAFO	Coordination des associations et ONG Féminines	Bamako, Mali
CEACY	La Coopérative des Exploitants Agricoles Caha Ygnion	Côte d'Ivoire
CMRN	Comité de Médiation pour la Réconciliation Nationale	Côte d'Ivoire
CNLPAL	Commission Nationale de Lutte Contre la prolifération des armes légères.	Bamako, MALI
CONGACI	Collectif des ONG Actives de CI	Côte d'Ivoire - member of WANEP
CPD	Coopérative des pêcheurs de Djenné	Djenne, Mali
CUA-CI	Club de l'Union Africaine-section Côte d'Ivoire	Côte d'Ivoire
CV-CI	La Croix Verte de Côte d'Ivoire	Cote d'Ivoire
DOZOS	Confrérie des chasseurs traditionnels	Côte d'Ivoire
FCR	Forum des partis politiques	Côte d'Ivoire —created by GERDDES
FOFCI	Fédération des Organisations. Féminines de Côte d'Ivoire	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire I
FPP	Forum des partis politiques	Cote d'Ivoire—created by GERDDES
GERDDES-CI),	Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches sur la Démocratie et le Développement Economique et Social en Côte d'Ivoire	Cote d'Ivoire
GDRN5	Réseau gestion décentralisée des ressources naturelles Mopti	Mopti, Mali
INAGEF	Institut Africain de gestion et de formation	Mali
LIDHO	La Ligue Ivoirienne des Droits de l'Homme	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
MNFSPUN	Le mouvement national des femmes pour la sauvegarde de la paix et de l'unité nationale	Mali
OLPED	Observatoire de la Liberté de la Presse de l'Ethique et de la Déontologie	Côte d'Ivoire
OIMPJ	Observatoire de l'Indépendance de la Magistrature et du Pouvoir Judiciaire	Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
PCASED	Programme de coordination et d'assistance pour la sécurité et le développement.	Bamako, Mali
Plateforme Paysanne	Coordination national de la plate forme des organisations paysannes	
RANCPAL – MALI	Réseau D'action nationale contre la prolifération des armes légères.	Mali
RIOF	Réseau Ivoirien des Organisations Féminines	Côte d'Ivoire
SYNARES	Syndicat National de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur	Côte d'Ivoire
UNCTRM	Union nationale des coopératives de transporteurs routiers du mali	Sogoniko, Mali
VAFAG	Vision et Action des Femmes Africaines contre les Guerres	Côte d'Ivoire



## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This Synthesis Report covers the assessment of Côte d'Ivoire civil society organizations (CSO) and their capacity to undertake conflict prevention and management functions. The overall assessment examined CSO conflict resolution capacity at three levels, that is, (a) the local community level; (b) around issues of with a national scope; and (c) those conflicts that had a "cross-border" or sub-regional dimension. The Côte d'Ivoire country assessment is one of two Francophone studies conducted for the West Africa Regional Program of USAID as part of a broader study entitled "West Africa—Civil Society Strengthening for Conflict Prevention."

A team of three consultants, one international, one Ivoirian and one sub-regional (from Burkina Faso), conducted the assessment over a period of three weeks in August and September 2001. A total of 30 Ivoirian CSOs were contacted during this period of which 15 were interviewed in-depth including the administration of a survey questionnaire (Annex 2) that was developed for use in both the Francophone and Anglophone country-level assessments. Interviews took place in both Abidjan and Korhogo (northern Cote d'Ivoire). Consolidated CSO Capacity Building Table in Annex 1 provides a summary of CSO capacity extracted from the 15 surveys conducted along three dimensions:

1. Internal governance
2. Internal management
3. Civic action including advocacy and conflict resolution

This survey covered additional issues as well including:

- the type of CSO being analyzed, i.e., primary level CSOs including traditional community based organizations; intermediary CSOs including classic NGOs as well as associations of CBOs (e.g., unions, cooperatives and other federated bodies);
- the views of CSOs concerning the nature of the legal, policy and regulatory environment, that is whether it favored CSO participation or not in such "public" acts as conflict prevention and management.

The Côte d'Ivoire team also prepared a total of four mini case studies and extracted six anecdotes from the in-depth interviews whose purpose was to illustrate various aspects of CSO capacity as well as the nature of conflicts and CSOs role in resolving them. Many of the findings, conclusions and lessons learned found in the body of this study were drawn from these case studies and anecdotes found in Annex 3 of this report.

Because this was the second of the two Country Studies undertaken, we provide a comparative analysis with that of Malian CSOs in terms of capacity to engage in conflict resolution activities.

Finally, the Team prepared a detailed Country Study (in French) which provides a more in-depth discussion of the summary findings and conclusions found in this Synthesis Report. The Côte d'Ivoire Country Study is found in Annex 4.

The remainder of this report is organized as follows:

- ❖ Section II presents an overall discussion of the nature of Ivoirian civil society including the different categories of CSOs that inhabit it.

- ❖ Section III provides an analysis of the legal, policy and regulatory environment in terms of the degree to which it encourages or discourages CSO participation in conflict prevention and management efforts.
- ❖ Section IV examines the types of conflict that the Côte d'Ivoire team found during the study.
- ❖ Section V examines the three dimensions of CSO capacity noted above that ultimately determine their effectiveness in undertaking conflict prevention and management functions.

## **I. CIVIL SOCIETY IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE**

### **A. Principal Findings**

Civil society in Côte d'Ivoire is, in comparison to Mali and most other West African countries, quite weak. This is surprising given the relative political stability of the country and its economic success, at least through the 1980s. There are reasons for this however, and among the more important the following are noted:

- ❖ Ivoirian civil society, while diverse and density at the primary level, is very weak in terms of well differentiated and specialized associations above this level. This is due to a number of historical factors. The long reign of Felix Houphouët-Boigny and his ruling party (PDCI-RDA), while generally benign, inhibited the development of more modern traditional associations and intermediary level NGOs and federated bodies. Those that did exist were organized by the party/state along traditional corporatist lines found in much of Africa. Their participation was therefore structured and limited. One-party rule until the death of the country's president in the early 1990s further discouraged the development of a more mature civil society.
- ❖ The political culture of Ivoirian society has permitted a far lower level of social capital to develop than is the case of its Malian counterpart. While not rooted to systematic investigation the team came to the conclusion that notions of inclusiveness and tolerance are much less present in Ivoirian political culture as well. Social capital, we believe, is a prerequisite to a society's capacity for resolving public problems including social conflict. The bitter and intractable political conflicts that have arisen since the mid-1990s are indicative of a current deficit of social capital
- ❖ The capacity of Ivoirian CSOs suffered in part due to the country's good luck. Because CI did not suffer a major calamity, man-made (war) or natural (drought, famine), it never was the subject of much attention by international NGOs. As was noted in the Mali study, and as demonstrated elsewhere in West Africa, international NGOs, often with donor support, have been the principal stimulus for the creation or nurturing of an indigenous and often autonomous NGO sector. They have also been the principal source of capacity building assistance to local NGOs and CBOs from the 1990s onwards.
- ❖ Neither did CI attract much attention from the classic development NGOs because its "economic miracle" managed to prevent the extreme poverty found in countries to the North at least until the early 1980's. These development NGOs are often a precursor to civil society's emergence. As a result an independent grouping of non-state actors did develop very powerfully in CI.

- ❖ Finally, non-traditional civil society also developed later in CI than it did in countries like Mali that began its democratization process in 1992. Non-traditional CSOs that undertake such civic action activities as human rights monitoring, anti-corruption efforts and conflict resolution normally only emerge once political liberalization is well under way. Added to this is the fact that the democratic transition that eventually did take place has largely been stalled due to the inability of political elites to agree on the rules of electoral politics and, more generally, a rule of law that encouraged the inclusion and participation of all societal actors in democratic politics.

There has been some differentiation (structural characteristic) and specialization (functional roles) of associational life in CI. These are indicators of civil society's development. These factors, however, are much less advanced than in Mali. A wide range of community-based organizations does exist at the primary level of association. Mutual-aid societies proliferate as do a large number of economically-oriented associations reflecting the much greater economic activity that has been, until recently, a distinguishing factor of the country's development. With the exception of the economic associations (e.g., primary cooperatives, credit associations, producer groups), far fewer modern CBOs have emerged in CI than in Mali. As a result, far fewer CBOs of either a modern or traditional cast (e.g., hunters, *griots*) have taken on public tasks such as representation or the defense and promotion of member interests. Of the 15 CSOs interviewed in Côte d'Ivoire, only three associations, those representing traditional chiefs and hunters and a primary cooperative in Korhogo, were considered primary level CSOs.<sup>1</sup>

Surprisingly this study found fewer Ivoirian CSOs occupying the intermediary level of association than might have been expected and than exist in Mali and in many other African countries. One of the principal reasons for this is the historically small number of international donors and NGOs that established operations in CI. Elsewhere these donors provided the assistance necessary to first foster NGO development and later build their capacity over time. Our discussions with the full range of CI respondents indicated that most intermediary NGOs were still engaged in the delivery of development services (e.g., health, agriculture, micro-enterprise) to the local level rather than building the capacity of grassroots CBOs to undertake these tasks on their own. Primary level cocoa cooperatives and producer groups are an exception to this generalization. There is also a dearth of federated bodies and sectoral or geographically based sub-national networks. Such networks are usually capable of supporting their member CBOs, including promoting and defending their social, economic and political interests vis-à-vis government at all levels. The two intermediary CSOs interviewed i.e., CUA and *Notre Nation*, were classic NGOs. We were unable to find any federated bodies or networks at the sub-national level at all.

Similarly surprising was the finding that there were a relatively large number of tertiary level or specialized support CSOs whose principal functions are (a) providing support (e.g., capacity building, representation, research) to intermediary CSOs; and (b) engaging national government over a range of issues that affect Ivoirian civil society as a whole. The team interviewed ten of these specialized CSOs including the national level federation of teachers (SYNARES), a woman's NGO apex organizations (FOFCI), two national level professional associations (OIMPJ and OLPED), four human rights organizations (GERRDES, Amnesty International, LIDHO and

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<sup>1</sup> As with the Mali Study, the principal methodological lacuna was the lack of CBOs interviewed. This largely due to time constraints and not interest.

MIDH), and a research and training organization (AID-CI). Two of these human rights organizations were the branches of international NGOs.

## **B. Principal Conclusions**

The normal structure of a mature, well-differentiated and functionally specialized civil society is a pyramid with a broad base of primary associations, a smaller group of intermediary NGOs and federated bodies, and a small number of specialized CSOs at the summit. In CI quite a different pattern was found. The relatively large number of specialized CSOs at the top indicates that power and decision making has been centralized in CI. Non-state actors have tended to cluster around this concentration of state power. The problem that this poses for civil society's role in policy advocacy and conflict resolution is that there are few CSO intermediaries that are capable of linking the broad base of CBOs with specialized CSOs at the summit. This decreases the capability of civil society to act as a coherent whole, with each level supporting the role of the other. Considering that it is at the local level where many conflicts take place and/or where their impacts are felt, CBOs appear to be largely on their own in trying to address these problems.

Effectiveness of individual CSOs to undertake conflict management and prevention is as much the result of the strength of civil society overall, as it is in the specific capacities (skills, tools, strategies) that they develop and bring to bear in conflict situations. This includes the horizontal and vertical relationships that are developed between CSOs at the three levels of association (structure) and the various tasks that different CSOs undertake on behalf of their counterparts at these three levels (function). Specifically, the dearth of intermediaries prevents them from providing information, training and catalytic functions to CBOs; and specialized CSOs capable of conducting policy research and formulation concerning conflict resolution strategies or engaging central government over its decisions and actions are largely cut-off from the primary level.

The overall conclusion, expanded upon in the following three sections, is that the weakness of Ivoirian civil society is intimately tied to its inability to undertake conflict prevention and management functions. The weakness of Ivoirian civil society is due in part to the fact that the Ivoirian political system is unstable. This study concludes that the near-term prospects for CSOs to effectively engage in conflict resolution functions in CI are not bright.

## **II. THE LEGAL, POLICY AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT**

A favorable legal, policy and regulatory environment is essential if CSOs are going to participate in such civic or public actions as conflict management and prevention. At the same time, without well established, clearly defined and equitably applied "rules of the game," the contestation for, access to and use of public goods and services will necessarily lead to conflict among competing societal interests. Our interviews and survey questionnaire focused on both these functions of the Malian legal, policy and regulatory environment for the purpose analyzing whether CSOs were enabled or constrained in undertaking conflict prevention and management functions; and on whether this environment was itself a cause for conflict either because critical rules of the game do not exist, or fail to be enforced.

In addition to the legal framework, the study also examined the institutional context to determine whether existing state institutions were capable of designing, enforcing and adjudicating the rules of the game (e.g., laws, policies, regulations), thus helping to resolve conflict, or whether they were not able to do so, thus contributing to conflict.

### A. Principal Findings

Somewhat surprisingly, this study found that 11 of the 15 CSOs interviewed contended that the legal context is favorable. Two of the three CBOs had no real opinion since the formal legal system was unrelated to their ability to operate. In the new Constitution (July 2000) of Côte d'Ivoire there is strong reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the state's commitment to safeguard them. Much like Mali, the Law of Associations (loi 60-315 du 21 septembre 1960) that governs the formation of all forms of association except labor unions and some professional associations dates from the colonial era. It provides a fairly easy set of requirements for registration and succeeding governments seem to have done little to constrain this right. The application of the concerned law governing trade and labor unions has also been positive.

An indication of CI civil society's treatment by government has been the prominent role that it has played (at government invitation) in a range of important political fora over the past decade. Examples of this participation include the fact that the president of the country's first National Election Commission is the president of one of the most prominent NGOs, GERDDES. The speaker of the directorate managing the ongoing "Forum de la Reconciliation Nationale" is the president of CI National Union of Journalists. CSOs, primarily national level specialized organizations, have been invited to participate alongside government in national workshops covering issues ranging from women's rights to environmental protection.

What has not happened, however, is the actual participation of CSOs in any meaningful form of governance. They are largely unable to contribute to the formulation of public policy or the delivery of public services below the national level, for example. This is in stark contrast to the situation in Mali where CSOs from the national to local levels have increasingly gained recognition as partners in the country's development. The principal legal and institutional reforms that have encouraged this in Mali and that are totally absent in CI revolve around decentralization and the creation of autonomous and democratically elected local governments. Whether this is a reflection of the desire to maintain control at the center by various Ivorian governments or just a coincidence, the impact has been to deny CSOs with entry into arenas of decisionmaking that are close to them, potentially sympathetic to their views, and capable of participating in the numerous conflicts whose origins are most often local.

In addition a number of other constraints tend to inhibit both CSO participation in conflict resolution and actual provoke conflict in some cases. These include:

- ❖ The establishment of an effective and fair judiciary capable of adjudicating competing interests is a *sine qua non* for ensuring social peace and resolving conflict in any country. The judiciary in Cote d'Ivoire is both corrupt and weak, thus leaving a major gap in conflict resolution institutions and processes.
- ❖ The continued registration of most CSOs apart from labor, under the 1960 (colonial era) Law of Associations. The lack of more modern laws governing associations, particularly at the

local level and among federated bodies, means that important areas of CSO participation in social, economic and political life remain undefined.

- ❖ The unresponsiveness of Ivoirian governmental institutions to the public in their administration of the law. This has served as a principal cause of conflict either directly or through the non-enforcement of laws and regulations.
- ❖ The on-going political conflict that results in a breakdown in the social contract between the government and its people and the loss of consensus among political elites over the contestation of power. Many of the conflicts examined in this study, whether over access to natural resources, educational reform, or ethnicity are the result of fundamental societal cleavages that have become politicized for political gain.

As in Mali, this study found that most cross-border conflicts (e.g., harassment of commercial actors at border crossings, management of ethnic tensions) are as much the result of ill-conceived, non-existing or poorly enforced sub-regional laws and policies as they are from the nature of the conflict itself (e.g., competition for and the use of resources, school subsidies). The lack of binding bilateral agreements between states like Mali and Burkina Faso as well as the failure to enforce ECOWAS policies and conventions have been and continue to be principal causes of cross-border conflict.

## **B. Principal Conclusions**

CSOs that were interviewed during this assessment were mainly urban-based and elite-led organizations with few linkages to or roots in grassroots communities. Their view that the legal and institutional context is favorable reflects of their ability to operate with few constraints rather than whether they are able to participate in a meaningful or effective way in solving public problems. A conflicted polity makes solving conflicts, particularly at the local level, difficult at best. It is unlikely that until the macro-political rules find consensus among the principal institutional actors that Ivoirian CSOs will become effective public actors in their own right. We conclude that an unfavorable enabling environment for civil society participation in conflict resolution exists at the local and national levels and across borders within the region.

## **III. THE NATURE OF CONFLICTS**

To provide a context for the assessment of CSO capacity in the area of conflict prevention and management, this study first examines the principal types of conflicts that they have been involved in over the past decade.

### **A. Principal Findings**

#### **1. The Breakdown of Political Consensus: What Role Civil Society?**

Following the death of the country's founding president, Felix Houphouët-Boigny, Côte d'Ivoire has seen a general breakdown of agreement by political elites around the rules of the electoral game. The unwillingness of the PDCI, the former president's party, to agree to rules promoting free and fair elections was the basic cause of the conflict. Ultimately, this lack of consensus by the political class led to contested elections in 1995 and a coup d'état in 1999. Furthermore, many other major societal cleavages, from ethnicity, to control of over natural resource, and a

generational divide, were caught up in the ensuing conflict and used by political forces to advance their narrow interests essentially bringing the country to an economic, social and political halt.

Into the political breach stepped a number of CSOs and CSO coalitions to try and address both the principal political problem and its several social and economic permutations. Both religious groups and human rights groups attempted to ameliorate the situation. The intervention by GERRDES-CI and its efforts to mediate the dispute, and the formation of the “Collective” following the conflicted 1995 elections are good illustration of civil society efforts in these kinds of political disputes. In spite of a fairly broad-based coalition of civil society actors involving religious groups, human rights groups, women’s organizations and democracy promotion groups the “Collective” failed largely because the political parties saw little benefit to reaching consensus on the rules governing electoral competition. Instead they seemed to prefer extra-constitutional solutions. As is discussed in the following conflict category, civil society organizations were perceived to have lost their neutrality as honest brokers. Most CSOs had, in fact, become extremely politicized in the years following the 1995 elections.

The principal conclusion and lesson learned from the numerous attempts of CSOs to engage in conflict resolution efforts over the past decade is that political society is a far more powerful force than is civil society, particularly one that has succumbed to partisanship. Until the country’s political elites reach some type of accommodation over the rules governing political contestation, it is unlikely that CSOs in Côte d’Ivoire will have much success in resolving conflicts in a number of critical areas. In this vein, it is unclear whether civil society’s participation in the newly created (presidential) *Forum pour la réconciliation nationale* will produce different results.

## **2. The Case of National Identity: Who is an Ivoirian?**

Nothing is more fundamental in terms of societal consensus than national identity. In Africa, with its artificially constructed borders, the temptation to use national identity as a political device to gain and hold power has been all too common. Côte d’Ivoire has unfortunately succumbed to this divisive issue in recent years and it has been a source of major conflict both internally and with its neighbors. Malians and Burkinabés have lived and worked in the much more economically developed Côte d’Ivoire since the colonial era. As the economy began declining in the 1980s, and as this trend accelerated in the 1990s, nationals from both countries increasingly became the target of harassment, often with the Ivoirian state turning a blind eye. The conflict over land in the country’s West and Southwest region (see below) was in its root an economic conflict in which national identity was used to drive Malian and Burkinabé settlers, as well as settlers from northern Côte D’Ivoire, off the land they had been cultivating for decades.

The use of national identity as a political wedge came to a head with the 2000 elections in which Alassane Ouattara was declared ineligible as a candidate for president because of the allegation that his mother was from territory now known as Burkina Faso. Given the fact that national identity is intertwined with ethnic politics, Côte d’Ivoire’s political leaders have essentially torn asunder the country’s underlying social contract about citizenship. Unless this issue is resolved social peace is unlikely. The current National Reconciliation Forum may be the best last chance.

### **3. From Autonomous Reform Champions to Co-opted Anti-Reformers**

The failure of the civil society Collective to mediate the 1995 political conflict and the general ineffectiveness of civil society to manage conflict management have been the result of its politicization. Our interviews with CI respondents made it clear that CSOs of all stripes, whether confessional and human rights organizations, trade unions, women's organizations or professional groups, had lost much of their neutrality and hence trust as effective mediators in most types of conflicts. This fact should not be surprising given the extreme politicization and even polarization found in the Ivoirian society as a whole.

This contrasts to the role that many CSOs played in the early days of pro-reform multi-party politics prior to the 1995 elections. As was the case in many African countries during the early 1990s, trade unions, student groups, and professional associations, among others, led the call for multi-party democracy. Following the ensuing democratic transitions many pro-democracy coalitions broke-up with individual members following their particular interests in the new context. These interests were not always to the benefit of democratic consolidation. One of the best examples of this change of heart was that of the Ivoirian teacher's trade union, SYNARES.

SYNARES was the principal non-state actor challenging the Ivoirian state. It was a major force calling for the return of Allassene Ouattara in the hope that he could redress the country's economic crisis. Following the 1995 elections SYNARES increasingly became one of the principal backers of the current regime. It shifted from being a champion of reform to a defender of the status quo. In the process SYNARES lost a good deal of its credibility vis-à-vis other CSOs because it has essentially become a think-tank and leadership recruitment ground for the ruling party. What SYNARES did demonstrate, however, is the capacity for policy research, analysis and advocacy as principal tools in engaging powerholders around conflictual situations. This is highly relevant to the effectiveness of CSOs in conflict resolution.

### **4. The Legal and Institutional Environment**

Laws and their enforcement are one means of defining rules and incentives that govern the actions of citizens over a range of issues. Good rules and their consistent application are thus an important means for preventing and managing conflict. One of the principal areas of conflict in CI, as it is elsewhere, is over access to and use of natural resources. This study reviewed a number of such situations, particularly related to land and forest use. In the past two years the government has passed several new laws, notably a forestry code and a land use law, primarily designed to determine land ownership rights and to protect and conserve forests. The new land law now vests land in the state, while the forestry code prevents the exploitation of forests for commercial gain. Both laws are considered progressive and Ivoirian NGOs have been involved in their design and execution. Two recent cases show that enactment of progressive laws is, however, not enough to protect natural resources; it also requires that the government equitably enforce the laws.

- ❖ After designating a major forest in the north of the country a classified and hence protected area, the government then turned around and permitted the construction of a road through it. While the CSO, Croix Verte-CI, was successful in eventually overturning this decision, it engendered significant conflict between social, economic and political interests throughout the country.

- ❖ Because of growing pressure on limited farm land villagers in and surrounding another classified forest began cultivating cocoa and cutting trees for wood. When it came to enforcing the laws prohibiting these activities, however, government was unwilling to take legal action for political reasons. The unwillingness of government to enforce a law in one area calls into question its ability to enforce a law in other areas thus undermining the legitimacy of both itself and the rule of law in general.

### **5. Divergent Societal Interests: Broken Promises**

A society is made up of multiple and competing interests. It is the role of the state to arbitrate these interests keeping in mind the overall public good. Some interests, however, are so intimately tied to a country's conception of itself that they become part of the underlying agreement that binds the government and its people. In recent years the Ivoirian government has been unable to maintain one of its most fundamental covenants. The following discussion notes how the breach of this trust has led to ongoing conflict and exacerbated other tensions already present in the country. It also reinforces similar findings that CSOs have little capacity to resolve such fundamental conflicts when consensus on political life is itself called into question.

One of the cornerstones underlying the understanding between the Ivoirian state and its people, particularly its teachers, students and their parents, was the importance of education. A related understanding involves the prospect that students and their parent have for good jobs for graduates. A combination of factors, including declining prices of cocoa and coffee, coupled with poor economic policy, rapid population growth and the oil price shocks of the 1980s, led to unsustainable external debt. This in turn affected the government's ability to maintain the level of subsidy to education at all levels. As a result recurring conflict became a defining feature of relations between government and students from the late 1980s to the present.

The crisis was exacerbated as opposition political parties used students and teachers, as well as their unions, to place pressure on the ruling party to give up power. The ruling party responded by mobilizing its own student and teacher groups to counter the opposition leading in many cases to violent conflict.

While the conflict remained relatively peaceful through the early 1990s, the Catholic Church was able to undertake effective mediation between the student/teacher alliance and the government. Over time as the conflict heightened the church's ability to perform this public function declined. Eventually a broader coalition of CSOs including parent associations, human rights groups and women's organizations was formed to perform this mediation role. In 1998, the expanded church effort, called "le forum des confessions religieuses," merged with these other CSOs to constitute the "le Collectif pour l'école." The Collective, however, was no more successful in mediating the conflict than the Catholic Church had been. The reasons for this failure include the fact that the "Collective" was always reactive. It never developed a strategy of its own either for addressing the crisis or its underlying causes. In particular, the "Collective" lacked the analytic capacity to understand the political character of this dispute and then to attempt to deal with it. In fact the educational crisis was a manifestation of a much larger societal problem--the lack of consensus among political elites concerning the rules governing political contestation. Of course, students and teachers had real grievances concerning the ability of the Ivoirian government to provide quality education, but the underlying battle was between political forces trying to accede to power.

## **6. Natural Resources: Going Cross-Border / Traditional versus Modern Rules**

This study reveals that a majority of the conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire have resulted from multiple claims for access to and use of natural resources. Claims over the ownership of rich farmland in the Southwest (and West) highlight a number of dimensions to the natural resource category of conflict. The action ultimately setting off this conflict was the sale of land by tribal elders during the 1970s to outsiders-- Ivoirians (primarily from the North) and from neighboring countries, notably Burkina Faso and Mali. Ultimately, this led to some of the severest "non-political" violence seen in the modern history of Côte d'Ivoire.

This struggle for land became a cross-border conflict when the Malians and Burkinabés, who came to Côte d'Ivoire as laborers to work on the cocoa plantations, and who were eventually given land and settled in the cocoa belt, were eventually forced to flee the country for their lives. They were targeted in particular by young people in the Southwest who saw them as usurpers of their traditional lands. These conflicts often have involved the use of violence designed to force the "outsiders" to leave.

This conflict also had two additional dimensions as an ethno-regional conflict between people from the North and those in the Southwest, and as a conflict between customary versus modern values and laws regulating the rights to use land. The latter dimension was expressed as a conflict over the validity of modern contracts through which land had been sold Northerners. This right was contested by those who argued that only customary rules for allocating and managing of land were legitimate. They asserted that when traditional leaders allocated land to the emigrating Northern ethnic groups, Malians and Burkinabé settlers, that they had violated customary law and practice in which land is collectively vested in the community and ownership is not recognized as a right of individuals.

The broader arena of political conflict manifest in the elections of 1995 and 2000 was in large measure about the ownership of land and particularly the rich farming lands of the Southwest. Youth from the Southwest who found themselves without work after completing their studies, saw cocoa farming as their only means of livelihood. Land was not available to them, however, because it had been sold or given away by their elders. Their response was to reclaim it through violence. It can also be seen as a generational clash between unemployed youth and their elders.

However sophisticated the conflict methodologies that Ivoirian CSOs may possess they are unlikely to be able to solve this conflict. The problem is primarily political involving which body of law will be recognized as authoritative in allocating the principal natural resource (land) of the Côte d'Ivoire. The conflict was in fact exacerbated by politicians at all levels who used it as a means for gaining or maintaining political power and for deflecting criticism for their own failure to promote sound economic policy leading to adequate employment and income generation for the youth of the country.

## **7. Traditional versus Modern Authority in Conflict Prevention and Management**

For most of the post-colonial era, the modern Ivoirian state has been the primary arbitrator of social conflict. It has not just been a matter of the exclusion of civil society from participation in public matters but of the marginalization of traditional authorities as well. This study found that traditional authorities, with the assistance of CSOs, in fact fill the vacuum left by the ineffective attempts of government to resolve conflict, often centered around the use of natural resources. A

good example is a conflict that erupted in the North between nomadic (transhumance) cattle herders from Mali and sedentary Ivoirian farmers.

The usual recourse to the concerned local representative of the national administration, the *sous préfet*, had proven ineffective and thus could not prevent or manage conflict. One of the reasons for its ineffectiveness was the perception that these local administrative representatives were corrupt and that they frequently harassed cattle herders simply to gain illegal fees.

As a consequence of this ineffectiveness, Ivoirian NGOs worked with traditional authorities to strengthen their capacity deal with conflict, a function that had once been one of their major responsibilities. To succeed, however, administrative authorities needed to recognize the legitimacy of these traditional authorities to perform this function. They needed to encourage the concerned parties in the conflict to address themselves to traditional authorities rather than to the *sous-préfets*. When they did so a whole set of conflicts that had previously been immune to resolution and had become increasingly violent now could be addressed in a more sustainable manner built on traditional values and practices. This proved to be one of the major lessons learned from this study.

## **B. Principal Conclusions**

Côte d'Ivoire was, until the mid-1990s, as an oasis of stability, if not democracy, among West African countries. Social peace was, however, largely the result of a single party and a respected leader dominating political life. Stability was maintained because political opposition was both strongly discouraged, and because the economy was able to meet the needs the majority of the population. As the economy deteriorated during the 1980s, and with the death of founding president at the beginning of the 1990s, stability gave way to fundamental cleavages in social and political life. The principal difference between CI and Mali is that the latter was able to forge consensus among all societal interests concerning the basic make-up of the political system and the way power would be contested. In Mali the widespread agreement on the basic values of tolerance and inclusion served to dampen down the use of social and economic tensions resulting from poor economic performance as part of the strategy of contesting for power. The same was not true in Côte d'Ivoire, however. As a result many such tensions have been politicized with devastating consequences for conflict and its management. Politicization of conflict makes it far more difficult for civil society to play a significant role in this area.

## **IV. CSO CAPACITY ASSESSMENT**

### **A. Internal Governance**

Our analysis of CSO internal governance practices was designed to address two issues:

- ❖ The strengths and weaknesses of these CSOs in terms of their internal organization and functioning; and,
- ❖ The degree to which women are integrated into the structure and function of these CSO in meaningful ways

In general, the effectiveness of a CSO is a function of the degree to which it's internal structure and processes promote: (a) democratic practice, i.e., broad-based participation in the making and implementation organizational decisions; and, (b) good governance outcomes, i.e., transparency in the selection of decisions and leaders, and the accountability and responsiveness of leaders to their members.

## 1. Principal Findings

Our interviews with primary, intermediary and tertiary CSOs led to the following findings:

- ❖ Most primary level CSOs (associations of hunters and traditional authorities being the exception) are registered with concerned government organs. This is facilitated by the fact that they are able to register at the sub-national level with representatives of local ministries or with local governments.
- ❖ Most CSOs have constitutions and bylaws largely because these are requirements of the formal registration process. Many CSOs interviewed, however, reported a gap between the structures specified in their constitutions and those actually in place and functioning.
- ❖ All CSOs have been formed voluntarily. This includes primary level CBOs as well as intermediaries and specialized support organizations. The case studies collected for this study reveal that many primary CSOs have been formed to fulfill a real need, often to serve the specific interests of their members and to serve as the guardians of traditional values and practices. This is the case, for example of the associations of hunters (*Dozo*), traditional authorities and *griots*. Because this is the case these associations can play a major role in the prevention and management of conflict in traditional and informal settings.
- ❖ Primary level associations demonstrate far fewer of the characteristics of “internal democratic governance” than CSOs at the intermediary and tertiary levels. This is well documented in the “Consolidated CSO Capacity Building Table” found in Annex I of this report.
- ❖ Most CSOs have few if any permanent staff. As a result day-to-day decision making is usually made by a small group of leaders, whether in the executive body or among the governing board.
- ❖ Women are active in all of the governing bodies of the intermediary and tertiary CSOs studied in Côte d’Ivoire. This is in marked contrast to our findings for Mali where women are relegated to lesser posts on the governing boards.
- ❖ The intellectual capacity and sophistication of Ivoirian CSO personnel is extremely impressive. Members of intermediary and tertiary CSOs are much more likely to be literate, a principal indicator for participation, than is the case for Mali. Whatever limitations CSOs confront in their efforts to be effective in CI, knowledge or analytic capabilities are not to blame.
- ❖ In general, consensus, rather than voting prevailed as the preferred instrument employed by most CBOs when it came both to decision making and leadership selection. In CI, however, there is a far lower level of member participation in the association than was found in Mali. In many intermediary and specialized associations, for example, major organizational decisions tend to be made by a narrow group of founding board members, rather than by the

overall membership. It is not clear whether this observation stems from the structural factor that Ivoirian CSOs are much less likely than their Malian counterparts to have permanent executive bodies, or whether it is a reflection of the underlying difficulty of finding consensus in Ivoirian society as a whole.

## **2. Principal Conclusions**

Drawing firm conclusions on the internal governance of CSOs in Mali and CI based on the fairly small number of associations investigated is risky. Nonetheless, this study did discover that Ivoirian CSOs demonstrate lower levels of democratic practice in their internal governance than those in Mali. A number of factors appear to be at play:

- ❖ The broader macro-political environment seems to be significant either positively (Mali) or negatively (CI). Highly conflictual and politicized macro environments seem to be less conducive to supporting internally democratic CSOs.
- ❖ The degree to which CSOs benefit from the support of international NGOs or international donors may be relevant. When there is more support not only are African CSOs likely to receive help specifically on capacity building, but they are often required to demonstrate democratic and good governance practice in their daily operations in order to continue to receive support.

### **B. Internal Management**

This study focused on two questions in examining the internal management of CSOs:

- Do the CSOs have skills, systems and procedures that should assist them in being effective; ie. in achieving their organizational objectives and results. We posited that a specific range of skills relevant to ensuring good planning, the mobilization and effective utilization of resources, and the assessment of organizational performance and program impact should contribute to effectiveness
- What are the sources of financial support available to the CSOs, particularly for any conflict prevention and mitigation activities that they have conducted or plan to conduct.

#### **1. Principal Findings**

- ❖ Ivoirian CSOs demonstrated considerable weakness in the area of basic management skills, as is demonstrated in the “Consolidated Capacity Building Table” in Annex 1. While most of CSOs undertook basic accounting functions and reported on the use of their funds, particularly for donors, few actually had any type of broader financial management system in place. Only four of 15 CSOs reported an external audit of their yearly financial situations.
- ❖ All of the intermediary and tertiary CSOs interviewed lacked a long-term strategy capable of guiding their planning and goal setting processes. Most of these CSOs argued that since resources were in such short supply, it did not make sense to plan beyond the next project or what was immediately available.

- ❖ Most CSOs lack even a minimum amount of organizational infrastructure, including offices, equipment and transport. This was particularly true for CBOs and federated bodies, but, in contrast to Mali, it was even apparent among specialized NGOs in CI. CSOs across all three levels lack office and meeting space, have inadequate equipment including vehicles, and cannot maintain a permanent executive office with full-time staff. They are therefore dependent almost entirely on the volunteer labor of their members.
- ❖ CSOs in CI place little emphasis on such basic management requirements as written job descriptions or an organizational structure and responsibilities. They lack monitoring and evaluation systems or tools, and they show little evidence of having provided recent training, either technical or management, to their staff.

## **2. Principal Conclusions**

The majority of Ivoirian CSOs lack much of the organizational infrastructure and management systems, procedures and skills associated with effective associations. The comparison with Malian CSOs is significant. This difference can be explained by three factors: (a) the relative youth and size of civil society in CI compared to Malian and to many other countries in the sub-region; (b) the lack of external funding available to CSOs; and (c) the fact that few international NGOs have played the role of mentor of their Ivoirian counterparts as happened in Mali.

Ivoirian CSOs are also far less proactive than their Malian counterparts in exploring funding alternatives or in trying to imagine what they could accomplish with the resources that were available to them. Their lack of strategic vision programmatic planning forces them to remain in a reactive mode that limits their ability to obtain such funding

This is also probably true that since CI was viewed by the international community as having relatively better economic situation than its neighbors, donors did not target it for as much assistance. It was only with the troubles of the 1990s that CSOs became a more prominent force in Ivoirian development.

### **C. Conflict Prevention and Management**

The underlying premise of this assessment is that to be effective in this area of capacity CSOs must first be internally sound in both their governance arrangements and in the management of their organizations. With regard to capacity for conflict prevention and management this study focused on three issues:

- ❖ The scope of past and current activities involving conflict prevention and mitigation locally, nationally and regionally;
- ❖ The capacities of these CSO to communicate with other CSOs working on conflict issues, to form networks and coalitions for the purposes of advocacy, mediation and other activities that may be relevant to affecting conflict
- ❖ The capacities of these CSOs to communicate with authorities at various levels of government (local, national, regional) and to advocate their views and be involved in policy processes.

## 1. Principal Findings

- Ivoirian CSOs are weak in most skills including skills in the area of conflict prevention and management
  - The level of knowledge or understanding of the decision making process among Ivoirian CSOs is not high. Only 9 des 15 CSOs said they understood where the principal areas of decision making took place, thus providing them with a means for targeting their advocacy activities.
  - Their perception is that most (11 of 15) think that they have the capacity to develop and put into place an advocacy strategy.
  - About half (7 of 15) believe that they have the capacity to analyze the external environment sufficiently to mount an advocacy campaign.
  - About half (7 of 15) had actually undertaken advocacy either alone or as a member of a coalition.
- Capacity in policy research, analysis, formulation and lobbying as well as the ability to forge coalitions and alliances is very limited among Ivoirian CSO. Since these skills are required for conflict prevention and management, this limits their capacity to do this work
- Actual experience with developing a conflict management strategy is also very limited. Only one-third (5 of 15) of the CSOs felt they could actually formulate and execute conflict management strategy.
- Despite the fact most Ivoirian CSOs claim that they have had some capacity to analyze the origins of conflict have skills in mediation and negotiations the level of training of CSOs in training in conflict prevention and management is again very low. Only two CSOs, AID-CI and Notre Nation, reported having had any formal training in these areas. Since the majority of the CSOs also had had no formal training in advocacy they lacked the parallel skills that would have helped them even without formal conflict training.
- Despite these findings, many Ivoirian CSOs actually engage in conflict work. Fully three-quarters reported that they had some experience in this area that provided them with on-the-job training and opportunities to learn from their experience and mistakes.
- Most involvement of Ivoirian CSOs is in conflicts that take place at the national or even the cross-border level. This is in sharp contrast to the experience of Mali where local issues constitute the bulk of the conflict mitigation work. This may be due to the fact that the majority of conflicts noted in Côte d'Ivoire had involved national political disputes at their core, and because decentralization is much less far advanced in CI than in Mali.
- Ivoirian CSOs are much more likely than their Malian counterparts to be involved in political issues, like human rights abuses, labor rights, press freedom, and judicial reform. They are less likely to be involved in the more traditional areas conflict relating to the social and economic situation.

- Few CSOs are involved in conflict prevention or management efforts at the cross-border level. This is not because cross-border conflict was absent but rather that CSOs were either not well placed to deal with them or did not see it in their interest to do so
- Ivoirian CSOs are less likely to be involved in successful coalitions or networks. There have been efforts to do so but they have met with limited success because of the internal divisions, often along partisan line, within Ivoirian civil society
- CSOs in CI are ironically, given their general weakness, more likely to have been in relationship with government agencies than their Malian counterparts. CI has a long history of establishing formal consultations, the most recent of which is the National Reconciliation Forum. Consultation, however, has usually been more about co-optation and pie-sharing than about opening up real participation in policy determination or implementation..

## **2. Principal Conclusions**

Ivoirian CSOs are not likely to become effective actors in conflict mitigation or peace building any time soon. This study shows that there is no inherent reason or overwhelming internal constraint to this happening. Thus far, however, Ivoirian CSOs lack capacity in all three dimensions of examined above. This does not appear to be their most serious constraint however. Rather, as this assessment has repeatedly noted, the overall political, legal and institutional context are extremely debilitating for all societal actors not just civil society. In addition the impact of the external environment on CSOs has been unfavorable. As CSOs have become ever more partisan they have lost their neutrality and much of their potential for in public matters in general and conflict resolution in particular.

ANNEX 1 CONSOLIDATED CSO CAPACITY BUILDING ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE:																							
CSO Name	CSO Type			Enabling Environment		Internal Democratic Governance									Sound and Effective Internal Management								
	P	I	T	Pol	Inst	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Amnesty Intl			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x
CoopEACy	x					x	x	x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x		x			
Cheférie Trad	x			x		x																	
DOZO (hunters)	x					x			x														
FOFCI (women)			x	x		x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x			x		x		x
GERDDES			x	x		x	x	x			x		x	x			x	x		x			x
MIDH (Hrights)			x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Notre Nation		x		x		x	x		x		x	x	x	x		x				x			x
OLPED(press)			x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				x			x			x
OIMPJ (judges)			x			x		x			x	x			x					x			x
ACHS			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
CUA		x		x		x	x	x	x	x			x	x		x			x	x			x
LIDHO (HR)			x			x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x		x			x	x	x	x
AID-CI			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x			x	x	x		x
SYNARES			x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
Total	3	2	10	11		15	12	12	10	8	12	9	10	7	8	8	9	6	6	12	6	2	12