

Update on the context and situation of children

Since the post-electoral crisis of 2011, Côte d'Ivoire has moved towards political stabilization and enjoyed one of the strongest economic growth rates in the region. However, as noted in the UNICEF 2019 Conflict Analysis report, internal tensions continue due to persistent structural inequalities in access to land and basic social services. The objective of national reconciliation requires further effort as ethnic, religious and political divisions regularly provoke episodes of violence, as experienced during the local and regional elections in October 2018 and the May 2019 inter-community clashes in central and western Côte d'Ivoire. As the October 2020 presidential election approaches, and against the backdrop of an expanding Sahel crisis, social cohesion is at risk.

Côte d'Ivoire's economic outlook remains favourable, with real GDP growth in 2019 estimated at 7.0 per cent. A demographic explosion of young people will call for greater financial efforts to cope with the growing population of children, adolescent and youth aged under-20 – their numbers are expected to increase by 18 per cent, reaching 16.15 million in 2030 against 13.65 in 2020. However, this could be mitigated if Côte d'Ivoire succeeds in rapidly reducing its dependency ratio below 65 per cent. According to National Statistical Institute (INS) projections, in the absence of a more rapid decline in fertility, this window of opportunity should not be reached before 2033-2034. In parallel with this demographic explosion, Côte d'Ivoire population is increasingly urbanized, which is reflected by the rapid development of large peri-urban districts. This demographic context has implications for the work of the Country Office, both on the delivery of basic social services (e.g. construction of classrooms, immunization programme, etc.), as well as in addressing emerging issues, such as youth employment in a more urban context.

The first risk is related to the place occupied by agricultural production - in particular cocoa growing - in the country's economy and this sector's structural weaknesses of this sector. The primary sector still provides one in two jobs and is Côte d'Ivoire's main source of foreign exchange (60 per cent of exports in 2018 including 40 per cent for cocoa alone). However, agricultural production remains exposed to price fluctuations on international markets and climate change, which makes households, especially those living in rural areas, particularly vulnerable to shocks. In addition, the United States and the European Union have increased efforts to ensure that Ivorian cocoa have not been obtained through the use of child labor, forced labor, or through practices involving deforestation. The second risk is that growth remains insufficiently inclusive, which, in the context of the 2020 presidential elections, could exacerbate tensions. 2019 IMF data shows that per capita GDP amounted to US\$ 1,720, placing Côte d'Ivoire in the category of lower-middle-income countries.

But Côte d'Ivoire is positioned 165 out of 189 countries and territories in the Human Development Index (HDI) and 149 out of 157 countries in the Human Capital Index (ICH). A very large proportion of the population continues to live in extreme poverty: in 2015, 46.3 per cent of the population lived below the national poverty line, including 56.8, 44 and 22.7 per cent of rural, urban populations, and in Abidjan, respectively.

The Country Office developed a detailed 2019 Situation Analysis of Women and Children (SitAn, 2019). This study confirmed significant progress in the areas of education, birth registration, health and nutrition, but showed that results are still lagging in, among others, WASH, violence against children and child labour. All these concerns mentioned by the Country Office have been underlined in the CRC Concluding Observations issued in May 2019.

The Ministry of Planning which co-led the SitAn 2019 process acknowledged the preliminary results and decided to take the Country Office's analysis as the main reference for the development of the social axes of the country's next National Development Plan (PND 2021-2025).

The November 2019 Strategic Moment of Reflection took stock of the findings of the 2019 SitAn and made several recommendations for the next CPD (2021-2025). The recommendations included the need to: accelerate results for children and adolescents in the context of climate change, urbanization, and the learning crisis. Opportunities include the potential of innovations, in particular in the scaling up of construction with recycled plastic bricks, PPPs, and the enthusiasm of adolescents and young people in engaging into concrete actions.

The SitAn (including information from the 2018 N-MODA, the 2019 Gender Programmatic Review and the 2019 Conflict Analysis) reveals regional disparities with a geographical vulnerability arc ranging from western and north-western to north-eastern regions of the country. In this context, as well as the gradual encroachment of the Central Sahel crisis into northern Côte d'Ivoire, the Country Office plans to reinforce its western and northern sub-offices in the next CPD (2021-2025). To this end, it has already started to place stronger emphasis on integrating community resilience into regular programming in the northern parts of the country.

In addition, the Country Office is developing an evidence-based advocacy strategy, notably towards the private sector, to make their investments more relevant to vulnerable children, particularly children living in cocoa growing areas. Discussions with the cocoa private sector on developing a stronger PPP framework are expected to result in the signing of a joint statement and a framework for action in 2020. This could potentially be a major step in leveraging money for children living in cocoa growing areas.

Major contributions and drivers of results

In 2019, the Country Office structured its Annual Management Plan (AMP) programme results around five WCARO Key Results for Children (KRCs) on which the Country Office is committed to deliver results.

KRC#1 Immunization: The 2019 milestone was "100 per cent of districts have at least 80 per cent of children 0-11 months vaccinated with three doses of DTP-containing/Penta vaccine". This objective was met at 99 per cent, with the exception of Marcory Trechville (in the Abidjan district), where there is an issue with the denominator. The Country Office has supported government efforts to achieve universal immunization for children and in primary health care; in addition, it benefited from several existing tripartite agreements with multilateral agencies, including GAVI, the World Bank and the Global Fund.

The Country Office intensified existing strategies and scaled up innovative approaches to achieve KRC#1. These strategies and approaches included: (i) the implementation of the "Reaching each community at least once a month" strategy; (ii) the use of RapidPro to ensure monthly monitoring of targeted vaccinated villages in low-performance districts; (iii) the production of scorecards, which are subsequently transmitted to administrative, political and health authorities to increase accountability on a six-monthly basis; (iv) targeted tutoring of low-performing health area managers; (v) mobile money transfer for the direct provision of financial resources to support the implementation of advanced and mobile strategies at the health area level; and (vi) provision, via routine service, of the EPI + package at the same time as other services, e.g. immunization, birth registration, Vit. A supplementation, deworming and LLIN distribution. A study is on-going looking at equity in immunization to ensure that every child has equitable access to vaccination. Study results will be used to make equity-based programming funded by GAVI for the next two years.

As of October 2019, 91 per cent of children aged 0-11 months were immunized with the Measles and Rubella vaccine; 92 per cent received a dose of Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine; 94 per cent received three doses of oral Polio vaccine; and 95 per cent received three doses of the Pentavalent vaccine.

Following the Investment Case for Primary Health Care developed in 2018 with Country Office support, the MoH and health sector stakeholders developed the GFF investment case to contribute to the "Every Woman, Every Child Initiative", with a focus on strengthening PHC. The investment case has subsequently been used to inform the national dialogue on health financing in April 2019. One of the main achievements of this dialogue is the government's commitment to increasing its expenditure on PHC by a minimum of 15 per cent annually.

The Country Office continued to support high-impact interventions to reduce high maternal and newborn mortality rates, and reinforced capacities in pilot health centers in 13 priority health districts and in Abidjan. The results achieved in these pilots have convinced the MoH to scale up these innovations: 99 per cent of mothers with severe postpartum hemorrhage survived due to the innovative lifesaving approach of using intra-uterine balloon tamponade (UBT); 96 per cent of newborns with severe asphyxia survived thanks to resuscitator mask; and 98 per cent of premature babies admitted in Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) units survived.

KRC#3 Equitable and sustainable access to education: The 2019 milestone was an "Additional 6,000 out-of-school girls and boys participated in early learning, primary or secondary education through UNICEF-supported programmes". This

Cote D'Ivoire

milestone was overachieved with the reintegration of 10,284 (51 per cent of girls) out-of-school children and adolescents into formal education and alternative pathways to about 3,017 adolescents and young women (87 per cent of girls).

The latest routine statistical data published by the Ministry of Education (MoE) for 2019 indicate the upward trend in the access and retention rates for all levels of basic education is continuing. Compared to the previous year, the pre-primary enrollment ratio increased (9.4 per cent in 2019 compared to 9.0 per cent in 2018), as well as completion rates in both primary (80.5 per cent in 2019 compared to 77.7 per cent in 2018) and lower secondary (56.8 per cent in 2019 compared to 54.6 per cent in 2018). The 2019 statistical campaign conducted by the MoE identified 2,781 Islamic schools with 429,366 children enrolled (45 per cent of girls). Geolocalisation mapping supported by the Country Office showed that these schools are not concentrated in northern Muslim areas but can also be found in Abidjan and in the southwest where an influx of internal migrants and some non-Ivorians have begun to work in cocoa plantations. Advocacy undertaken by the Country Office has resulted in the formalization of the National Commission for Islamic Schools, which will contribute to the implementation of a national strategy for the integration of Islamic schools into the formal system.

In 2019, the Country Office invested significant efforts in piloting the new construction method using bricks made from recycled plastic waste in partnership with the Colombian social enterprise "Conceptos plásticos". Initiated in 2018, this partnership is a reality as 26 functional classrooms are now operational throughout the country; this innovation shows that this alternative is faster than traditional methods and reduces construction time by up to three weeks (instead of six months) and is safe and easy-to-use. At the same time, the collection of plastic waste creates jobs for disadvantaged communities and contributes to reducing plastic pollution.

KRC#7 Birth Registration: The 2019 milestone was "70 per cent of children under one year whose births are registered". The births of 55.4 per cent of children aged under-12 months whose births have been registered as of December 2019 – below the planned milestone. The Country Office provided technical and financial support to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and the MoH to expand coverage of the new mechanisms to record births and deaths within the legal delay. The first is a community mechanism that records births and deaths that occur outside the health system, which was implemented in 1,733 villages in south-western, northern and central-western Côte d'Ivoire. The second new mechanism seeks to directly link the health system with the civil registration system. According to this system, health workers collect birth data in the health facilities and report them to civil registration services using special forms. In 2019, vaccination services also began recording births of newborns who came in for vaccinations. This mechanism was implemented in ten health districts covering 924 (62 per cent) public health centres and maternities in central-western, north-western, northern regions of the country, as well as Abidjan. The data collection system is not yet able to tell how many new births were captured thanks to these new mechanisms, but initial results from the field are promising.

In 2019, with Country Office support, the government finalized the special operation for birth registration. A ceremony was organized with the First Lady's office to deliver, symbolically, more than 600,000 birth certificates to primary school children. An auto-evaluation of the special operation will be undertaken in 2020 with key government partners to document lessons learnt and plan for the implementation of the new special law.

In 2019, the Country Office decided to achieve an additional KRC, namely KRC#5 Protection of children from violence, with the milestone for 2019: "3,163 girls and boys who have experienced violence are reached by health, social work or justice/law enforcement services". As of December 2019, 4,429 children (1,182 boys and 3,247 girls) who have experienced violence were reached by health, social work or justice/law enforcement services.

To reflect the 2018 MTR strategic shift, additional programme results were added to the AMP 2019 results: Adolescents and Youth participation with the objective: "By 2020, adolescent girls and boys and youth have enhanced opportunities of development of their skills, their engagement and their participation in citizen actions".

Youth engagement was boosted with a substantial increase in the number of U-Reporters (from 404,869 in 2018 to 1,059,356 in 2019) – the second-highest number of any country, and the highest in Francophone African countries where U-Report is implemented – the number of actions taken by youth (U-Action) for the development of their communities also rose from 300 in 2018 to 6,300 U-Actions in 2019.

Ivorian youth made key contributions to the drafting of the global youth engagement guide, which was subsequently launched globally and in Côte d'Ivoire; the national launch was held in the presence of representatives from five ministries. The youth, co-creators of the guide, advocated on the topic "For every child, a green school". This initiative resulted in

Country Office Annual Report 2019



Cote D'Ivoire

youth engagement in reforestation, leading to the planting of 1,000,000 trees by the U-Reporters, with the support of the Minister of Water and Forests.

The recycled plastic bricks awareness and advocacy campaign has been, and continues to be, an office flagship advocacy campaign for preserving the environment, fighting plastic pollution, and for the right of children to grow and play in a clean environment, nationally but also at the global level. The advocacy campaign around this project succeeded in raising awareness on the importance of the environment nationally. It also succeeded in garnering political support at the highest level, as well as interest from the private sector and young people. In September 2019, Kherann Yao, a young Ivoirian boy, took part in the UN General Assembly, while a classroom made of recycled plastic bricks was displayed at the entrance of UN HQ in NY. This contributed to positioning UNICEF as a credible actor in the fight for climate change, and as an agency responding to the demand of young people around the world that are asking for climate action, now.

The Country Office also supported the Ministry of Youth and the National Civic Service to develop a life-skills training programme; 2,761 vulnerable adolescents and young people from 10-24 benefited from this programme in 2019. In addition, 411 out-of-school adolescent boys and 117 girls (the first female cohort) aged 16-24 years old enrolled in the civic service, a nine-month vocational training, aimed at giving a second chance to vulnerable or delinquent adolescents and young people.

In addition to the foregoing AMP programme results, the Country Office had two management results:

Promotion of Ethics, Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA):

Training sessions were provided to operations and programme staff on gender, HACT-PSEA-fraud, ethics, eTools and UNPP, to create a conducive environment for enhanced programme performance. The PSEA 2019 action plan developed and validated by the CMT, which was then monitored on a quarterly basis during PCTs. PSEA focal points were designated in Abidjan and in the two sub-offices, and all focal points benefited from capacity building in 2019. PSEA posters were developed and signed by all programme and operation teams, and then displayed in July 2019 on office walls.

Enabling environment for effective and efficient programme delivery through improved systems, processes and procedures:

The Country Office maintains an excellent relationship with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire at the national and operational level, and has the largest staff (112 staff, and two sub-offices) and the most substantial budget of United Nations agencies based in Côte d'Ivoire. In 2019, the Country Office reinforced its relationship with its line ministry, the Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD) and made significant strides in reaching youth with the scale-up of U-Reports. The SitAn positioned the Country Office as a strong technical partner, delivering evidenced-based field-level results. The SitAn will be the main reference for the development of the social axes of the next National Development Plan (NDP, 2021-2025), the UN Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the 2021-2025 UNSDCF. The Country Office successfully introduced several innovations that contributed to its reputation and visibility. On 19 December 2019, the overall Country Office funding was US\$ 42,470,279, plus US\$ 33,547,899 already re-phased (OR and ORE) for 2020 and beyond. The total allocation for 2019 was more than in 2018, and about three times higher than in 2017 (US\$ 40,494,886 in 2018 and US\$ 25,763,794 in 2017).

As the Axe 2 lead of the UN Common Country Plan (CPU), the Country Office ensured the UN participative process leading to the finalisation and validation of the 2019-2020 CPU work plans. The CCA is underway, but the significant delay in the UNSCDF process is a challenge for the development of the UNICEF next programme cycle (CPD, 2021-2025). However, the November SMR presented an opportunity to reflect on the common chapter. Facilitated by the Regional Office, the panel of discussions between UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP and UNWOMEN on the common chapter led to the identification of three major domains of interagency collaboration, namely data, gender and climate change resilience.

In 2019, the Country Office support facilitated the launch of a new 2019-2021 national action plan on fighting child labour,

Cote D'Ivoire

and is working on a possible PPP with the cocoa sector.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

1. Plastic bricks project

In 2019, the Country Office continued to strengthen its partnership with “Conceptos Plasticos”, the Colombian social enterprise, to build classrooms using bricks produced from recycled plastic. This project aims to improve equitable and sustainable access to quality education for children, and empower women and youth, while also promoting new attitudes and beliefs towards recycling and the protection of the environment. In 2019, pilot classrooms (26 classrooms so far) were built with recycled plastic bricks imported from Colombia. The Country Office wishes to produce recycled plastic bricks in Côte d’Ivoire. The lead of the Operations team, including the Innovation Specialist who is under the supervision of the Deputy Representative of Operations and the strong support from the Representative, played a key role in ensuring success.

The plastic bricks factory plant in Abidjan is 80 per cent complete and will be able to undertake test runs in February 2020 with plans to become fully functional in March. UNICEF had to create a special contract with “Conceptos Plasticos” that enables a shared value partnership and gives more flexibility to both parties as compared to a contract for goods. However, the nature of the partnership is evolving, and the Country Office will soon develop a Partner Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with the newly created NGO “Conceptos Plasticos Côte d’Ivoire” to benefit from their expertise in social development, notably in the organization of a network of female collectors of plastics for recycling in the factory.

So far, the project has created an extraordinary enthusiasm with new partnerships and raising up additional USD 1,738,709 with new perspective to come. The nature of these “new donors” is, however, very different from “traditional donors” since they are more demanding in terms of budget and communication materials. The budget part was tricky because in the process of developing this project, additional costs had to be taken into account in the construction costs. The initial cost of US\$ 10,000 per classroom only calculated the plastic infrastructure, and was not aligned with MoE norms and standards, which stipulate the inclusion of WASH facilities and at least one teacher’s office. The cost was revised dividing the construction of a standard school according to the number of classrooms. But this cost still did not reflect the real cost of a functioning classroom, which should include school equipment (e.g. desks, school kits) and “soft” costs for the social mobilisation around the school, teacher’s training, UNICEF technical expertise and other support costs. Since production has not yet begun in Côte d’Ivoire, the real price of recycled plastic bricks required adjustments.

Another challenge for the Country Office was to integrate this project approach into programmes and to articulate this big project within the CPD. The development of an impact bond proposal with the French NatCom and BNP Parisbas helped to gather all programmes around this innovation, as construction projects are needed in all programme areas. In addition, the development of the new 2021-2025 CPD offers a wonderful opportunity to integrate the plastic brick project into programmatic objectives.

2. Mobile money and real-time monitoring system

The Country Office continued using mobile money for payments to beneficiaries and partners; in 2019, 70 per cent of programmes used this technology for the implementation of their activities, saving time, enhancing traceability, and transparency of transactions. For instance, the digital payments allowed the payment of about US\$ 5 million to over 30,000 health workers and Community Health Workers participating in vaccination campaigns. Despite some payment delays, this payment approach is highly appreciated by the final beneficiaries. With the creation of a temporary post at the end of 2019, the Country Office aims to improve the process and identify additional partners for optimization purposes.

As the Country Office continues to innovate for children, it is paramount to consider the context in which the new solution is being implemented to ensure that it is feasible and appropriate – this gives the project a higher chance of success and sustainability. One example of this is the Country Office’s choice to use SMS for real-time monitoring, as opposed to digital channels like Facebook because the majority of people use simple feature phones. In 2019, the Country Office piloted the use of Edu-Trac through RapidPro to support the timely collection and transmission of key education indicators, and provide

Cote D'Ivoire

analysis and feedback in five regions in the north-west of the country. When this system is scaled up in over 500 schools, it will help to build a decision support system that will capture several key indicators for improving the quality of the education system.

In 2019, the Country Office was able to scale up and monitor (using RapidPro) pilot life-saving innovations introduced in 2018. As a result: 99 per cent of mothers with severe postpartum hemorrhage survived thanks to the intra-uterine balloon tamponade (UBT); 96 per cent of newborns with severe asphyxia survived thanks to resuscitator mask; and 98 per cent of premature babies admitted in Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC) units survived. Real-time monitoring also supported vaccination campaigns to raise awareness, collect data and provide a grievance redress system with over 300,000 people using the tool.

3. Public Private Partnerships (PPP)

In 2019, the Country Office continued to leverage existing and new partnerships with the private sector, notably in the areas of nutrition, WASH, social policy, youth and adolescents. However, this requires human resources with specific skills set (e.g. familiarity with the business world) as partnerships' work is highly relational. To fill this gap the Country Office activated innovative collaborations with an international business school and the Spanish Economic Office in Abidjan.

In 2019, the Country Office provided support for the finalization and launch of the new national action plan to fight child labour, and the development of a new transformative PPP with the cocoa growing sector. The development of the new PPP with the cocoa sector was very time consuming but allowed other programmes, such as health, nutrition, education, WASH and child protection, to participate in discussions with the private sector on how best to address child labour in cocoa growing regions.