

# **Engaging companies in manmade disasters – a guidance toolkit for private sector networks**

## **Case study: La plateforme humanitaire du secteur privé de Côte d'Ivoire**

### **Overview of the humanitarian context**

Côte d'Ivoire is currently in a period of rebuilding and reconciliation after a lengthy civil war and has experienced relative political stability since the cessation of violent conflict in 2011. In 1999 a military coup successfully overthrew the existing government; popular protest resulted in an election that brought Laurence Gbagbo to power. Civil war erupted when dissidents, including in the military, launched another coup. After over ten years of conflict, in 2010 Alassane Ouattara won the presidency via election but Gbagbo refused to cede authority, resulting in a final but significant outbreak of violence. With the intervention of French forces and a UN peacekeeping mission, the conflict came to an end in 2011, shifting focus over time from emergency humanitarian response to development needs. In 2017, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire came to an end after 14 years, its mandate fulfilled, as evidenced in part by a successful constitutional referendum and peaceful presidential elections in 2016. As the UN peacekeeping mission left the country, officials stressed the need to continue reintegration of former combatants, reform the security sector and continue transitional justice and reconciliation efforts.

Côte d'Ivoire benefits from its position as an access point to international trade for neighboring landlocked countries and has a history of economic integration in the region through trade and migration. At the same time, periods of violence and instability within Côte d'Ivoire's neighbors as well as Côte d'Ivoire's own civil war have created humanitarian challenges precisely because of the tight integration of the West African region. Neighboring a country that is "a failing state at peace—meaning a state which is not experiencing outright civil war" reduces growth on average .6 percentage points per year and potentially more in places with high levels of economic integration, such as West Africa. At the apex of the 2010-2011 election crisis, there were as many as one million displaced Ivorians both in Côte d'Ivoire and in adjacent countries. As of December 2017, there were still an estimated 16,000 internally displaced persons in Côte d'Ivoire.

Within Cote d'Ivoire, there are noticeable regional trends that also contribute to different strains and pressures on both public sector infrastructure and private sector resources. Overpopulation, especially in more remote areas of the country, is straining the capacity of existing local infrastructure. With population growth comes increasing demand for basic services (i.e. health, sanitation, education, transportation), which many local municipalities simply cannot provide or manage due to a lack of financial and other resources. There are also several parts of the country with higher concentrations of refugee or migratory populations such as the north, northwest, or west. These regions border a number of chronically unstable countries such as Liberia, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Refugee populations have been displaced and cannot survive without external assistance and support. As assistance flows toward refugees, this can create tension or frustration among local residents who are also suffering. Because of the two dynamics presented above, the risk of conflict is quite high between native and foreign populations. These tensions can escalate rapidly, especially in situations where cross-border migrants are hired by companies but

local populations, especially youth, are not hired. The country also sees intermittent conflict between pastoralists (herders) and farmers.

### **Overview of the economy and private sector capabilities**

Côte d'Ivoire has enjoyed one of the highest economic growth rates in the world over the past five years and continues to be one of the most vibrant economies in sub-Saharan Africa . In 2015 GDP growth was nearly 9%; real GDP growth was 7.4% in 2018, down from 7.7% in 2017, and is expected to remain steady at around 7% in 2019 and 2020. The country's rate of growth remains second in Africa, only after Ethiopia, and was three to four times the average for the rest of the continent.

Agriculture is a driving force of Côte d'Ivoire's economy; while it constitutes only 20% of the economy compared with industry at around 27% and services at 53%, 68% of the country's labour force is involved in agriculture. Côte d'Ivoire is the world's largest producer of cocoa and a major exporter of rubber, coffee and oil; gold mining and exporting electricity are other primary industries.

Despite Côte d'Ivoire's economic leadership in the region, its strong growth is vulnerable in several ways: of particular concern are commodity price volatility, climate, global and regional security issues and regional and international financial markets. Côte d'Ivoire's economic success depends on the continued viability of just a few industries and commodities, which are particularly sensitive to price fluctuations in global markets. The effects were seen in 2016-2017, when oil price volatility as well as a sharp drop in cocoa prices negatively affected the economy and necessitated fiscal policy response.

Climate change and environmental degradation are significant risks to the Ivorian economy given the centrality of agricultural production and of the cocoa value chain. Cocoa is both a primary cause of deforestation in Côte d'Ivoire, which has claimed up to 60% of the country's forests, and at risk due to the negative impact of warming temperatures on soil fertility. Côte d'Ivoire's widely lauded economic growth has largely been a product of an estimated utilization of 26% of its natural resources between 1990 and 2014; sustained economic stability will require active management of these resources for future use rather than unbridled exploitation as well as climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.

### **Examples of the role of the private sector in manmade disasters**

The private sector has limited experience in supporting manmade disaster response in Cote d'Ivoire. Some of the larger companies like SIFCA (through its foundation) have, however, provided significant support (infrastructure, health care etc.) in the communities where they operate. While this has been considered more as corporate social responsibility, the essence of helping affected populations and building community resilience is the same. Most companies interviewed, however, had not been exposed or addressed manmade disasters.

The private sector perception of resilience is changing. As resilience is understood as more than just philanthropy or CSR, the perception also moves away from reputational gains to more of a strategic investment and partnerships that benefit competitiveness and long-term success.

### **The role of the CBI Member Network in Cote d'Ivoire**

In June 2015, as a prelude to the World Humanitarian Summit, the Ministry of Solidarity and OCHA Cote d'Ivoire in partnership with the Confédération Générale des Entreprises de Côte d'Ivoire (CGECI) co-organized a Regional Dialogue for West and Central Africa on private sector engagement in humanitarian action in Abidjan. As a follow-up, in April 2017, La plateforme humanitaire du secteur privé de Côte d'Ivoire (PHSP Cote d'Ivoire) was formally launched, under the auspices of CGECI. The platform aims to promote sustainable partnerships between the private sector and humanitarian organizations and enable the private sector members of the platform to contribute to disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, response and recovery through their areas of expertise.

During the project duration and as part of the manmade disaster workstream, PHSP Cote d'Ivoire did the following:

- Together with the CBI Secretariat and ODI, co-organized a session in Abidjan on 31 August 2018. The event brought together business and non-business representatives to learn about private sector engagement in complex emergency situations. It also provided an opportunity to exchange experiences as well as contribute to the development of the guidance toolkit.
- A landscape assessment was conducted on the basis of desk research and interviews conducted from November 2018 to August 2019. The objective was to gain a proper understanding of the context in which PHSP Cote d'Ivoire and its members operate and how have / might companies contribute.
- A workshop was convened on 27 August 2019 to continue the conversation on manmade disasters, identify key stakeholders of PHSP Cote d'Ivoire and further understand their expectations, particularly around the manmade disaster workstream. The conversations also helped the platform re-think and re-structure its work, but more importantly build ownership among the participants to move forward with implementing additional activities in the space of disaster management.

### **Key observations:**

- The manmade disaster situation in Cote d'Ivoire is not as acute as in some other sub-Saharan African countries (with armed conflict, refugees etc.), making it easier for the Ivorian private sector to overlook their potential role. Furthermore, since the summer 2018 flooding in and around Abidjan, private sector attention has been directed more towards natural hazards.

- PHSP Cote d'Ivoire was impacted by closure of the OCHA Cote d'Ivoire office. It has been challenging to find experts that understand the humanitarian landscape and have expertise in / with the private sector. The landscape assessment process was accompanied with an analysis of the platform structure and mandate, to ensure PHSP Cote d'Ivoire can continue to provide value to its participants.
- Lack of information and understanding on manmade disasters in general and the Ivorian context is a clear barrier to private sector engagement. The topic of manmade disasters is in fact not widely understood among private sector entities.
- Terminology and differences between manmade and natural disasters were new to most private sector entities. Once terminology had been discussed and agreed upon, companies were able to share some examples of and brainstorm on ways how they could address manmade disaster contexts. Corporate social responsibility or corporate citizenship were used as the framework for discussing contributions. As companies find it challenging to identify and assess opportunities, PHSP Cote d'Ivoire needs to find ways to share information, support planning and coordinate activities.

### **Next steps for PHSP Cote d'Ivoire**

PHSP Cote d'Ivoire will finalize a structural analysis to further strengthen its operations. The new structure will be presented to members of the platform together with the outcomes of the manmade disaster landscape assessment.

As intercommunity violence is considered as one of the main manmade challenges at the moment, the network should consider localized instead of national level activities. These could be led by the companies present in each given location.

Election related violence has been identified as another potential entry point and will be further discussed in the coming months.

PHSP Cote d'Ivoire will have to further strengthen the business case or rationale for private sector engagement. This will enable more companies to join the platform and take ownership of the workstream on manmade disasters.