



European
Commission



External evaluation of the European Union's cooperation with the Republic of Ivory Coast (2007-2015)

Summary
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*Evaluation carried out on behalf of
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International
cooperation and
development

Summary

Objectives of the Evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide a comprehensive and independent assessment of the European Union (EU)'s past and present cooperation in Ivory Coast, in order to draw key lessons and make recommendations for the future, including within the context of joint programming between the EU, France, Germany and Spain.

The scope of the study covers all the cooperation strategies and agreements between the EU and Ivory Coast, and the actions related to their implementation over the 2007-2015 period.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation took place in four phases: inception, desk-based, fieldwork and synthesis. The evaluation was managed by the Evaluation Unit of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO).

The intervention logic of the EU Strategy in Ivory Coast was reconstructed to highlight the causal relationships between planned activities, outcomes and impacts. The evaluation team then formulated ten evaluation questions and associated judgement criteria, measured by objectively verifiable indicators. The final conclusions are based on a triangulation of different sources and methods of data collection. To answer the evaluation questions, more than 200 documents were reviewed, 118 people consulted, in the form of individual interviews or focus group, and 20 projects examined in more detail, with field visits for nine of them.

The context of the period under evaluation

Ivory Coast is emerging from a long period of instability, punctuated by a political and military conflict between 2002 and 2007 and a post-election crisis in 2010/2011. Two events mark the beginning of the evaluation period: the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, which put an end to the country's north-south divide, and the normalisation of the relationships between the government and the multilateral agencies. The process of ending the crisis subsequently continued to face many obstacles: after being continually postponed, the presidential elections of October 2010 plunged again the country into instability, leaving a death toll of 3,000 and 500,000 displaced.

The first term of President Alassane Ouattara was characterised by a return to stability and resumption in economic growth. The country also benefited from significant debt relief through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. In recognition of the normalisation of the country's situation, the United Nations meanwhile, lifted the sanctions on the country and ended the United Nations mission in Ivory Coast (UNOCI). Alassane Ouattara was re-elected for a second term in October 2015 (the last year of the evaluation period).

While the risk of renewed political and military conflict was considered low at the end of the evaluation period, the country continued to face significant challenges: the process of national reconciliation to address the post-election violence was still at infant stage and the security sector and the terrorist risk remained a concern. The country was also experiencing growing social discontent. The population felt excluded from the benefits of economic growth, while key social indicators remained at their lowest after more than a decade of instability.

Cooperation between EU – Ivory Coast

As the only donor still present during the first years of the political-military conflict, the EU has witnessed the rapid return of other technical and financial partners since 2007. According to OECD-DAC data, the EU share as a percentage of total aid (in net flow) was 8.4% (\$939 million) between 2007 and 2015. In 2015, the EU was the third largest donor in the country (9% of the total), after France (43% - within the context of its debt reduction and development contracts (C2D)) and the United States (11%).

In the period under review, the EU's strategy in Ivory Coast has shifted from an approach linking relief, rehabilitation and development to a long-term development cooperation characterised by a reduction in its sectors of intervention. Over the review period, nearly 83% of committed resources came from the European Development Fund (EDF), the remaining 17% coming from other financial instruments. The total amount of commitments over the period was €629.5 million, of which €531.5 million was disbursed (412,924.9 million CFA francs).

Peace building, good governance and the strengthening of the state have been key objectives of the EU's cooperation strategy with the country throughout the period under review. Actions financed under the 9th EDF (2002-2007) focused on emergency and reconstruction programs. In the 10th EDF (2008-2013), the EU also focused on improving the country's social and economic infrastructure. The strategic priorities of EU cooperation with the country subsequently evolved under the 11th EDF (2014-2020), with a decision to focus on three sectors: (i) agriculture and food security; (ii) energy; and (iii) strengthening the state and peace building. In addition to these so-called "focal sectors", the EU has also lent its support to agricultural export sector, to regional integration, and to non-state actors.

Conclusions

Overall assessment

The EU has pursued ambitious cooperation objectives with Ivory Coast. It has been able to take advantage of its uninterrupted presence during the years of conflict, its diplomatic status and its range of financial instruments, to support the government of Laurent Gbagbo, then that of Alassane Ouattara in ending the crisis and rebuilding the country. The use of thematic instruments and the approval of a State building contract (SBC) after the post-election crisis of 2010-2011 has made it possible to mobilise significant additional resources (totalling €170 million) to meet urgent needs related to peace-building, good governance and state-building. Overall, results have been achieved in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; formulating policies and restoring the sovereign functions of the state in the areas of justice, police, public finance management, health, and water and sanitation. The EU has also played a key and innovative role in building the capacity of civil society, in the cotton sector and on the issue of rural land tenure. Furthermore, its capacity for dialogue and coordination with other technical and financial partners has been widely recognised.

Significant obstacles have undermined the relevance and effectiveness of its action in Ivory Coast, however. These obstacles were both institutional and contextual. The EU's cooperation framework is mainly defined by the EDF National Indicative Programmes, which are joint programming documents with the government. Civil society organisations, representatives of the private sector and, to a lesser extent, local authorities, have received support from the EU. However, they have not been sufficiently considered as full development partners in the same way as the government, which remains the EU's preferred partner. By embracing the government's ambitions to make Ivory Coast an example of success, the EU took the risk of overlooking some of the country's factors of fragility, including corruption and the culture of impunity, as well as the persistence of social and regional disparities. Conversely, the EU experience shows that, despite all its support (including through dialogue and the SBC), some issues cannot move forward (and can even move backwards), if political and/or institutional blockages persist.

EU aid management mechanisms and weak capacity of the beneficiary institutions also caused many delays in launching and then implementing the majority of the 10th and 11th EDF programmes. Despite satisfactory multi-donor coordination mechanisms, the risk of aid fragmentation remains significant. Finally, for a large majority of interventions, the sustainability of results is not assured.

In this context, and in view of the many uncertainties that still characterised the end of the evaluation period, certain principles of international engagement in fragile states - including those on non-discrimination; alignment with local priorities; and the links between political, security and development objectives - retain their full meaning.

The conclusions below complete this general conclusion.

Intervention Areas

Strengthening the state and promoting good governance. *The EU, together with the other technical and financial partners, has visibly accompanied the country towards a lasting solution to the crisis, in particular with regard to the elections as well as the demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants. It has also helped to restore the physical presence of the state over a large part of the territory, particularly in the areas of security, justice and health. The results in improving governance, however, are mixed. Despite a coordinated approach, the expectations of the EU and other technical and financial partners regarding policy dialogue have not been met. At a sub-sector level, the objectives of promoting international trade have not been achieved; civil society, although strengthened, is not yet completely fulfilling its advocacy role; and the introduction of new public finance management tools has not yet yielded tangible results. Challenges related to decentralisation and reconciliation (including between the population and the police) also remain important.*

Social services. *The EU has contributed to reviving the public provision of health services, and to a lesser extent, water and sanitation. However, its decision to leave the health sector under the 11th EDF does not take sufficient account of the reality of the country, which is still facing very significant challenges in this sector, as reflected in a high maternal mortality rate (614 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2012) and, more generally, a low life expectancy of 50.7 years compared to 56.8 years across Sub-Saharan Africa in 2012. The urgent need to strengthen the health system still requires significant mobilisation of financial and human resources. This situation has prompted all the technical and financial partners to ask the government to rebalance public investments for the benefit of the social sectors. Equally, the arrival of other technical and financial partners, notably France, is not enough to compensate for the departure of the EU, which has recognised experience in this sector.*

Economic infrastructure. *The EU's contribution to the road network has focused on upgrading roads (including the Adzopé-Agnibilékrou road) and defining new sectoral policies. The EU has, however, overestimated the government's willingness and ability to implement the necessary reforms, a situation that risks finding itself in the energy sector (in particular with regard to renewable energies).*

Agriculture and rural development. *The choice of agriculture and food security as a focal sector under the 11th EDF is fully in line with the country's inclusive and sustainable growth objective. It also reflects the EU's ability to build on past successes, particularly in the cotton sector and on land tenure. Support for cotton (taken over by France through the C2D) has helped to strengthen the organisation of small producers, increase cotton production as well as improve farmers' incomes. Support for rural land tenure, which continues through sector budget support under the 11th EDF, addresses one of the main constraints to the development of small-scale farming. EU support in this area has developed and tested a strategic and participatory intervention model and opened a new area of partnership with the government and other technical and financial partners. Interventions in the banana and sugar sectors have first of all followed an approach focusing on strengthening external competitiveness of industrial sectors.*

Cross-cutting issues. *The EU has paid particular attention to cross-cutting issues on gender (including young people), human rights, and, to a lesser extent, the fight against global warming. Results have been achieved, particularly with the economic reintegration of 8,300 young people and setting up legal clinics. Targeting vulnerable groups, including women, has become less important under the 11th EDF, despite the persistence of regional and social disparities.*

Recommendations

The recommendations below seek to provide possible solutions in the short and medium term, including by 2020, an election year, which is pivotal for the country. The recommendations also provide a basis for further reflection on the next EU cooperation programming cycle. These recommendations seek to be realistic, taking into account the current weight of cooperation from the EU, its Member States, and other technical and financial partners in the country, as well as their need to rationalise their choice of focal sectors.

Cooperation strategy

Take better account of the country's factors of fragility. Integrate social contract and social cohesion issues, as well as the challenges of inclusive and sustainable growth, more fully into strategic priorities, analyses and actions in Ivory Coast:

- Adopt a strategy for re-engagement in the basic social sectors by 2020, building on the EU's added value in these sectors (mainly health);
- Better mainstream issues related to transitional justice, the fight against corruption and impunity, social inequalities and the situation of vulnerable groups at every level of dialogue;
- Better support the deconcentrated state services in the various programmes of the 11th EDF and provide complementary support to local authorities (through thematic instruments) to help the government accelerate decentralization;
- Improve the assessment of the distributive effects of the different programmes in the regions and across the population and continue to support the strengthening of national statistics to understand better the social and economic needs of the country;
- Come to a better understanding of the impact that planned or ongoing programmes (notably registration of civil status, rural land tenure, support related to migration) can have on the social contract and social cohesion.

Pursue and improve the mix of instruments. Consolidate the EU's approach of combining its different aid instruments and modalities to enhance the effectiveness of its actions, especially:

- As part of the budget support provided to Ivory Coast, but also to other ACP countries, seek a consensus within the EU on the relevance and usefulness of the choice of indicators that encourage the government to face up to its own commitments but are politically difficult;
- Identify and maintain the synergy of actions and dialogue between budget support and project-based approaches, particularly in supporting rural land tenure and in the sectors of justice and public finance management;
- Define joint objectives between the interventions financed through the National Indicative Programme and those outside (including the emergency trust fund) to ensure a greater coherence and relevance of actions in the focal sector "Strengthening the State and Peace-building" in the 11th EDF;
- Draw lessons from the past on the operational risks associated with projects whose implementation involves several national beneficiary institutions.

Partnership. Strengthen the EU's partnership framework with other state and non-state actors to better take into account the local realities of the country. The implementation and monitoring of the EU roadmap for engagement with civil society (2016-2020) will be an essential element of this strengthening. A consultation framework between the EU delegation and civil society should also be established for regular discussions on key themes.

Dialogue and coordination. Pursue the objectives of policy dialogue and deepen coordination, coherence, complementarity efforts between technical and financial partners, by considering the following actions:

- Further encourage the government to play a full leadership role through its own monitoring and coordination mechanisms;
- Strengthen the entry points of the Committee of Heads of Cooperation at the level of Government Cabinet Directors, so that they can conduct high-level policy dialogue that is less ceremonial and more technical;
- Better understand the added value of the EU across different sectors and, with the government, encourage more discussions on the division of labour between technical and financial partners, within and across sectors;
- Regarding budget support, better understand opportunities for policy dialogue and their limitations, and use complementary measures to support more effective implementation of reforms in all sectors covered by budget support.

Areas of intervention of the 11th EDF

Governance. *Better articulate and document the approach combining political dialogue, policy dialogue, and multi-stakeholder partnership, by considering the following actions:*

- *Rule of law, human rights and the fight against corruption: In addition to general budget support, maintain a project approach in the justice sector to maintain and strengthen the partnership framework between the EU, the government and other non-state actors;*
- *Civil society: Continue to encourage the revision of the law on associations. In the 11th EDF civil society programme, improve targeting strategies, resize geographical areas of the Regional Centres for Support to Civil Society and provide continuous support to mechanisms for dialogue and consultation at local, regional and national level;*
- *Public Finance Management: With the government, better identify the possibilities of synergy of actions between technical and financial partners and move towards a "common basket" to support the reform strategy;*
- *Foreign trade and regional integration: Continue support for external trade and regional integration, avoiding direct support to businesses (whether jointly or individually), by refocusing on the institutional and regulatory environment for the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises.*

Agriculture and food security. *Reinforce the coherence and relevance of the various interventions, especially those supporting the major export sectors, towards the main objectives of the cooperation: poverty reduction, post-crisis recovery and good governance, by considering the following actions:*

- *Strengthen support for village programmes in the sugar and banana interventions;*
- *Establish a roadmap for rural land tenure with participation of all technical and financial partners and civil society representatives. Maintain legal and technical assistance at local and national level as part of the implementation of the rural land reform;*
- *Carry out an evaluation of the cotton programmes and formulate an exit strategy (and strategy to facilitate the actions of the French Development Agency) in this sector;*
- *Consider "blending" as an instrument to support the private sector in major sectors (banana, sugar).*

Energy. *In the energy sector, enhance opportunities for dialogue and maximise the opportunities offered by "blending", by considering the following actions:*

- *Promote high visibility interventions in the framework of the EU partnership with the government and in relation with the issues associated with the projects, such as climatic, economic and social challenges ;*
- *Optimise the opportunities offered by "blending", by positioning itself on the sector's key links in order to better accompany the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the sectoral policy of the country as a whole.*