



# Being a **WOMAN** in Côte d'Ivoire : **EMPOWERMENT CHALLENGES**

ABIDJAN COUNTRY OFFICE  
GENDER CONSULTATIONS REPORT SUMMARY



WORLD BANK  
REGIONAL OFFICE, CÔTE D'IVOIRE

JUNE 2013

## Acknowledgements

Mrs. Henriette DAGRI-DIABATE, Grand chancellor of the National Order, Chairperson of Gender Consultations in Côte d'Ivoire;

Mrs. Anne-Désirée OULOTO, Minister of Solidarity, Family, Women and Children;

Mrs. FADIKA Sarra Sako, Senior Vice-President of the National Assembly;

Mrs. Fatima MAÏGA, former Country Director, UN Women, Côte d'Ivoire Office;

Prefects (governors) of the regions of Gbêkê, Tonkpi, Poro, Gontoungo, Sanwi, Bafing and San Pedro;

Mayors of the regions of Gbêkê, Tonkpi, Poro, Gontoungo, Sanwi, Bafing and San Pedro;

Women's Organizations of regions and cities visited;

The National Statistics Institute (*Institut National de la Statistique* (INS));

The General Confederation of Enterprises of Côte d'Ivoire (CGECI);

The Ivorian Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises (FIPME);

The Centre for the Promotion of Investment in Côte d'Ivoire (CEPICI);

The UNESCO Chair on Water, Women and Decision Making, Abidjan

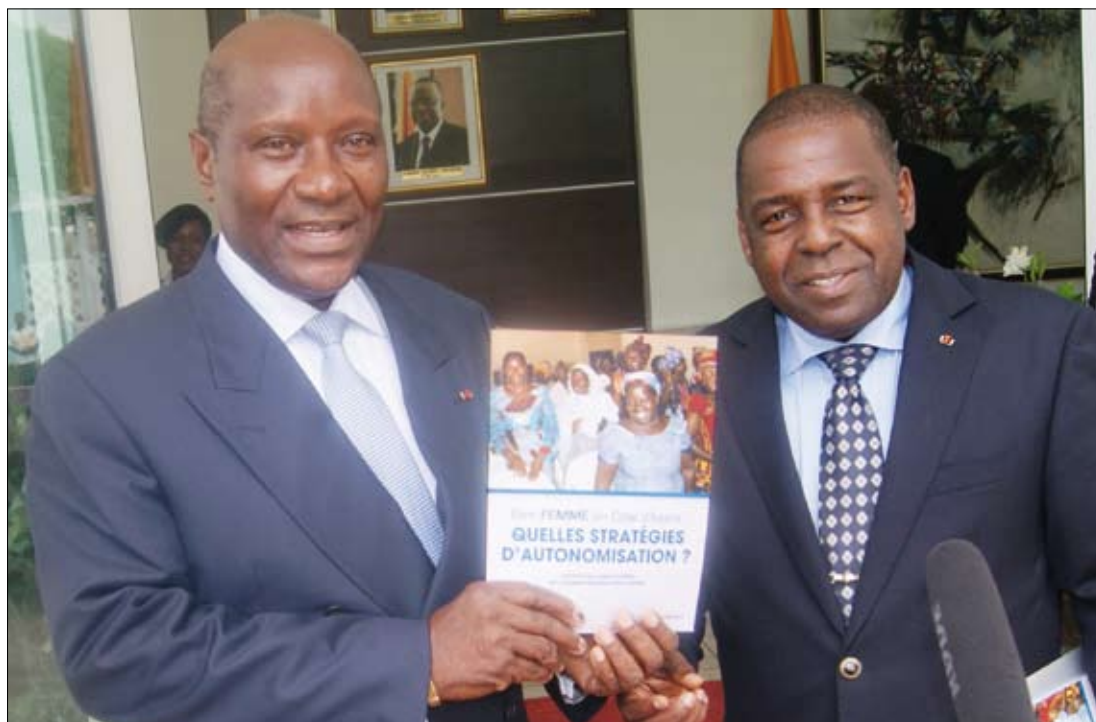
The Ivorian Center for Economic and Social Research (*Centre Ivoirien de Recherches Economiques et Sociales* (CIRES))

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The following staff members provided valuable support to the team: Marie-Chantal Attobra; , Léontine Sidjé , Bintou Fofana , Robert Yungu, Azedine Querghi, Mariko Phanse, Alexis Kacou, Kouakou Kouassi, Kouamé Kouadio, Ouattara Ningou Jérôme and Dah Sié.



## Executive Summary

In Africa, women are subjected to discriminatory practices that keep them in a vulnerable situation. Their limited access to land, in a continent where the majority of the population depends on agriculture, reduces their access to credit and their capacity to undertake sustainable economic activities to generate income. They hold only 18% of agricultural lands and are not better off in administrations. In Côte d'Ivoire, the woman remains marginalized, with a status that is increasingly weakened today by the socio-political situation. Data from the National Statistics Institute highlight their extreme poverty: 75% of rural women are living below the poverty line. And they are often deprived of basic social services. Some socio-cultural factors perpetuate traditions that are harmful to girls and women. Despite the establishment of organizations for the promotion and protection of women's rights (Directorate for equality and gender promotion in 2006, National Committee to Combat Violence Against Women and Children), Côte d'Ivoire ranks 136<sup>th</sup> in the gender inequality index as per the UNDP 2011 gender-related development index (GDI). Yet the country has ratified several international and regional conventions on equal dignity and rights for all citizens. While there are almost equal rights for men and women, no interest is given to gender and women empowerment issues in the implementation of national policies. Faced with these realities that could be an obstacle to the ambition of the Ivorian authorities to make Côte d'Ivoire an emerging country by 2020, the World Bank has decided to listen to the concerns of all categories of women to take more effective action in their favor. Equality between men

and women is the cornerstone of sustainable development. The World Bank consultations on gender in Côte d'Ivoire have given the opportunity to women in Côte d'Ivoire, whether in urban or rural areas, to express concerns that are specific to their environments. Workshops were organized in eight regions and cities around four themes:

- **Tradition, modernity: cultural differences and the value system for African Women**
- **Public space, political space, social space: The leadership of women**
- **Economic space and women entrepreneurs**
- **Gender-Based Violence : When will rights be observed ?**

For seven months, a World Bank Abidjan office traveled across the regions which were selected at the end of the Abidjan workshop. Nearly four hundred women and men took part in workshops in Bouake, Korhogo, Man, Aboisso, Bondoukou, Touba, San Pedro (after the one held in the Ivorian economic capital). Cross-exchanges and shared reflections led to proposals and recommendations useful for the formulation of well targeted public policies to reduce gender disparities. These include:

- Respect of the Constitution which enshrines equality of all regardless of gender, ethnicity and religion;
- Recognition and respect for women's rights

(right to education, right to information, right to health, ...);

- Enforcement of laws and legislation against gender-based discrimination and violence;
- Full participation of women in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country;
- Establishment of an institutional framework on gender equality;
- Respect for and enhancement of the reproductive role of women;
- Enhancement of women's image;
- Promotion and enhancement of customs and traditions ...

This report is the culmination of the process initiated by the World Bank as part of the establishment of its program of strengthening the role of women in Ivorian society. It reports summary proposals from the various consultations held both nationally and regionally. Designed in a participatory and decentralized approach, these consultations have made it possible to gather factual and contextual data on the four (04) themes selected for the workshops, as well as proposals that, if translated into actions, would help develop an action plan. This is, and it must be stressed, a study that has the merit of giving the floor directly to hundreds of Ivorian women from all socio-professional categories to develop themselves a roadmap based on their own daily experiences.



## WHY CONSULTATIONS ON GENDER IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE ?

### Key Ideas

● In 2012, the World Bank released the *World Development Report: Gender Equality and Development*. In terms of recommendations, the Report identifies four areas where action needs to be taken as a priority :

- 1. Reducing gender gaps in human capital endowments (addressing excess female mortality and eliminating pockets of gender disadvantage in education where they persist)**
- 2. Closing earnings and productivity gaps between women and men**
- 3. Shrinking gender differences in voice**
- 4. Limiting the reproduction of gender inequality over time, whether it is through endowments, economic opportunities, or agency**



- In July 2012, the WB CO based in Abidjan organized a major debate on gender to identify inequality constraints that prevent women from accessing the same rights as men.
- In partnership with UN-Women, a meeting with forty women leaders under the auspices of the Grand Chancellor of the National Order of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire identified key points for reflection through a nation-wide consultation with other women.
- Participants asked the World Bank to adjust its procedures to better address and integrate gender issues into its programs. More specifically, the idea retained was to conduct consultations at the national level by giving the floor to women directly (as a priority), but also to men in order to establish a snapshot of the most compelling issues and propose a roadmap that can first be used for the operations of the World Bank and then for country dialogue and advocacy.



## METHODOLOGY

- Unlike recent studies on gender in Côte d'Ivoire, these consultations have been conducted in several regions (08) over a longer period (November 2012 – May 2013).
- A participatory approach in the form of workshops attended by approximately 400 participants in Abidjan, Bouaké, Korhogo, Man, Aboisso Bondoukou, Touba and San Pedro.
- Consideration of various geographical and cultural areas (North, South, Centre, Southwest, East, West), which gives a panoramic view of the expectations of women and a better understanding of their needs, taking as focus for reflection the 04 major themes :
  - Tradition, modernity : cultural differences and the value system for African Women
  - Public space, political space, social space: The leadership of women.
  - Economic space and women entrepreneurs
  - Gender based violence: When will rights be observed ?



## ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

- Data collected from these consultations show that the situation of Ivorian women is worrying at the end of the long sociopolitical crisis.
- For example, figures from the National Statistics Institute (*Institut National de la Statistique*) highlight extreme poverty among them, especially in rural areas where 75% of women live below the poverty line, a phenomenon also accentuated by the lack of basic social services.
- Without opposing tradition and modernity, it should be noted that some cultural factors perpetuate traditions that are harmful to girls and women, such as female genital mutilation, domestic violence, land access denial, etc.
- In terms of decision making, the situation of women in Côte d'Ivoire is marked by their under-representation in positions of authority both in the politico-economic and the administrative sphere whereas they were nearly 52% registered to vote in 2010.
- Despite commendable progress in gender equity and empowerment (Reform of the Marriage Law; the Gender component of the 2012-2015 National Development Plan; the Support Fund for Women of Côte d'Ivoire and the Compendium of Female Expertise), disparities remain glaring and this must concern us all: government, elected officials, partners, politicians, economic operators, CSOs, media, etc.





## CONSULTATION RESULTS : TRENDS IN SHORT PER THEME AND PROPOSED ACTIONS :

**Shared Realities** : We found that despite the diversity of locations (eight geographical areas of the country), cultures, traditions and religious practices, the proposals made at the end of the workshops highlight common essential features. In this, Ivorian women have similar expectations, with some nuances. More specifically, they want :

- Respect of the Constitution which enshrines the equality of all regardless of gender, ethnicity and religion;
- Recognition and respect for women's rights (right to education, right to information, right to health ...);
- Enforcement of laws and legislation against discrimination and gender-based violence;
- Full participation of women in political, social, economic and cultural life.
- Establishment of an institutional framework on gender equality;
- Respect for and enhancement of the reproductive role and image of women;
- Promotion and enhancement of customs and traditions that recognize the dignity of women.




**THEME  
1**

**Tradition, modernity : cultural differences and the value system for African Women: Give women reference points that are worthy of their contributions to the development of society.**

Without opposing tradition and modernity, let us note the persistence of discriminatory and degrading practices towards women, often for cultural and religious reasons: non-acceptance of women in the public space; early marriage of young girls; forced marriage; lack of land access for women as landowners; non-education of the girl child; exclusion of women from family inheritance; genital mutilation; levirate, etc.

**Key Actions  
Proposed**

- Educate the whole community on citizenship, gender and peace ;
- initiate constructive dialogue without giving the appearance of a clash between tradition and modernity;
- create a center for personality development training for women ; support legislative reforms and effectively enforce laws on equality and parity ;
- make adult women literate, especially in rural areas ;
- popularize women's rights and fight against sexist and discriminatory stereotypes ;
- create one-stop shops for women's access to land (identify all state fallows and redistribute them to women and provide support measures for the development of lands).


**THEME  
2**
**Public space, political space, social space :  
The leadership of women**

One of the factors to be taken into account in the non-assertion of the leadership of women in the public area is the difficulty they have expressing themselves outside the private sphere. It seems clear to participants that the level of education weighs much in whether women are self-confident or not.

Many women are present in political parties but their electoral weight has not been transformed into political power. The emergency law on the quota of at least 30% of women in politics and decision-making positions in administrations has not yet been passed while the Constitution enshrines the equality of all citizens

**Key Actions  
Proposed**

- Subject the funding of political parties to the rate of participation of women in decision-making bodies of said parties and in key positions ;
- enroll and keep girls in school by providing incentives (bonuses, institutional scholarships, financial support, Award of Excellence, boarding, building more high schools for girls ...);
- establish databases for competent women in political parties, administrations, private sector, international organizations and institutions, and make them public ;
- fight against prejudice and encourage initiative in women.


**THEME**  
**3**
**Economic space and women entrepreneurs :  
 Accelerating women empowerment , especially in rural areas.**

For Côte d'Ivoire, an agricultural country, the primary wealth of people is land. However, the customary land system discriminates against women, which makes it difficult or even impossible for them to own agricultural lands. Women, in most cases, particularly those in rural areas, are forced to negotiate plots of land from their families of origin or their husbands for growing food crops. Access to information and business opportunities is a puzzle; and the difficult access to credit is one of the obstacles most mentioned by women themselves, whether in rural areas or urban areas.

**Key Actions  
 Proposed**

- Educate on equal access to land ; organize training sessions and/or seminars on entrepreneurial activities of women ;
- establish a gender sensitive policy at the Ivorian Entrepreneurship Institute (*Institut National Ivoirien de l'Entreprenariat (INIE)*) ;
- create an advisory, information and training center for female entrepreneurs ;
- create a facility to support, inform, train and coach rural women ;
- provide financial structures with an assistance fund for female entrepreneurs ;
- set up a one stop shop for female micro-entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs.


**THÈME  
4**
**Gender based violence: When will rights be observed ?**

Women are victims of various forms of violence: rape, excision, and infibulations. In some families, from a young age, the girl suffers mutilations whose impacts on her life as a woman are indescribable and unspeakable. (It should be noted that fortunately, these traditions are not practiced in all regions of Côte d'Ivoire). Sometimes women are humiliated and beaten by their husbands and/or partners, most often in total indifference.

**Key Actions  
Proposed**

- Build reception centers and legal clinics for women victims of violence ;
- introduce free delivery of medical certificate for women victims of violence and encourage victims to file complaints against their assaulters ;
- force assaulters to take care of their victims ;
- teach methods of contraception in schools and health centers ; educate religious and traditional leaders on the dangers and illegality of gender based violence as well as the disadvantages of amicable settlement of acts that are punishable by law.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONSULTANT

### On a strategic level

#### Government

- Respect of the Constitution which enshrines the equality of all citizens;
- Implementation of a gender sensitive planning and budgeting;
- Implementation of existing laws and strengthening the institutional framework;
- Establishment of an institutional framework on gender equality with the strategic objective to correct gender disparities at all levels;
- Creation of a Gender and Equity Observatory whose tasks will include the following:
  - To undertake gender audit and gender analysis of existing policies, strategies and sectoral action plans;
  - To ensure the inclusion of gender as an analytical, diagnostic and guidance tool to better address development equitably; ensure the enforcement of laws and conventions passed and signed for the respect of equality between women and men.





### Parliamentarians

- Establishment of gender and equity committees;
- Perform an audit of laws passed to assess their level of enforcement.

### World Bank

- Acquire sufficient and institutional human resources to systematically mainstream gender into the programs of the World Bank and of its national partners;
- Support capacity building for decision-makers and stakeholders in gender; formalization of reflection frameworks through gender-based violence trainings for decision-makers and stakeholders; organizations such as the CERAP and UNESCO Chair on Water, Women and Decision Making may be asked to assist;
- Support the creation of a Gender and Equity Observatory (Rwanda and Senegal

are equipped with such an instrument which allows them to integrate gender peculiarities in their development policies. The results make these countries a reference in terms of gender sensitive development).

### On a practical level

#### For law enforcement.

Build the capacity of judicial staff for better mastery of national, regional and international instruments on women's rights; build the capacity of members of the legislature on women's rights.

#### For the assertion of women's leadership.

Enhance women's visibility; train women in leadership; promote networking of women (in this regard, the Compendium of Female Expertise is a program to develop women's skills that should be supported).



#### **For the empowerment of female entrepreneurs.**

Economic empowerment of women through the establishment by the Government of an enabling environment and an appropriate and effective system for better women's access to financing; establish a fund for the development of female entrepreneurship (This fund will help address land access issues and thereby meet one of the expectations of rural women).

#### **For the fight against gender-based violence.**

Apply best practices: implement actions by duplicating the existing best models.

With support from the European Union, UN Women had implemented a multidimensional integrated project: legal assistance, counseling and medical assistance to victims of violence.

The Women Lawyers Association of Côte d'Ivoire (AfjCI); the Platform of Women to Win (*Plate-forme des femmes pour gagner*) and the UNESCO Chair on Water, Women and Decision Making have legal clinics and prevention and assistance centers for women victims of violence.

#### **Monitoring of recommendations.**

Set up a monitoring committee that will participate in the transformation of these proposals into relevant actions and programs, and ensure the implementation of the Action Plan to be finalized.

The excitement around these consultations was such that a slackening in the monitoring of these recommendations would be a blow to the reputation of the World Bank.





## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FEEDBACK WORKSHOP

### Additional Proposed Actions

On June 18, 2013, the national workshop to present the results and recommendations of the consultations was attended by over a hundred women and men in the presence of Mrs. Minister of Solidarity, Family, Women and Children, representing the Prime Minister; Mrs. Senior Vice-President of the National Assembly; the representative of the Grand Chancellor of the National Order. After the presentation, the report was enriched by inputs.

#### **Theme 1 : Tradition, modernity : cultural differences and the value system for African Women**

Highlight the tradition-modernity dynamic; enhance the visibility of women living in rural areas.

#### **Theme 2 : Public space, political space, social space: The leadership of women.**

Respect the Constitution by passing a law on parity; build the House of the Woman; clean

up existing laws and legislation and harmonize national and regional instruments; leverage public media for the information, training and education of people on citizenship.

#### **Theme 3 : Economic space and women entrepreneurs**

Establish a support fund for women; support rural women in agricultural modernization (equipment, then storage and transformation of produce).

#### **Theme 4 : Gender based violence: When will rights be observed ?**

Involve forensic experts in rape and other sexual violence investigations; build the capacity of state officials (judges, doctors and police) for a better mastery of the gender approach and national and international instruments on women's rights; organize activities of information, education and popularization of practices that are harmful to women's health.

Move from words to action and enforce all laws in the name of women's right to life.

**For equitable development in Côte d'Ivoire,** women require involvement at all levels of political power.

Women call for more solidarity among

themselves. They have also undertaken to play their part in achieving the recommendations of the consultations.

### Brief Overview of Gender Issue in Côte d'Ivoire

The Solemn Declaration of Côte d'Ivoire on Equal Opportunities, Equity and Gender made in 2007 by the Ivorian authorities, who undertook to cause to be developed a national policy on equal opportunities, equity and gender applicable in development policies, programs and projects in all areas of public life has for now remained a dead letter. The national policy document on equal opportunities, equity and gender written in 2009 by the Directorate of Equality and Gender Promotion, Ministry of Family, Women and Children reminds the need to take into account the gender dimension at all levels of the development process in Côte d'Ivoire. According to statistics of the Ministry of Family, Women and Children, 36% of women in Côte d'Ivoire are victims of physical and psychological violence, including female genital mutilation, with particularly high levels in the northern part of the country. Yet Law No. 98/757 of December 23, 1988 criminalizes some forms of violence against women. The fight against gender-based violence is taken into

account by law-makers. The willingness of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to set up organizations in charge of the promotion and protection of women's rights is affirmed. Hence the creation of a Directorate for Gender Equality and Promotion on December 28, 2006 and a National Committee to Combat Violence against Women and Children. But in practice, sufficient attention is not paid to the issue of gender and women's empowerment. Statistics continue to show the huge gap between laws and the actual situation of women. Economic and social inequalities still exist between men and women. In administrations and decision-making bodies (Government, National Assembly), women are largely underrepresented. Despite its constitutional, legal and political commitments, Côte d'Ivoire fails to be consistent with the requirements of equal opportunities. Much remains to be done for equality between men and women to become a reality, says the Association of Women Lawyers of Côte d'Ivoire.



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