

Background Note
Briefing to the Executive Board
Annual Session 18-20 June 2019

Policy and programme matters:

UN-WOMEN operational response at the country level: Côte d'Ivoire

Summary: Hailed, before the crisis, as a model of growth and one of the drivers of development in West Africa, Cote d'Ivoire has within 10 year returned to an annual grow rate of over 8.5% per annum and, since 2012, continued to achieve very high growth rates. This economic rebound was possible thanks to the vision defined for the country as an emerging country by 2020. As the country is gearing up for the forthcoming presidential elections, slated for 2020, tensions are revived highlighting the fact that the country is still fragile. The year 2018 was marked by socio-political unrest, notably the October and December local election campaigns and strikes in the health and education sectors. This fragility is compounded by Côte d'Ivoire vicinity to the Sahel and the extremist threat as well as climate change. Like many countries in the sub-region, Cote d'Ivoire has been hit by acts of terrorism, the most notorious being the attack in Grand Bassam in March 2016. Climate change is also a reality in Cote d'Ivoire and is characterized by an increased desertification in the north, erosion of the southern coastal areas and floods. This briefing will be structured in three parts as follows: (i) The context in which UN Women is operating in Côte d'Ivoire; (ii) UN Women operational response; (iii) UN Women normative and coordinating mandate; (iv) Opportunities for support to women's empowerment in Côte d'Ivoire.

1. Context.

After a decade of strong political and military security instability that reached its apogee in 2011, with a post-election crisis, the country has been recovering and seen its economy rising since 2012 with a growth approaching 9% and a projection of around 7% for the years to come according to both the World Bank and the IMF. The country National Development Plan (NDP) 2016-2020 was adopted by the National Assembly on 30 December 2015. The NDP aims to make Côte d'Ivoire an emerging country by 2020. In order to achieve this, the government has placed the private sector, both national and international, at the heart of its strategy as the main driver of economic growth. Macroeconomic stability has been restored with the mastery of internal and external balances.

Despite this positive performance of its economy and the gradual strengthening of its stability the country remains fragile. The perception of an incomplete reconciliation process is still acute, added to this that the majority of the population has not benefited from the country's economic growth. Côte d'Ivoire still ranks in the low human development category with a ranking of 170 out of 188 countries in the world. Poverty remains high (46.9%, 2015 ¹). This poverty affects women more than men. It is also more pronounced in rural than in urban

¹ 2015 Living Level Survey

areas. In addition, the illiteracy rate for the population over 15 years old is 56.1%² with the proportion of women concerned at 63% and that of men at 49%.

The country has signed most global frameworks on gender equality and women empowerment and has put into place institutions to promote women empowerment including a National Council for Women. In November 2016 the Ivory Coast adopted a constitution in which, among other things, the principles of gender equality in the labor market and equal opportunities in jobs and elected assemblies. On March 6, 2019, the country adopted a draft law on the quota for a minimum of 30% of women in elected assemblies.

Despite these efforts, the actions carried out have not led to the significant changes expected in terms of reduction of gender inequalities and increased women empowerment thereby limiting the conditions for equitable and sustainable human development and the expected progress towards emergence by 2020. In order to redress this situation, the government has put into place, a Social Programme : *le Programme Social du gouvernement (PSGouv) 2019-2020*, which objective is to accelerate the redistribution of the fruits of growth especially for the most disadvantaged, transparency in public resource management, education for all, a health system of excellence and proximity, universal health coverage and greater representativeness for women.

2. UN Women operational response in Cote d'Ivoire.

Programme Focus

UN Women in Côte d'Ivoire has been aligning its operational response to the country's focusing its activities and partnerships around a number of on-going UN Women Flagship Programmes as follows:

2.1 Women Economic Empowerment

A priority focus area of UN Women work in Cote d'Ivoire is women economic empowerment. The following initiatives have been supported (i) **setting up of local Women Training and Entrepreneurship Centres (*Centre de Formation à l'Entreprenariat Féminin*)** The pilot center established with the support of the Government of Japan has provided technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and development opportunities to young women and women in the community, providing concrete and innovative solutions through the use of new technologies in order to overcome the weakness of education (including illiteracy) and entrepreneurial training that strongly penalizes women entrepreneurs in Côte d'Ivoire. The Training centers once established and fully operational will allow a large number of Ivorian women to transform their entrepreneurial status into a real social and economic springboard and, in the long term, ensure that women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy. The economic model of the centers is developed to ensure the viability of the programs and to preserve the impact on the beneficiaries. (ii) **Women Economic empowerment through Climate Resilient Agriculture in Côte d'Ivoire.** The programme, in its acronym, AGRIFED undertaken in close collaboration with the Ministry of gender, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Plan, is a key programme for the government of Côte d'Ivoire and

² UNDP, Human Development Indicators and Indicators Report, 2018, P57

aims to empower and support women farmers by enabling them to fully participate in the economy through climate-friendly agriculture. The overall objective of this flagship programme is to ensure that rural women have secure access, control over and use of productive resources and engage in sustainable agriculture to increase their income security, work conditions and resilience to climate change. The programme aims, by 2021, to empower 40,000 women in strategic agricultural sectors that employ the most women (cocoa, cashew nuts, shea butter, rice and cassava).

Within the AGRIFED Programme, UN Women has facilitated the structuring and the implementation of the shea butter value chain through the reinforcement of the technical and functional capacities of the FIKACI, a women association operating in the shea butter sector, with a view to increasing the economic opportunities and income of women in the sector. UN women's intervention has helped turn the women association into an internationally eco-certified venture. The project has so far benefited 1,927 but has the potential to impact more women in the shea butter industry in Côte d'Ivoire and in the sub-region. Concomitantly, the **(iii) BuyfromWomen project has been** formulated by UN Women and implemented with funding from the Korean Government, under the AGRIFED programme, to provide a platform to link women farmers and supply chain actors, avail them critical information on market prices, sensitize them on climate smart agricultural practices and incoming opportunities. The tool also provides a link to social impact investment platforms to increase equity financing.

The partnership between UN Women Côte d'Ivoire and the AfDB for the implementation of the Women in Agribusiness programme, will dramatically improve the situation of thousands of women through agribusiness, value chain and access to foreign markets.

2.2 Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAW)

Under the Muskoka Programme, implemented in collaboration with UNFPA, OMS, UNICEF, UN Women Côte provided: **(i) training to youth groups on preventing gender based violence** within their communities through sensitizing youth on the social impact of gender based violence and identifying signs of violence including violence affecting women and girls in universities; **(ii) Engaging with religious and traditional leaders on EVAW**. Following up on the UN Women Lagos initiative with traditional leaders to end Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)³ attended by a delegation from Côte d'Ivoire composed of 2 traditional leaders and on 1 CSO activist, UN Women Côte d'Ivoire has continued its collaboration with religious and traditional leaders on EVAW, ending FGM and early marriages; **(iii) Policy support**. UN Women is also providing technical support to the government of Côte d'Ivoire for the updating of its National Policy Against Gender Based Violence (2012-2015).

The **Heforshe** campaign in Côte d'Ivoire has seen the commitment of President Alassane Ouattara as the first HeforShe Head of State in Africa. The number of men has now reached 7,755 **HeforShe** champions for gender equality and women empowerment in Côte d'Ivoire.

³ Lagos 3 – 7 December 2018

As part of its work with men and youth, UN Women Côte d'Ivoire signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Alassane Ouattara University, in Bouake, to mainstream gender into the university curriculum as well as establish a gender-club within the university

as a fora for young men and women to discuss societal issues and stereotypes that work against women's leadership and empowerment through community sensitization and the engagement of men and boys in remote communities. The other 7 universities of Côte d'Ivoire have expressed interest in signing a similar MoU and setting-up gender-clubs.

Women Political Empowerment and Leadership: In Côte d'Ivoire the programme aims at building the capacities of women in political parties, young women and in leadership and civic education as well as locally elected women to secure their participation in governance and political processes. In this regard, UN Women has provided training to 119 women on civic education, access to registration, voting, communication and negotiation for increased leadership and political participation. This has resulted in a sharing of experience between women in the political arena and younger women which in turn has inspired some of those young women to engage further in politics. UN Women Côte d'Ivoire is committed to support young women in politics through a new initiative to promote the next generation of Ivorian women in politics through its project **(i) *Pépinière des jeunes femmes en politique*** ("*Nursery of young women in politics*"). The project aims at building young women political and leadership capacities, encouraging their political participation as voters and candidates and mentoring the younger generation of women in politics. **(ii) *Training of locally elected women on gender-sensitive planning and budgeting*** in towns and districts headed by women with a view to providing them with the tools to better communicate and exercise their mandate through the formulation of inclusive and gender sensitive local plans, strategies and policies; **(iii) *Elaboration of the gender strategy of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)***. UN Women provided technical and financial support to the IEC in Côte d'Ivoire for the formulation of a gender sensitive strategy. This support fits into a capacity building strategy to mainstream gender in the election management bodies ahead of the 2020 elections.

2.3 Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action

Given the socio-political context of the country this programme is important as the post-electoral crisis of 2011 and the sociopolitical crisis of the 2018 local elections have exacerbated tensions between communities. It also repositions the thematic of gender, peace and security by giving space to women in the prevention and management of pre and post-electoral conflict and their role in early warning including of extremist threats.

At the strategic level: (i) UN Women facilitated a workshop on conflict analysis coupled with consultations with women groups and CSOs active in the area of social cohesion, peace building and conflict prevention. This resulted in scenario development and the formulation of recommendations and strategy to prevent pre and post electoral violence at community level; (ii) UN Women and the Embassy of Canada jointly supported the updating of the National Implementation Plan for Resolution 1325; (iii) Un Women in collaboration with the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Cohesion and the Fight against Poverty and the Observatory of Solidarity and Social Cohesion supported the formulation of a National early warning and rapid response strategy involving women, women and girl in early warning and response.

At the project level: UN Women supported the following activities aimed at ensuring that women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of conflicts, natural disasters and humanitarian action: **(i) Anticipating and preventing women and young girls vulnerability to terrorism through their empowerment, community dialogue and education in Northern part of Côte d'Ivoire.** The project aims at empowering women in remote communities to contribute to social cohesion, prevention of extremism and protection against violence through education; **(iii) Women and girls as actors of conflict prevention through early warning and information networks.** This project "aimed at preventing conflict and consolidating peace at the community level in the North (Korhogo et Bouna) and West (Man et Duekoue) of the country and Abidjan (Abobo et Yopougon) by strengthening the roles of women and girls in early warning and peacebuilding mechanisms. women and humanitarian border management with IOM, border programmes mali, Burkina faso, security local development plans and peace plans his project aims to address the topic of conflict prevention and management by involving the effective participation of women and girls. The project titled **Strengthening Women's Leadership for Securing Border Areas and Humanitarian Border Management in Ouangolodougou District (Border with Burkina Faso),** is a new joint project between UN Women Cote d'Ivoire and IOM Cote d'Ivoire that aims at strengthening the partnership between local authorities and women in the humanitarian management of borders, the formulation of local inclusive governance and development plans that promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in hosting communities.

UN Women Cote d'Ivoire has facilitated the participation of key practitioners on women, peace and security and women in uniform in international fora on UNSCR 1325 and related.

2.4 UN Women Normative and coordination Mandate in Cote d'Ivoire

In line with its mandate, UN Women Cote d'Ivoire has been providing normative support to the Government on the country's gender related reviews and reporting including CSW, Beijing +25, CEDAW reporting.

As part of its efforts to improve the legal framework on women's rights in the country, UN Women has been providing capacity building and financial support to CSOs and gender advocates for enhanced advocacy and social mobilization for the adoption of gender sensitive legislations and the repeal of gender discriminatory laws. This has led most recently to the adoption of various laws including: (i) on the reform of the Code of Criminal Procedure (December 2018); (ii) adoption by the Council of Ministers of a bill promoting the representation of women in the elected Assemblies (March 2019); (iii) Adoption of a bill by the Council of Ministers to reform the penal code (March 2019); adoption of a bill by the Council of Ministers on the family code amending the law on marriage, minority, filiation and estate/inheritance (March 2019).

Under its coordination mandate on gender equality and women's empowerment UN Women Côte d'Ivoire works closely with sister agencies under the Delivery as One (DaO) with a view to increasing joint programming in support of Women & youth inclusion through economic empowerment, political participation, conflict prevention. UN Women Cote d'Ivoire chairs the Gender Thematic Group (GTG) and provides (i) programming and advisory support and policy

advice based on gap analysis and emerging challenges; (ii) in addition to government and CSOs, UN Women Cote d'Ivoire provides expertise and capacity development to the UNCT

UN Women also co-chair the Development Partners Gender Thematic Group alongside the European Union and the French development agency.

4. Opportunities for support to women's empowerment in Cote d'Ivoire.

As part of the National Voluntary review UN Women Cote d'Ivoire has been promoting, at the national level, the alignment of CSW, the Beijing platform for Action with the SDGs framework. In a spirit of leaving no one behind UN Women has been encouraging thorough and inclusive consultative processes (CSW, Beijing, National voluntary review) involving women, men, youth, people living with disabilities, people leaving with HIV/aids.

In order for the actions in support of gender equality and women empowerment undertaken by the government of Cote d'Ivoire and its partners to lead to the significant changes expected in terms of reduction of gender inequalities and increased women empowerment UN Women will work on the following tracks:-

- Continue its work on strengthening the capacity of national stakeholders on gender equality and women empowerment with a view to addressing stereotypes that work against women and girls' full realization of their potential;
- Support government's effort on the functioning of mechanisms for the institutionalization of gender,
- Contribute to strengthening those mechanisms in order to improve the management and operational practices related to collection, planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluating gender equality and women's empowerment;
- Gender statistics: (i) Provide technical and financial support for the collection and disseminating of disaggregated data and statistics to promote and track progress on gender equality and women empowerment, including for those in vulnerable situation. (ii) Provide Technical support to national statistical institutions for the production, analysis, centralization and dissemination of gender-sensitive statistics;(iii) support the development by national statistical institutions of a centralized gender-sensitive database;

The UN Women Office in Côte d'Ivoire will continue leveraging the complementarities within the UNCT and will pursue its existing partnership with the AfDB, the AFD, Canada, the EU, Japan, Korea, AfDB and the World bank whilst continuing to explore new and innovative partnerships including with the private sector and foundations.
