

Understanding the Roots of Corruption in Cote d'Ivoire

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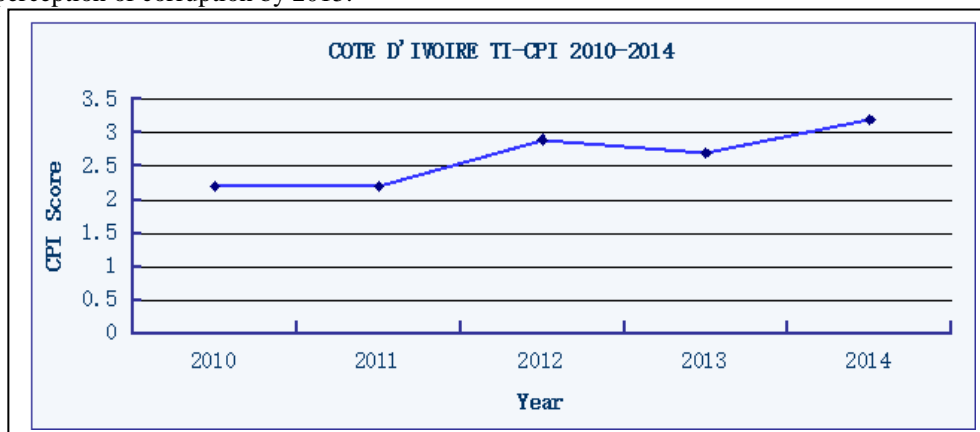
Abstract: Corruption in Cote d'Ivoire is endemic, it spills over every sector of the public administration. The mainstay of this article is to understand the earlier factors that induced the country in such dramatic state in order to design adequate actions to address the issue. Two special, though perhaps not exclusive explanations of the spread of corruption in Cote d'Ivoire are the legitimization of the act and the impunity that unfortunately encourages it. Corruption costs the country to remain crippled from economic development and reaching social equilibrium needed to build a stable nation, yet only few is done to punish this abusive behavior. Although, the country has signed up into international, continental and sub-regional anti-corruption conventions, it has failed to be more effective in practice. Additionally to the platonic ratification of these conventions, this paper suggests the implementation of further actions to enforce an effective fight against corruption within the country. These suggestions include population awareness, higher salary, fair judicial system, press freedom, audits of public offices and disclosure of public funds management that would promote transparency.

Keywords: Corruption, Public administration, Anti-corruption, Cote d'Ivoire

I. Introduction

As most of other African countries, Cote d'Ivoire is working on setting a proper environment to attract foreign investment and move forward to regain its economic leadership after a decade of sociopolitical crisis. Located in the western part of Africa, the ex-French colonial West Africa endows attracting economic infrastructures that have contributed to its economic boost after independence. In the early 1980s, the country experienced the "Ivorian economic miracle" by exhibiting one of the highest per capita income rates among non oil-producing countries in the Sub-Saharan region¹.

Earlier in 1996, the level of perceived corruption of Cote d'Ivoire was about 63 over 100, yet the country needed to improve this score in order to insure better economic environment for its investors. Contrarily, this score dropped drastically a decade later, as a consequence, the country was among the most corrupt economies of the world. This can be seen in the 2013 Transparency International² corruption perception index (TI-CPI) report on which the country was ranked 127th over 177 countries and territories evaluated, with a tendency of being very corrupt. Meanwhile, the current status (TI-CPI 2014) let observe a remarkable progress by an improvement of five points³ over the previous perceived level of corruption. Figure 1 exhibits the behavior of the Ivorian CPI score between the past five years. The observable progress could be the result of the government's desire to deploy all possible efforts to place the country among the top 80 countries in terms of the index of perception of corruption by 2015.



Source: Compiled TI-CPI reports 2010-2014.

¹Robert M. Hecht (1983). The Ivory Coast Economic 'Miracle': What Benefits for Peasant Farmers?. The Journal of Modern African Studies, 21, pp 25-53 doi:10.1017/S0022278X0002303X

²Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index, 2013.

³Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index, 2014.

To support this desire, the government strengthened the institutional framework around the fight against corruption. Thereby, the Brigade for the Fight against Corruption (BLC)⁴ and the High Authority for Good Governance⁵ have been the principal weapons of the government in the battle against the plague. Hopefully, all these measures will not be a simple façade but rather a real will of the authorities to drive the country out of the claws of corruption.

Despite the efforts to crackdown illegal exchanges between public officials and their clients, the threat of corruption remains systemic. This denotes that public administration as a whole is somehow using its authority as a legal alibi to accumulate personal profits. Therefore, the national anti-corruption bodies need to have a critical look at the colonial and the sociopolitical backgrounds to be enlightened on the roots of the rampant corruption within the country. The fight against corruption requires a deep understanding of the origins of the phenomenon to set up optimal measures that would address the issue from the root.

II. The nature of corruption in Cote d'Ivoire

Corruption in Africa and especially in Cote d'Ivoire is not always well understood as a crime by the perpetrators. It can also be justified by the passivity of the judicial system on acts of corruption. The judicial system fails to properly investigate and prosecute wrongdoers. In fact, the phenomenon has been legitimately accepted throughout the country to a level that it is expedient to deal with daily administrative issues. There is a need to increase corruption awareness to the population as well as to public officials and private sector companies. Corrupt exchanges intervene almost at every step of a public service to a point that those who are playing clean are seen as angels among the wolves of the public administration. In other words, it becomes abnormal to behave otherwise. Those who behave honestly are often persecuted for their probity within a systemic corrupt administration.

Article 6, paragraphs a and b of the Protocol on the Fight against Corruption of the Economic Community of West African States⁶ defines an act of corruption as the following:

- a) a public official demanding or accepting, either directly or indirectly through a third party, any object of pecuniary value such as a gift, offer, a promise or an advantage of any nature, whether for himself or for another person, in exchange for an act or an omission in the discharge of his duties;*
- b) offering or giving a public official, either directly or indirectly, any object of pecuniary value such as a gift, a favor or an advantage, whether for himself or another person, in exchange for an act or an omission in the discharge of his duties;*

Both actions of demanding and offering an object of pecuniary value by and to a public official are characterized as acts of corruption. Corruption in this case makes no victim between the two actors of the transaction. Both acts are reprehensible at the same level by Articles 28 and 29 of the presidential order No. 2013-660⁷ released by the Ivorian government in September 2013.

2.1. Current status of national corruption in Cote d'Ivoire

Corruption touches every sector of the Ivorian public administration.

As corruption becomes endemic, citizens might not know that they are doing wrong when they are asked by public officials to pay an amount of money to get a service done. The issue is no more taken as an offense as people would openly rationalize and defend themselves by claiming that they are neither not the first nor the last to behave likewise. Things work this way and there's nothing to be done, they usually claim. Therefore, they give up and choose to continue the opprobrious practice till they get seriously affected by it.

In most of the cases citizens are unaware of their rights and obligations and get scared to refuse to pay a bribe to avoid disappointing the official. They may even do so to get him available for more favors for the next time they might need his services. Or the situation could be that they are consciously aware and are intentionally not willing to go through the long process of the public administration. In the latter case, they are willing to pay bribes and other forms of corruption to get through their public needs. Thereby, rents seeking are offered to public officials.

Citizens' mind-set has rather been influenced by illegal practices of officials which have become as

⁴See more details about the Brigade for the Fight against Corruption in section five of this paper and visit official website at <http://www.igf.finances.gouv.ci/blc/>

⁵High Authority for Good Governance refers to the "Haute Autorite pour la Bonne Gouvernance" created by the presidential order No. 2013-660 of September, 20th, 2013.

⁶See Economic Community of West African States Protocol on the Fight against Corruption.

⁷See presidential order No. 2013-660 of September, 20th, 2013 of the official journal of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire.

"rules" set to pay "*involuntary bribes*" to get services done. People are constantly afraid to denounce irregularities of public officials especially when impunity of leaders is legitimated by the judicial system. Some other times, the mind-set is being controlled by the selfishness and arrogance of individuals willing to defy the established rules by offering what could be called "*voluntary bribes*". Unfortunately, any of this type of bribes and corrupt behavior profits to the global economy, rather it nourishes solely the belly of the bribe collector.

Every country establishes laws and regulations to educate its citizens according to principles of ethics and integrity. Laws and regulations are set to be respected and followed even for the lawmaker. To preserve a fair level of equality within the country, one's prestige and high reputation shall not be above established laws and regulations. As this is properly acknowledged, any behavior that is performed to counter-pass these laws and regulations should be punished to maintain general cohesion. Whether concerning "*involuntary bribes*" or "*voluntary bribes*", in each example laws and regulations are transgressed. Therefore, for each of these cases responsibilities should be identified and treated in respect of the laws and regulations.

In the case of "*involuntary bribes*", the responsibility might be appointed to the official who intentionally requests a petty payment for a service he is duly paid for. No matter if his salary is fairly paid or not. The citizen also has a part of the responsibility to assume for ignoring his rights and obligations to denounce corruption or for condoning with the system in place by embracing the easy ways of corruption. The fraud triangle defines such behaviors as "rationalization" which consist in persuading oneself that illegal behaviors are acceptable with the justification that anyone else does so. Meanwhile in the case of "*voluntary bribes*", the double responsibility is present. The citizen who comes with the intent to bribe is already in transgression with the law same as the official who accepts it. We are not talking about gifts between friends, but about illegal benefits received while exercising a public service. As a result, every party engaged in a corrupt activity is held accountable for violating the law even if the degree might differ among participants. At the same time, measures should be carried out at each part of the society to reinforce and ingest corruption awareness. Citizens and officials mind-sets should be improved on the matter of corruption and taught to understand the consequences of their actions on the global economy and society welfare. Studies of the World Bank and other development partners revealed that Cote d'Ivoire annually loses 350 billion CFA francs (approximately 500 million EUR) due to the racketeering and corruption.

This reality should impel Ivorian anti-corruption institutions to design measures that integrate each participant engaged in a corrupt exchange. Participants of a corrupt exchange can be divided into two groups: the citizen who is the buyer and the public official, the supplier of services. In one side, measures should educate the citizen on his rights and obligations towards corruption. On the other side, these measures should contribute in to reiterating officials' acknowledgment of their duties towards the citizens in the exercise of their service. Officials need to be reminded that they are appointed to serve the citizens and citizens' satisfaction should be their first motivation. Contrarily, we assist at another scenario where citizens serve the officials.

2.2. Major corruption cases

There is no working day without paying of bribes as well as there is no day passing without cases of corruption being reported by the press in Cote d'Ivoire. These cases are not seriously taken into consideration by anti-corruption institutions in place. Corruption is so usual in the country that it appears almost unbelievable that no one gets caught by authorities. As a consequence, the population hesitates to denounce by fear of reprisals of the corrupt officials. However, few major cases have been investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted to the court to respond for their actions. Among these cases, two major ones are discussed in the remainder of this section.

The first one is the case of four senior officials and a company director brought before the Public Prosecutor.

The case involves four officials of the Ministry of Health and a private entrepreneur in the mismanagement of funds made available to them. It took place between 2009 and 2010 in the context of the Gavi Programme. The programme driven by the Ministry of Health was launched for strengthening the Ivorian health system. It came from a judicial source that the four health officials have squandered more than 227 million FCFA (nearly 396,154 USD) to the detriment of the State. Financial mismanagement was uncovered by an investigative mission conducted by the General Inspectorate of Finance and the internal department of accounts and transparency of the Gavi.

The four health officials are brought to justice for acts of embezzlement, forgery and fraud complicity. As for the private entrepreneur is also prosecuted for the same facts except for embezzlement which is in this case for the public officials.

The second is the case of the former barons of the coffee-cocoa sector

The agricultural sector accounts for 22% of GDP and the sector of coffee-cocoa is the main driver of

this number. In 2013-2014, nearly 1.74 million tonnes of cocoa were harvested and the total gross income of this period enabled the Ivorian government to garner about 1,400 billion FCFA (2.13 billion EUR). This shows the sensitivity of this case that involves fourteen former barons of the coffee-cocoa sector. They were sentenced to 20 years of prison by the Court of First Instance of the Courthouse in Abidjan. The investigation was initiated in 2007 but the verdict was delivered in November 2013. Investigators particularly accused exporters of coffee and cocoa of stealing the State of Côte d'Ivoire enormous amount of money⁸ during the period of January 2002 to May 2008. The top managers of the coffee-cocoa sector have been convicted for embezzlement, breach of trust, abuse of corporate assets, fraud and forgery.

The latter case was one of the biggest scandal of corruption ever reported and condemned. The case also involved some high officials of the government even so they have not been found convicted of crime while an investigation reports their obvious involvement at different stages of the case. This is the epitome of the Ivorian judicial system in which some are condemned while others are left free. Citizens are disappointed in the system allowing the impunity of government officials who are protected from prosecution. The worst that could happen to officials is to be dismissed or ungraded from their public position. There is a strong protection for great embezzlers of the State, thusly how could corruption and other crimes be eradicated?

III. Roots of the problem

The roots of corruption in Cote d'Ivoire are many. They vary between colonial, cultural, judicial, social and economic origins. The misuse of public authority as a means to overlook users; the promotion of a leadership that does not consider the rights of others especially those of the poor. The filthy desire for an extravagant lifestyle, poverty, lack of knowledge of rights and obligations, the lack of inculcating merit and the loss of moral values; all of these spawn fertile ground for indigenous corruption and thus justify the alarming level of perceived corruption in the country.

3.1. Colonial and political roots

Firstly, it is important to remind that during the post-independence period the majority of African countries have turned against the West to communism, but Cote d'Ivoire maintained tight relationship with France. It is said that the excellent ties with France has allowed the country to receive technical and military assistance since the beginning of the post-colonial period up to now. Beside this formal cooperation, Ivorian leaders have also inherited from their former colons some culture of successful lifestyles and ideology of governance that consist in frightening the opposition and creating an unstable sociopolitical environment. Leaders who fought against the lavish lifestyles of their former masters have finally been found in walking in the same paths as their predecessors of the colonial times did. Personal gain was the primary focus of a leader while the population remained in starvation and demanding for better life conditions. The race for personal gain of the leaders on the detriment of the population's needs has spawned corruption and bribes within the public administration in the earlier post-colonial era.

Secondly, after the death of the first president in 1993, the Cote d'Ivoire encountered repetitive sociopolitical instabilities that have worsened in 1999. It was then the beginning of a series of insecurity, poor governance practices and partial judicial system. Political instability weakened confidence in public system and provided to corruption and fraud propitious grounds to stretch their roots. During 2002 and 2004, the sociopolitical instabilities took a tragic turn and caused the economy as well as the social environment to drop to a critical level. Governance practices and the economy were unstable for a decade. As a consequence, the country was transformed in a risky place for new investments and trade.

As corollaries of the two major facts above, corruption that was present earlier in post-colonial era, got wider gates to spread throughout the country's administrations, causing almost all sectors to be permeable to corruption. Transmitting to the country in such way the hereditary traits of endemic corruption.

3.2. Judicial roots

Corruption is condemned by the Ivorian jurisdiction. Concomitantly, impunity is generalized throughout the country and the justice remains silent before several reports of top officials' embezzlement. Although the release of the presidential decree No. 2013-660 on the establishment of the prevention and repression of corruption provides criminal clauses against acts of corruption, cases of corruption are daily reported but those in charge seem unmoved. The decree sanctions acts of corruption with a risk of five to ten years imprisonment associated with fines payment. This measure stands for both participants of the corrupt exchange.

Delays in the administrative system cause citizens to go informal and deal as fast and easy as possible

⁸Some auditors reported the loss of approximately 370 billion FCFA (645,713,000 USD) while other reports accused them of stealing nearly 1,000 billion FCFA (1,745,170,000USD) including other offenses related to the case.

with unscrupulous officials. As a result, the population is mostly engaged in the informal sector and this fact hinders economic growth. Since, there is an increased discredit in the judicial system and no one fears to get caught. On the contrary, there is a generalization of wrongdoing across the country. Treisman (2000) argues that the probability of getting caught is partially dependent of the country's legal system. The effectiveness of the legal system is expected to discourage illegal practices, nevertheless, the stark contrast of the Ivorian situation displays a quite deceiving reality.

The most robust anti-corruption commission would not resist longer in the absence of the rule of law, lack of judicial independence and political instability. A sound anti-corruption mission is supported by the rule of law in order to respect the rights and obligations of each parties and punish what has to be punished. Without the support of the rule of law, uncovered wrongdoers will not be answerable for their actions, consequently impunity will be encouraged and general disorder as well. The current state of the Ivorian judicial environment represents a weak point in the fight against irregularities in the public system and in the society.

3.3. Economic and Sociocultural roots

One of the economic determinants of corruption is poverty. One country's socioeconomic situation may be tightly related to the level of corruption in this country. For the thrust of an act of corruption is to obtain an object of pecuniary value. Poverty sometimes alimnts the greed of public goods detractors. Another economic determinant is the distribution of low salaries to public officials that drives them to request more from public users to adjust their personal needs. The minimum guaranteed wage set at 60 000 FCFA (104.710 USD) as announced in November 2013 by the government is yet waiting to be enforced. As in the colonial time, nowadays public officials desire to be compensated by citizens for the job they are doing. In order words, it represents a bribe for the exercise of their functions.

In Cote d'Ivoire, tribalism and political appurtenances are strongly affecting the professional sector. Such practice announces primary patterns of corruption. Ethnic diversity creates a selfish behavior that consists in reserving the best only for one's tribal or familial citizens on the detriment of others. Political leaders are willing to develop their regions and stand as a gate of opportunities for their regional citizens. This segregation impedes fair decisions and pushes nepotism at its most. The culture of offering gifts to motivate and being grateful to someone for a favor is not always innocent in the current status of bribing in public administration.

At a social level, corruption is stimulated by the increase of social inequality that derives from public officials' selfish behaviors. Poverty has spread through the poor management of the country's resources, hence the society has to struggle to meet the requirements of a basic living condition. It is a common thing in Cote d'Ivoire to see those in power living an extravagant lifestyle while the average of the population strives to maintain a standard lifestyle. Employment opportunities will only be offered to a strictly restrained group of people who are related whether by family, ethnic or friendship ties. What maintains the level of inequality higher for wealth will solely grow within tribal bounds.

In schools, one reason that causes students to be engaged into corrupt acts is the fear to fail final examination. Another reason that could justify this lack of integrity is the encouragement of mediocrity by parents and pedagogs. In fact, corruption in the education system is highly observed in a way that it becomes usual for students and parents to bribe teachers to assure the success to national examinations. Expressions like "faire couler le petrole" which means literally "spilling out the petroleum" are very common in schools and universities during examination. This induces that the examination subjects are already known or that students are cheating obviously in the presence of the teachers. Another scandalous justification could be the personal greed of teachers and professors who find in such case a great opportunity to get richer within a short time. To get some public administration posts, it is obviously required to participants to pay a certain amount of bribe to be at least listed for the job. For instance, entrance to the national administration school, for several times has been in the middle of severe critics from the general opinion who believes that those who succeeded have offered huge amount of bribes to high level officials in charge of the examination to guarantee their success. Somehow, high school's bad habits follow their perpetrators to professional life.

The growing impatience of citizens associated with the general dissatisfaction of public officials about their working conditions create incentives of corruption. The processing of some administrative documents offers public officials an opportunity of fraud and bribery. The opportunity is generally generated by the impatience of the public user who is ready at an acceptable price concluded between the two parties to pay a "pot-de-vin" to the official to accelerate the execution of his request. For instance, a document needed urgently by a public service user will require "extra tips" to grease the wheels and accelerate the process within a shorter period of time. The question that rises from this is that "could public service speed up the normal process of their services to avoid corruption?" If yes then, a reform is needed to increase the performance of these services and decrease opportunity of wrongdoing. If no, a serious measure should be carried out to oversee special treatment in the detriment of others.

The last reason but not the least is the personal greed of some people who desire to live a "bling"

lifestyle for which they are not making efforts to earn. This could derive from a lack of education or familial disorder where at the familial unit level, parents failed to provide for the needs of their children. The children are then left by themselves and seek for easy ways to survive in the society. Unfortunately, there is no enough social resources and organs to care for such children whose number continues to rise every year in the Ivorian society.

The society endows numerous factors that determine the spread of corruption in the country. Income inequality and low salaries are critical factors that deserve special concern of the authorities in order to restore social equilibrium. Fixing the issue from the roots will gradually close the gates often widely open to corruption.

IV. Consequences

Exploring the dark impacts of cases of corruption from the business sector to the educational field, while passing by the public health, result in the discovery of several examples of poor governance, illegal distribution of public procurement contracts and conflicts of interest in the race for illicit enrichment.

4.1. Economic consequences

The economic consequences of corruption are legion. Mauro (1995) states that corruption affects negatively economic growth. In Cote d'Ivoire, experts say that corruption slows public services performance and delays administrative services. It also causes a high degree of favoritism in public procurement. Corruption occasions waste of public resources, lowers growth (Mauro 1995) and therefore causes inefficient administration and loss of credibility in public institutions.

Corruption also slows down foreign investments who fear to jeopardize their financial resources in the depth of a systemic corrupt environment. Although the results of the survey of the World Bank Doing Business 2014 report a net improvement of the conditions for starting a business in Cote d'Ivoire over 2014 and 2015, the fear of foreign investors remains great at the only view of the level of perceived corruption in the country. The illegal distribution of public procurement contracts between friends and family members affects free competition and engenders favoritism and patronage. The quality of the services is not always the most desirable but as much as public officials profit from this malpractice, it is imposed to the society. In the first quarter of 2013, nearly 21.4 million USD emanating from illicit public procurement were awarded by friendly mutual agreement, which represents more than 80% of all contracts granted over the period, reported the Ivorian public procurement regulatory authority in September 2013.

Racket, another form of corruption is also everywhere, on roads, schools, hospitals, justice courts and other public services. In 2010, it was reported that per year at least 300 million USD was paid in bribes at checkpoints in Cote d'Ivoire for racketing⁹. What makes the country relatively inefficient. For the sake of enriching their pockets and those of their private partners, officials have taken shameful measures to allow the exportation of hundreds of thousand tons of cocoa leaving the country without paying the due exportation tax¹⁰.

At several occasions, aids meant for the development of the country have been embezzled by public officials and nothing has been done towards it. Years over years, the country received plenty of financial aids from different international organizations, but yet no actions have followed up the execution of the primarily purposes of these aids. The choking impunity present in the country sparks public outrage against authorities while it extends untouchable covers for opportunistic officials who consistently serve their own interests. Freshly enough, it has been reported by national press, the embezzlement of approximately 120 million FCFA (nearly 209,420 USD) orchestrated in the Ministry for the Promotion of Youth, Sports and Leisure. The funds granted by the government under the 2014 budget for the setting up of the National Youth Council (CNJ) are missing. "A situation that is jeopardizing the implementation of this organ development and empowerment of Ivorian youth organizations" reported the local press¹¹. The restoration of the funds is claimed by national youth associations but the government remains silent about the scandalous rumors. In such cases, public officials usually bribe the complainers and kill the case between four walls.

The only victim of these actions is the State while the miscreants are free and likely to uphold their malpractices.

4.2. Sociocultural consequences

The damages of corruption are not solely economic, they also affect seriously the society.

⁹ Article available in Ivorian press as well as international press. Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8660679.stm>

¹⁰ Legal proceedings of the scandal in the coffee and cocoa sector, press article available entitled "Procès du scandale de la filière café-cacao (1ère partie): Ces exportateurs qui ont volé 1.000 milliards Fcfa", published on October 12, 2012. Available at http://www.ladepechedabidjan.info/Proces-du-scandale-de-la-filiere-cafe-cacao-1ere-partie-Ces-exportateurs-qui-ont-vole-1-000-milliards-Fcfa_a10198.html

¹¹ Abidjan.net article "Autonomisation des jeunes: 115 millions disparaissent au ministère de la Jeunesse", published on February 2, 2015. Available at <http://news.abidjan.net/h/524053.html>

Corruption in schools and universities puts into question the credibility of the education system, academic results and diplomas in Cote d'Ivoire. As a consequence, there is a poor level of education and professional aptitudes become questionable. This stimulates companies to tighten employment opportunities in the disadvantage of fresh graduates. From the lack of integrity of students, teachers, parents and the *laissez-aller* of public officials in charge of education, the whole society suffers a high rate of unemployment. Cote d'Ivoire's unemployment rate¹² has increased from 15.70% in 2008 to 22.60% early in 2015 and is expected to keep the trend. Companies and public administrations are therefore developing nepotism and favoritism to employ staff. This gives nepotism and favoritism a double attribute of determinants and consequences of corruption in Cote d'Ivoire. Bribing to obtain a diploma or to pass a public examination produces unqualified personnel for companies which at a larger scale generates poor performance for the entities that accept them.

A society is built upon its legal, educational, cultural and religious systems. If one of them promotes faulty and unethical behaviors, it becomes patent that the society will be growing up with major social deficiencies. Corruption in schools and universities does not only affect final academic results but affects considerably the society as a whole. Nowadays, Cote d'Ivoire is witness of a serious depravity of morals and code of conduct both in the society and in offices. What is commonly called "*la vie facile*" literally "easy life" is the slogan that brags a considerable percentage of the youth society. It implies a way of living that deprives hard working and leads to seek for easy means to get a job, a business permit, an apartment, and so forth. In other words, the youth seeks for means other than the ethically recognized ones to provide for their daily needs. For the usual way is found too long and annoying to comply with. The education system is failing to inculcate ethical notions to the young society, as a consequence, the entire society is gradually driven into mediocrity.

V. Tackling corruption in Cote d'Ivoire

Knowing the roots of an issue helps considerably into the search of proper solutions to address it. Accordingly, anti-corruption measures will be centered on specific angles. Rooting out systemic corruption will meanwhile require the design of adequate strategies for the sectors infected by the disease.

In the execution of their anti-corruption strategy, countries signed up to anti-corruption conventions in order to exhibit their will to curb the phenomenon. But "the dark side" appears in the poor enforcement of these conventions. Countries sign up but do not have the sincere will to apply the provisions of these conventions intended to assist them in the implementation of the best practices against corruption. Similarly, the Ivorian government has joined international and continental conventions against corruption but the expected outcomes are still unobserved. On the national platform, institutions have been put in place however, there is a limited evidence of their actions.

5.1. International measures

Joining international and continental conventions.

At the international level, Cote d'Ivoire has signed up to the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2003 and has ratified it in 2012. While on the continental stage, it has also signed up to the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption on 27th February 2004 and to the ECOWAS Protocol on the Fight against Corruption some years earlier in 2001 for the count of the sub-regional community. All these conventions are based on principles of efficiency, transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs. They share common measures and provisions that focus on the prevention, criminalization of corruption, protection of informants and on international cooperation in every aspect of the fight against corruption. The creation of a national independent anti-corruption body is vital to ensure and promote policies and practices that reflect a zero tolerance of corruption within the society and public administration.

Corruption does not only exist in one specific area, it's a worldwide phenomenon which deserves a global attention and response in order to bind efforts to combat it. In one hand, the need of joining international and regional anti-corruption conventions appears in the global recognition of the issue and the efficiency that all could benefit from the international expertise gathered to assess and address corruption. In the other hand, the need appears as to be imperative for most corrupt economies to sign up. This allows the international community to observe the government's intent to comply and fight the scourge. In the same time joining international convention offers to foreign investors a guaranty to trust the inviting state. Considering the positive effects attached to the conventions, implementing their provisions should have followed up automatically. Unfortunately, the general observation is that countries join conventions but fail to enforce their provisions.

5.2. National measures

Strengthening institutional framework around corruption.

On the national stage, there was a moderate response to the application of the provisions of the

¹²Source Ivory Coast Unemployment Rate at <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/ivory-coast/unemployment-rate>

conventions, this purports that fighting corruption was not a real challenge for the government. However, the government carried on some measures in building up a strong institutional framework to thwart corruption.

Already in December 1995, the government instituted the General State Inspectorate (IGE) which is entitled to undertake any investigation in the context of the fight against fraud and corruption as part of its mission of control, inspection and promotion of good governance of all public services. At this period, the country was preserving a quiet good score of perceived corruption. The 1996 level of perceived corruption of the country reached the 63 over 100 before it drastically dropped in the beginning of the 21st century.

During the reform of the third national constitution in 2000, adjustments has been made to address corruption and transparency in the revenues of the President and, consequently, to promote the fight against embezzlement of public funds. Later on in 2010, the government had to reconsider the importance of the issue and focused on the improvement of transparency in public finances. Good governance efforts were expected to boost the economy and the credit in public institutions. Ergo, the National Secretariat for Good Governance and Capacity Building (SNGRC) was created to foster good governance and the deployment of resources to tackle corruption. In September 2014, the SNGRC became the National Secretariat for Capacity Building (SNRC) and its new missions are now limited to ensure the coherence and effectiveness in the action of public authorities on the matter of good governance and capacity building.

To be more precise in addressing corruption, the Brigade for the Fight against Corruption (BLC) was established in February 2012 with the purpose of specifically combating corruption and related offenses in the Ministry in charge of Finance. It was intended to be equipped with instruments that deter corruption in all its forms through prevention, treatment of complaints, investigation and control over financial resources under the management of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF). The brigade is an organ of the General Inspectorate of the Finances that operates under the cover of the MEF. From this angle, the brigade may lack independence from the government since it is a unit of the MEF which works under orders of the government. Yet, the institution of the anti-corruption brigade is said to emphasize the strong commitment of the government in restoring transparency in different sectors of the country which have experienced severe inefficiencies due to a high level of corruption. The creation of this brigade is followed by high expectation in order to detract fraudulent activists in the public sector in one hand and in another, to restore investors confidence in the country.

In compliance with the ECOWAS protocol on democracy and good governance¹³ and the ECOWAS anti-corruption protocol, the Ivorian government went further to exhibit its will to fight corruption and improve good governance. In September 2013, it has issued an order that exclusively dealt with the prevention and the fight against corruption. This order instituted the creation of the High Authority for Good Governance (HABG). The institution was only functional in September 2014, a year after its creation. It is in charge of leading actions that contribute to the prevention and the repression of acts of corruption and assimilated offenses. The prevention actions aim both the public and private sectors. Concerning the public sector, preventive measures aim the assets declaration for all public officials including the President of the Republic and his government members, the respect of integrity and ethic codes by public officers, the transparency in public finance and with relations with the population. Concerning the private sector, the preventive measures point at the establishment of internal control systems and the strict respect of auditing and accounting standards by companies and financial institutions in order to detect corrupt acts. These measures will be carried through training programs, seminars and media coverage to promote the sensitization against any form of corruption within public and private sectors.

Beside the creation of this institutional framework around corruption, an improvement is noticeable in the disclosure of information but it remains at a basic level. The government is making some efforts to provide information about the functioning and institutional framework of its structures. However, it remains basic for only a brief overview of public finance reports is published. Public access to information is a key element in the display of transparency and probity of the state. More detailed official reports of the anti-corruption commissions' actions in public and private sectors should be accessible by the society. On the matter, the brigade for the fight against corruption is trying to fill the gap but its information remains outdated. There are more efforts to be done on information disclosure.

5.3. The will of the government in the fight against corruption

Visible efforts but insufficient results.

Good governance and anti-corruption have been the focus of the Ivorian government in the establishment of structures and institutions in the last decade. This demonstrates that there is a will of the government to eradicate corruption by creating a solid institutional framework for tackling corruption and improving governance. Yet as this institutional framework is in place, the practical actions are less observable. In Cote d'Ivoire, it is commonly argued that investigations always start but the results are never published. In

¹³See the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001) Article 38, paragraphs 1 and 2.

the same line, an author stated that anti-corruption commissions are quickly created by governments in order to bury the problem of corruption and distract the international community and the general opinion. This illustrates the game around joining a convention as a cover for countries, especially the most corrupt ones, to avoid the pressure of the international community. Signing up can also guarantee some financial aid assistance, therefore many join without the real zeal to execute the provisions. This regrettable situation could be explained by the lack of relevant information on the practical actions of the so-called anti-corruption institutions that born right after the ratification of international conventions.

A real will of the government to curb corruption should be associated with practical actions that involve national security, financial and legal advisers in the fight against the plague. Creating the institutions and appointing people to lead them is not fighting corruption. Rather, it consists into educating the population, anti-corruption consciousness raising, increasing perception of detection and prosecution of wrongdoers. Tracking and punishing corruption is an efficient medicine to prevent and eradicate this disease and its metastases.

Measures have been taken, institutions have been created only the actions are waiting to be seen. The Ivorian government in one side, should avoid piling up unnecessary anti-corruption institutions that could create complexity and confusion in their function. Funds needed for the unneeded commissions could be saved to make only few commissions more effective. On the other side, it should be encouraged in its efforts to curb corruption by meeting the objective of reaching the perceived corruption score of 50 in a short term as settled in the general plan for the fight against corruption.

5.4. Further suggestions

Fighting corruption is costly but the severity of its consequences on the country makes it worthy to join the battle against the plague. Additionally to what has already been established and done by the Ivorian government, further actions could be implemented in favor of fostering and consolidating what is already in place. Scholars and best anti-corruption practices suggest freedom of the press¹⁴ to encourage access to the information and increase corruption awareness. They also suggest e-government¹⁵ as an indicator to control corruption and also as an instrument to improve transparency in the government sector. Some others focus on better rule of law, education of women and trust in court of appeal for the design of efficient anti-corruption strategies. The rule of law will include adequate legislative reforms necessary to include anti-corruption policies into the legal system while education will be a key factor in the widespread of corruption awareness.

The improvement of the working environment of the media where press freedom is exhibited and conducted to educate, denounce and criticize the mismanagement of public goods. Media means can likewise be an important tool to disclose the agenda and actions of the anti-corruption bodies. This freedom should be implemented in the respect of human rights. Media should not only be praising neither continually be criticizing state's actions, rather it should play a key role in helping the government building a society geared with sufficient knowledge to recognize corruption's red flags. Media should also contribute in demystifying the "taboo" around corruption and transform it into a topic that can be freely discussed without fear of officials' reprisals.

Curbing corruption also requires a system that reduces opportunities of corruption in the relations between public officials and their clients. The institution and proper conduct of mandatory independent audits within public administration, disclosure of audits reports discovery and disclosure of public funds management have been recognized as powerful instrument to reduce corruption. Audit has a natural characteristic of detection, it incites the fear of wrongdoers and create opportunities to uncover illegal transactions. Such a crucial tool shall not be disregarded in the fight against an infraction of the size of corruption.

One special, though perhaps not the least is to reinforce the judicial system within the country in order to guarantee equality during legal proceedings. Deterrence of acts of corruption without further actions to condemn wrongdoing pulls back all investigated efforts. Wrongdoing has to be sanctioned and impunity has to be eradicated from the habits. The establishment of a fair judicial system is imperative in the fight against corruption. Criminalization of corruption and similar offenses should be effective and corrupt individuals should be prosecuted for their actions. Automatically, it will increase the fear to be caught and create an environment that does not condone corruption. Simultaneously, this measure will contribute strongly in restoring the trust in government's institutions.

In summary, what future could be done for an administration up to the neck in systemic corruption? Firstly, target the issue and accordingly set the weapons to address it. The issue: corruption is present at each inch of the society and public administration. What to do? The weapons: 1) Increase population awareness on their rights and obligations to understand what they are entitled to do to contribute to the repression of

¹⁴See Rick Stapenhurst (2000); Christine Kalenborn, Christian Lessmann, *Journal of Policy Modeling* 35 (2013) 857–886; Tobias Dahlström (Work in Progress) (2011).

¹⁵See Ionescu, Luminita (2013) and Thomas Barnebeck Andersen (2009).

corruption. Spreading education on the threats of corruption will enable the citizens to refuse condoning criminal acts. The more the population refuses to cooperate, the more the corrupt exchange gets unbalanced. 2) Training and moralization of public officials on the essence of their duties, accompanied by a fair salary adjustment on their favor to reduce incentives for corruption. Public officials should be motivated to regain the value of their function in the development of the country. The improvement of their working conditions that includes an increase of their salaries could be effective in addressing their general dissatisfaction that often causes the rationalization of their corrupt behaviors. 3) Sound and independent anti-corruption commission in charge of preventing and investigating corruption within each section of the public administration. The existing anti-corruption commissions need to be geared with auditors, police officers and legal advisers to preserve the respect of the rule of law and deter wrongdoers. Their mission shall be independent and the results made public and available for observation. The existence of effective anti-corruption commissions increases the perception of detection. 4) A fair and impartial justice system. This is the end of the line. Detection and deterrence would be meaningless without prosecution and punishment. Wrongdoing has to be repressed in order to establish fear of cheating and restore public confidence.

The implementation of these suggestions might not erase definitely the rampant corruption in Cote d'Ivoire but surely it might contribute considerably in the reduction of acts of corruption and similar offenses.

VI. Conclusion

Corruption is a serious and complex issue. The phenomenon is so deeply encrusted in the habits that it is almost impossible to extinguish. Though such is the case, it is necessary to react and resist it. The endogenous characteristic of corruption should not be a reason for our countries to encourage acceptance of the fact. Corruption is an open sore that constantly eats up our countries by weakening up our economies and frightening the chances of brighter future for the generations to come. What has to be done against corruption should be the concern of each individual of a country, a company or a society. In Cote d'Ivoire, it is common knowledge that corruption is spread throughout almost every sector of the economy. To strike back such corruption, there is a need to identify the priorities and address the issue sector by sector.

Anti-corruption measures have to be designed and implemented in order to let the fear of reporting wrongdoing fade to allow an environment free of corruption emerge progressively. Corruption is a hard nut to crack but not impossible to remove from our daily behaviors. The emergence of a zero-corruption environment can progressively take off through a clear understanding of the phenomenon, its deadly impacts on the economy and the fierce will of the government to abolish corrupt practices.

Our countries should not just desire to establish an anti-corruption entity with the ulterior motive to get more investors or to be granted foreign aids. Fighting corruption without a genuine will of the government to get rid of corrupt habits might not ease the process. It is not acceptable to encourage impunity and disorder when there is an ambition to build a stable nation free from corruption. Moreover, a sound anti-systemic corruption policy should involve each part of the system and simultaneously enforce concrete actions that create fear to get caught into wrongdoing. Financial, judicial and political strengths should be bound to track down corruption in order to create higher perception of detection and shut down impunity.

Ivorian institutional framework has been toughened for the sake of detecting and fighting corruption within public administration. But this effort remains insufficient to repress illegal practices as the country continues to face and endure consequences of high corruption. As a corollary, there is a growing skepticism around the efficiency and effectiveness of these institutions' anti-corruption measures. There is also a general questioning about their importance in number and on the risk of conflict of interest in their functioning. Melissa Khemani (2009) studied the rapid emergence of anti-corruption commissions in African countries and investigated the real goals of the establishment of these commissions. The author performed an analysis to make sure that these commissions were not only a façade in order to bury the problem of corruption in African countries but rather to address the issue. In Cote d'Ivoire, legal and institutional systems seem to have had integrated essential features to provide government with control, overview and detection of illegal activities. Only if these systems were properly active and evaluated, the spread of corruption and fraud could have been under control. Up to this point, these institutions can merely be compared to empty vases. The framework to control and fight corruption is in place, yet a genuine will of authorities is missing to make it active and efficient. Hopefully, the target set by the government to reach a perceived corruption score of 50 will be met in a short term. For now, the country is still struggling to create an environment that promotes corruption awareness in order to limit the devastating consequences of the plague.

Table 1 shows the different measures taken by the Ivorian government in order to tackle corruption. At the same time, it depicts the lack of effectiveness of these measures. Only few, see no practical action has been done.

Table 1. COTE D'IVOIRE'S ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES

Region	Convention/ Institution	Objectives Description	Signature/ Creation	Ratification/ Approval	Major Enforced Actions
International	United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)	(a) To promote and strengthen measures to prevent and combat corruption more efficiently and effectively; (b) To promote, facilitate and support international cooperation and technical assistance in the prevention of and fight against corruption, including in asset recovery; (c) To promote integrity, accountability and proper management of public affairs and public property. ¹⁶	10 th December 2003	25 th October 2012	
Continental	African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC-The Convention)	1. Promote and strengthen the development of mechanisms that prevent, detect, punish and eradicate corruption and related offenses in the public and private sectors. 2. Promote, facilitate and regulate cooperation to ensure the effectiveness of measures and actions to prevent, detect, punish and eradicate corruption and related offenses in Africa. 3. Coordinate and harmonize the policies and legislation for the purposes of prevention, detection, punishment and eradication of corruption on the continent. 4. Promote socioeconomic development by removing obstacles to the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights. 5. Establish the necessary conditions to foster transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs. ¹⁷	27 th February 2004	14 th February 2012	- Creation of national anti-corruption institutional framework in different sectors of the public administration. Essentially, the creation of the National Secretariat for Capacity Building and the High Authority of Good Governance.
Regional	ECOWAS Protocol on the Fight against Corruption (ECOWAS Protocol)	i) To promote and strengthen effective mechanisms to prevent, suppress and eradicate corruption; ii) To intensify and revitalize regional cooperation in a way of making anti-corruption measures more effective; iii) To promote the harmonization and coordination of national anti-corruption laws and policies. ¹⁸	21 st December 2001	Not been ratified	
National	National Secretariat for Capacity Building (SNRC, Ex SNGRC)	- Develop and implement the national strategy to promote good governance and capacity building in accordance with the economic and social development program of the Government; - Coordinating nationally promotional activities of good governance and capacity building; - Ensure the operational coordination of interventions of development partners for all issues related to governance and capacity building. ¹⁹	12 th October 2010	12 th October 2010	- Strengthening of the national legal and institutional framework for the fight against corruption by taking the presidential order No. 2013-660 of September, 20 th , 2013 for the prevention and the fight against corruption and related offenses and the creation of the High Authority of Good Governance exclusively engaged into the fight against corruption. - The establishment of sectoral bodies to fight against corruption: Brigade Anti-Corruption based in the General Inspectorate of State and the Committee for the Fight against Corruption based in the Ministry of Trade, Crafts and Promotion of

¹⁶See full UNCAC convention at https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Publications/Convention/08-50026_E.pdf

¹⁷See full AUCPCC convention at http://www.aumaticorruption.org/uploads/au_convention_on_preventing_and_combating_corruption.pdf

¹⁸See ECOWAS Protocol on the Fight against Corruption adopted in Dakar, December 2001.

¹⁹See official website of the SNGRC at http://www.bonnegouvernance.ci/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=72&Itemid=93

Region	Convention/ Institution	Objectives Description	Signature/ Creation	Ratification/ Approval	Major Enforced Actions SMEs.
	High Authority of Good Governance (HABG)	The prevention and repression of corruption and relative offenses	20 th September 2013	5 th September 2014	- No available information
	Brigade for the Fight against Corruption (BLC)	Prevent, investigate and denounce illegal and fraudulent activities that are occurring in the Ministry of Economy and Finance.	17 th February 2012	Operational since 2 nd semester of 2012	- Training and symposium - Investigation of the case GAVI

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