

# PROFILE: CÔTE D'IVOIRE



Once a haven of peace, stability and prosperity in West Africa, more recently Côte d'Ivoire has experienced protracted political instability which has proved costly for its people.

Although a 2007 peace accord has held armed conflict at bay, Côte d'Ivoire has suffered ongoing turmoil since a first coup d'état in 1999.

In 2002, an armed rebellion split Côte d'Ivoire into the rebel-held north and the government-controlled south. Many lives were lost, and sexual violence was used as a weapon of war by both sides.

According to Human Rights Watch (2007), combatants violated girls and women with impunity. Closely linked with this is the fact that Côte d'Ivoire, according to UNAIDS, has the highest HIV prevalence in West Africa (seven to ten per cent of adults).

The country has large numbers of children at risk, including children orphaned by conflict or AIDS, children used as soldiers, and children trafficked from neighbouring countries for work as house helps, plantation labourers and sex workers.

Only half of girls are enrolled in primary school, compared with two-thirds of boys. Almost a million children, mostly in the north, do not attend school at all.

Côte d'Ivoire is highly fertile and bio-diverse, but is prone to natural disasters, while the political vacuum has led to large-scale deforestation and soil erosion due to illegal and uncontrolled mining.

## TEARFUND'S WORK IN CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Tearfund's association with Côte d'Ivoire dates back to the 1980s, when we supported various individual scholarships and ad-hoc relief programmes. Our involvement has since stepped up as protracted conflicts have brought desperate need and deeper poverty.

Tearfund currently has six Ivorian partners, which are addressing vulnerability in the following ways:

**Church and church mobilisation:** empowering the Ivorian church to act and speak out on issues such as conflict, corruption and lack of access to water and sanitation.

We are also working with a leading theological institute to train future Christian leaders in integral mission.

Environmental damage is a particular concern. In 2006, a European cargo ship, in apparent connivance with relevant agencies, dumped tonnes of toxic waste in Abidjan, killing several local residents and causing health problems for thousands more.

An intensive response to HIV: years of conflict and huge population movements have caused an HIV prevalence that requires an urgent nationwide programme of prevention, care and support. Vulnerable groups being helped include orphans, sex workers, former child soldiers, and victims of gender-based violence.

**Community development:** the regions of Montagnes, Zanzan, Savanes, and Vallée du Bandama have been prioritised for projects focusing on literacy and primary education, children at risk, water and sanitation, and environmental sustainability.

- **Pray for people living in poverty in Côte d'Ivoire.**
- **Please pray for our partners in Côte d'Ivoire as they seek to help others.**
- **And pray for Côte d'Ivoire: for justice, peace, health and hope for everyone.**