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A JOINT RESEARCH PROJECT
OF THE INTERNATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION AND THE
CHARLES F. KETTERING
FOUNDATION

IVORY COAST

PAINTING THE LANDSCAPE

A CROSS - CULTURAL EXPLORATION OF
PUBLIC - GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING

1.1. Ivory Coast

Participants of this research were sourced from various organizations and positions in Ivory Coast including Federal Administrator, State Administrator, Locally elected official, public participation practitioner and NGO Leader.

Findings

Research Question 1

What is the nature of public participation/deliberation in government decision-making processes across different cultures?

Ivory Coast is a republic of approximately 18 million people located on the western coast of Africa.^[1] It is a democracy with strong executive power invested in the presidency. The country has 19 regions and 57 departments. A former protectorate (a protectorate is an autonomous territory that submits part of its sovereignty to another state, often in exchange for military or diplomatic protection) of France, the country gained its independence in 1960. French is its official language. Suffrage is universal starting at age 18.

Context of Public Participation

Role of traditional leaders

A provincial level official highlighted the role of traditional leaders in Ivory Coast. “You could be a landowner and make decisions just like that...but in the beginning, the traditional ruler needs to give his approval,” said this official. “He may not know his entire domain though.”

Formal and informal organizations

Several organizations, formal and informal, facilitate interaction. These include “the neighborhood councils; let’s not forget the religious communities, let’s not forget genders, the women, the NGO and all that,” said a local elected official.

Role of women

The role of women in Ivory Coast is central to success. “Mainly, for the women, we know that they are the cornerstone, those who make everything, so, whenever there are impacts, they are the ones who are able to appreciate it,” said a federal administrator. “It’s true that the real solution will be to get all the target populations to get involved in the process at the same time. There is also sometimes when populations hinder the project.”

Organizing for engagement

Efforts to engage the public are underway but interviewees report that there is little “organizing” in place. “Our populations have the craving, they work, they take initiatives but, their production remains in their hands. They do not know how to organize themselves so that once organized, they are able to become their own buyers. They can begin by organizing themselves. Therefore, I’m trying to build a relationship with the [organization], with [organization acronym] to help and to teach our populations to organize themselves.” The goal of this official is to secure local financing to support business development.

“It’s very easy to do but the population does not have this culture,” said the local elected official. “That’s why along with neighborhood councils and religious communities, I even urge the ministers and the priest by stressing the fact that “you’re the only ones that populations trust, confide in. But you need to bring them into the world of development rather than confine them only to the world of prayer. I’m urging, because we must all help the youth. Which means the young ones, the elderly, let’s not forget the executives.”

Elites or executives “are sometimes the ones slowing everything down,” said the local elected official. “They only come to funerals. They only come to take care of their personal problems. But they do not get involved in the management of the city. They are just criticizing without knowing what is happening in the city. Each group needs to be empowered.”

One way that engagement is encouraged in this official’s community is through political involvement. “In [community name], one of our characteristics is that we’re not set against political parties,” the official said. “We cultivate it; one of our secrets (because) we are one of the only cities in Ivory Coast that is not identified based on ethnic groups. All the ethnic groups are represented. Not because they came from somewhere. But we can show that they are native....we are a population that cultivates intermarriages, that cultivates symbiosis.”

Public participation and deliberation processes are initiated from “both directions,” according to a federal administrator. “We’re the one to introduce it or often times we can receive letters underlining things concerning the process,” said this individual. “Well, it can come from populations, from the company that’s carrying out the project. With regard to the environmental code and the effects on the population of article number 16, the population, obviously, comes first, then, uh, there is also the mayor, the NGOs or the deputy prefect.”

Authority for managing participatory processes lies at the ministerial level, although there is no coordination. Rather, “as far as the process of participation is concerned, that it is something that exists, but in a muddled way,” said a federal administrator. “So, there is not a lot to do. It is scattered between different ministries and therefore it would be good to have an office that would collect all this. When I talk with the ministry of [subject], there is confrontation because they too have to organize a public survey. So,

this is a little messy....Each of them is in their own field of action. It would be great to have a process of unification there.”

Reforms in support of participation

A local elected official described the impact of proposed reforms on public participation at the local level. “We went even further because for the next elections, we’re in favor of turning the neighborhood councils into town councils; rather than gathering cronies to form a town council and imposing it on populations,” said the official. “The neighborhood councils can come up with 1 or 2 people, a woman and a man (these proportions have to be respected). Therefore, there has to be (and we’re including this in our definition of a good town council) public participation.”

A provincial administrative official sees improvement at the local level and is anxious to see similar reforms at the ministerial level. “On a longer run, now, I want that, at a national level, the [district name] participates. It’s true that there is some revival within the district. They’ve sorted things out.”

Expectations for participation

Expectations for public participation and deliberation include a desire to be involved in order to effect local decisions. “Because the idea that we develop about the population’s participation, it’s this very population that’s its best advocate,” said a local elected official. “They defend their own idea. Therefore wherever a native of [community name] is located, as soon as one talks about a project, it knows it, because information flows, with the local radio, with the neighborhood councils...except for those who refuse. There are people who don’t want to do anything. Allow every citizen to be informed...But, I say: we’re doing well implementing the neighborhood councils. There is no way around it because you do not live anywhere but in a neighborhood. A neighborhood, meaning a town council that chooses its leaders, implements the ideas, accompanies the projects. Therefore we think that this is a beautiful experience and we’ve achieved a lot of things.” A federal administrator concurred. “Everybody understands today that as long as a population does not agree, a project cannot succeed.”

A local elected official noted the value of technology in communicating with local people about projects and other efforts. “Thanks to the local radio stations, we’ve been able to get closer to the population, a population which communicates a lot.” Participation also is encouraged through more traditional media, such as the local library. “Me, my wish is what I just told you or that the population reads through the posters, in that sense, yes, all the media in general,” said a provincial administrator. “These measures are meant to encourage people to participate.”

Research Question 2

How do different cultures support or provide space for public participation/deliberation in government decision-making processes?

This research question sought to understand how different cultures – and in turn, different associated governments – provide support for or how they facilitate the practice of public participation among those they serve. Like all countries included in this study, Ivory Coast participatory or deliberative processes is related to how participation/deliberation is conceived and defined. We identified support for public participation/deliberation in the data through responses to interview questions concerning how such processes are defined, how people access such processes and the specific tools or practices that are used to support engagement.

Public participation design framework

This part of our research focused on how public participation is defined and the corresponding design framework

Concept of Public Participation

Five interviewees in Ivory Coast shared four different conceptual definitions for participatory or deliberative processes.

Action and decision making. “It means that we give the possibility of action, to be able to take part; being able to allow the population to take part in any decision regarding development,” said a federal administrator. A locally elected official concurred: “Public participation firstly, means participating in the decision-making process that we put in place, in the decisions that we make.”

Airing grievances, establishing accountability. “Public participation is just a questioning made to those we’re working for, it’s up to them to let us know their grievances, their different concerns,” said an NGO leader. “What are they expecting, what are they hoping for. What is their contributions to the decisions that we’re making (among others things). Therefore, this is public empowerment. So, this is taxpayer’s empowerment regarding decision making. Because it’s not right to be sitting around in our offices and be making decisions that have an impact on taxpayers, and on the citizen. But, it is also good that the citizen, from where he stands, gives his viewpoint on the orientations of justice. Therefore, public participation means taking into account the vision of this very public.”

Honoring the public’s power. “The participation of the public, people say the power of the public, participation or the power of the public because they now have, according to them, the power to influence decisions; which means this very power, the honor showed,” said an NGO leader. “That’s what it is...they see it as an honor.”

Jargon, a way of increasing credibility. A public participation practitioner said, “the notion of public participation, well, it is a new concept, a kind of jargon. Public participation today is widely discussed by the very people who are concerned and its

decisions affect the aspirations of as many as possible. Well, it is clear that in the beginning, when you look at it, you cannot, at first sight, really understand the impact of it. People very easily adhere to it and participate in local actions and even at the national level. The process can only increase the credibility of the decisions made for a community, they have to reflect.”

Common Terms

Among the common terms for participatory or deliberative processes that interviewees used were “public survey (federal administrator), public investigation (federal administrator), public inquiry survey (federal administrator), public empowerment (NGO leader) and taxpayer’s empowerment (NGO leader). Among these, those were distinctive to Ivory Coast were public survey, public investigation and public inquiry survey.

Types of public participation/deliberative processes

Types of participatory or deliberative processes identified by interviewees included **projects with a future orientation or economic dimension**. “I think that people are very interested and they are really open to it,” said a federal administrator. “Because when we organize, for example, public surveys, people ask very sharp questions. They are really interested in their future. It is not just because a project is started somewhere and because it is probably going to bring about employment that everybody adheres to it in a massive way. People are really interested and they have concerns and they voice them.

“My colleagues? What do they think of it? They think that it is important,” the administrator continued. “Everybody understands today that as long as a population does not agree, a project cannot succeed.” As part of such an effort, “the essential questions are of different kinds. Of course, how many locals are going to be hired? Well, often, when we’re carrying out the public survey, it is because there is a movement. Therefore, the consequences generated by the movement of populations...So, I mean, if there is movement, populations wonder what kind of compensation is going to be applied. Now also, there are many technical questions, for example, on the negative impacts.”

These public surveys are required by law. They are “for all types of projects, but really for the big-budgeted projects. You know, well, it maybe any sector. But there is no small project... No small project. When I say no small project, I mean that a project that is really going to modify the landscape. We’re seeing that the realtor is going to pretend not to see that there is a population living right around the corner. Therefore, the sector doesn't matter much. But, it is true that it depends on the size. It is necessary whether it is an important project or not.”

By comparison, at the local level public participation is structured based on population and appear generally **project-based**. “In order for the population to effectively take an active part in the decision-making process, we’ve subdivided [community name] and

[community name],” said a locally elected official. “Because the city is made up of 2 large towns of [number] inhabitants each. Therefore almost [number] inhabitants. These 2 towns are [number] km apart from each other. We divided the 2 towns into [number] neighborhood councils, therefore every neighborhood council forms a small city council with a president elected by the inhabitants of the locality, of the area and a small council is set up to represent them at town council.”

The council “receives all the health and education projects and that’s meant for the population to really feel involved. And we gave the experiment a try, regarding health issues for instance the organization of vaccination campaigns has been put in the hands of the neighborhood councils. They are the one to know where the children are where the activities are, the children and their parents and all that. We really, found satisfaction in doing so.”

There is also a **communication or information-sharing aspect to participation at the local level**. “Besides, we put in place -- we are still building and we’ll be finished -- a listening center in [community name] and in [community name] to allow populations to have timely information. We’re planning on setting up a satellite dish so that populations have the possibility to watch other TV channels. We’re planning on setting up a radio station because we endowed our city with a community radio thanks to the contribution of the embassy of the United States. Therefore, this will allow (the listening centers with microphones) to widely inform the population on every little problem that will bring about a dynamic dialog, because we’re planning on putting a siren that will play the role of a talking drum because everybody would want to say something. Whether it’s the women who are invited to a meeting, or the youth, or the population as whole or the elderly, by using this tool, the population can communicate at any moment.”

“Well! Thanks to the local radio stations, we’ve been able to get closer to the population, a population which communicates a lot. And we have, in order to allow the population to have a connection to reading, because we know that education is very important, we have, with the help of our twin city in Belgium, received more than 15,000 books. We’ve opened a library. The Americans were interested in our library and they’ve set up an ‘American Corner’ which allows for the spreading of American philosophy and English language.”

Here, there is a **social commitment to engagement**. People “were fascinated by a philosophy. And therefore, in [community name], indeed, you would hear people talking about the city as the one of symbiosis amongst everyone when it comes to participation. I don’t know if my assistants want to speak or intervene. We inculcated the philosophy of symbiosis. I think that they are entitled to speak and that their word will not be rejected; symbiosis, accepting everyone. We intend to be a city of symbiosis.” This interviewee also noted a commitment to the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals, which support participatory governance.

This particular community also **emphasizes individual responsibility through its participatory efforts:**

“Why, wouldn’t our populations like beauty...flowers get into their houses? Every inhabitant knows that the mayor’s office has nothing else to do but to take care of the city. The mayor’s office must take care of the streets, public areas. But the mayor cannot go sweep everybody’s houses; everybody must be able to surround his house with flowers. Everybody must be able to sensitize his neighbor so that the ‘cleanliness disease’, the ‘health disease’ spreads through the population. This is what we’re working hard on. Whatever locals do, non-natives can do. During the day natives are working, in the evening non-natives obliged themselves to go to sleep. The non-natives are taking over the place to smoke fish, to make food. And the natives wake up in the morning, without knowing how everything got made. Everybody has a role to play.”

An NGO leader explained a more **service- and education-oriented type of participation** that this organization provides. “We carry out training seminars targeting taxpayers in order to ask them what are their apprehensions, with regard to our judicial decisions, and regarding this seminar, it makes sense that we invite the taxpayers,” this person said. “Recently, we performed a seminar about the magistrate and his deontology [ethics or moral obligations], we invited different social layers to tell us what their understanding of the magistrate’s deontology is because we wished to draft a text, a text that will be taken into account as an ethical code.”

“Therefore, it is obvious that for the regular citizen, the man on the street, that is, the understanding of deontology of the magistrate is not the same as the member of parliament (whom we invited, by the way) as the intellectual, as the scholar that you are, as lawyer or the farmer. We, therefore, invited those persons to tell us what they think about magistrates’ deontology, what do they recommend for a better compliance to deontology? I think that this seminar was interesting, by and large, because the populations were able to share their expectations.”

“And everything was recorded in our conclusions stating that it is evident that if we think that we can make decisions in the place of these populations, it is also necessary to get them involved in the making of these decisions. So, this seminar was key in showing us what the people we’re working for think or what their apprehensions are with regards to our work, to the conditions of work. Therefore, this participation was important at any moment; for the sake of quality of justice, perception of the judicial action absolutely needs to be shown and perceived, and revealed to those we’re working for. The improvements to bring to this action take into account whatever the taxpayer can think about our action.”

“Every decision made should be able to, (shouldn’t they?), achieve this approach. Therefore I’m telling you that the resolutions of these seminars along with these taxpayers’ viewpoint have been used as a basis for the compilation of a code of deontology. It’s not just that. We receive the taxpayer in our headquarters (in our fiefdom) and we provide them with advice on judicial decisions and on the code, people

advise us on the way we're acting: which would cause justice to be more active, to be independent. They also seize this opportunity, to let us know what they think, what do they mean by an independent and active justice, and what needs to be done to achieve this goal. And it is therefore based on this feedback that we are working to improve the image and the quality of justice. It is obvious that we are not decision-makers. But, our pressure on the government or sister-organizations can get the government and the other actors of justice to adjust their behavior.”

This conception of justice is a central element of the work this NGO leader does. “As I said earlier, we had contacts with representatives since they are the ones who pass the laws. We equally made contacts with lawyers, notaries, public appraisers, professionals and non professional of law. From the worker to the scholar that are outside of the field of law. Say, those people are questioned, most of the time, on the quality of justice, on an orientation, on which justice to establish. If we think that justice is an essential engine to development, it is necessary that the actors of this development, individually or collectively, tell which orientation to bring about in order to open this development engine up. It is not just professionals who are interested there are non professionals, the merchant, the woman at the Gouro market in Adjamé, the charcoal seller. What is he exactly expecting from justice and what is required for these expectations to be met. Therefore, for us the work that is being performed is done with the participation of different social layers in such a way that the combination of all these perceptions, the combination of all these discussions and these people's visions can effectively orient the work on the field.”

This particular NGO encourages the exploration of these questions and an acknowledgement of the public's influence on decisions “because we have to act in such way that the decisions are perennial and that they are accepted by the targeted audience,” said the NGO leader. “If there happens to be rather drastic decisions made, people need to understand the need for it and that justice didn't impose these decisions on them. With the feeling of having, themselves, participated in the making of these decisions and in such a way that they accept more easily the decisions that are made and they better understand those decisions, hence the need for participation. When we invite people to share their opinions, we have a meeting amongst ourselves, but it is also true that sometimes we go to the people, we go to them, to their respective organizations, their associations, the different groupings (uh) and therefore, we use these two methods so that we have the two and we're getting there, aren't we? So that people don't have the impression that internally things were decided and then imposed on them. And then, when they come to us, we make proposals and they critique these proposals and they rephrase them.” In this way, a “decision-making meeting, it's an exchange. The meeting is an exchange during which or at the end of which (uh) the outcomes are considered as the result of everybody's participation.”

A public participation practitioner described how participatory processes are **an integral part of project implementation**. Specifically, “...because it is the best way of meeting developmental needs expressed by the communities, their commitment to participate in the implementation of participation,” this interviewee said. “It is not only the dialogue

that has to be participative but taking part in the actions leading to dialogue in such a way that we reach adhesion. Yes, getting people to adhere is important. Yes, there is an official requirement. We have an approach whereby we ask the participants to assess their document using a form that converts their participation as defined by the State.”

Meetings are held in a variety of formats. “Establishing documents dealing with or around their environment. And the ideas are discussed,” said the practitioner. “So, I mean, in fact, it looks like something that looks like the baobab tree at home. The forms of participation in Africa rest not upon voting but on discussion, consensus. In any organization, there is always a leader who could be the president of the association or another member who is responsible. My role is not to impose the activity but to encourage the discussion...”

Sometimes external actors play a role in public or stakeholder processes. For example, a federal administrator noted the participation of an agent who takes charge of a project proposal. “It is the agent who takes charge of it. We just take a neutral position, say. It is not for all the projects; the projects where the impacts are really important; whereas for the projects where the social impacts are not so important, we do not carry out any formal public survey.” The agent is responsible for organizing the public survey on behalf of the agency.

Regularity/frequency

The regularity of participatory or deliberative processes reflected both ongoing efforts and interactions of varying length. Some participation is prescribed by law, such as that described at the ministerial level, while other participatory efforts are optional, such as at the local level. An NGO leader said, “We’re permanently in touch with the population. We maintain contact. But formally, I think that we’re holding activities every 2 months. And every 2 months, it is absolutely necessary that the results of those consultations, formal or informal, are dealt with in the meeting and the activities; truly absolutely and permanently.” A public participation practitioner said that the time span of engagement takes “as much time as necessary. To decide on year-long projects, the diagnosis of participation can be long. There is no timeframe, it can also be short.”

How people access participatory processes

Access to engagement processes in Ivory Coast is made possible through a range of means. *[Editor’s Note: The categories to which these strategies/techniques have been assigned were made by the project team (and not by interviewees) as one means for organizing what appear to be like activities together.]*

Meetings, Committees and Community Dialogue -- Face to Face

Project planning and local decision making. A locally elected official explained how engagement occurs in one Ivory Coast community.

“Because the city is made up of 2 large towns of [number] inhabitants each. Therefore almost [number] inhabitants. These 2 towns are [number] km apart from

each other. We divided the 2 towns into [number] neighborhoods councils, therefore every neighborhood council forms **a small city council** with a president elected by the inhabitants of the locality, of the area and a small council is set up to represent them at town council. It receives all the health and education projects and that's meant for the population to really feel involved."

"And we gave the experiment a try, regarding health issues for instance the organization of vaccination campaigns has been put in the hands of the neighborhood councils. They are the one to know where the children are where the activities are, the children and their parents and all that. We really, found satisfaction in doing so. Besides, we put in place (we are still building and we'll be finished) a listening center in [community name] and in [community name] to allow populations to have timely information. We're planning on setting up a satellite dish so that populations have the possibility to watch other TV channels. We're planning on setting up a radio station because we endowed our city with a community radio thanks to the contribution of the embassy of the United States. Therefore, this will allow (the listening centers with microphones) to widely inform the population on every little problem that will bring about a dynamic dialog, because we're planning on putting a siren that will play the role of a talking drum because everybody would want to say something. Whether it's the women who are invited to a meeting, or the youth, or the population as whole or the elderly, by using this tool, the population can communicate at any moment."

Community centers are also local connection points for people. "And we've also tried to set up centers: [Program acronym] which are Community Centers meant for early childhood in [community name] and [community name]. That allowed us to realize that it was worth it, because the center of [community name], for example, within one year has gathered nearly 250 children, aged from 2 (to 3) to 5, kids who had no activity, who were obliged to accompany their moms to the market and who didn't learn anything but had to go through a lot," said the locally elected official. "As if these children were going to begin working."

"But with the [program acronym], we chose to allow them to discover a new life, to familiarize them with the French language very early on and to pick up modern habits likely to prepare them to start school. That has created such an excitement that for both of those centers; we're planning on turning them into kindergartens and creating another one. But in all the big villages surrounding [community name] we will build community centers, because this is very important, we've had very good results."

"Let's say that, as much as possible, the population has to get involved at all levels and then, with the millennium goals [the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals] (since we are a pilot city) we are obliged. There is the strategic plan that was elaborated, with the whole population's participation, a population that did not understand at first the very complex terms of development. But, since we got them involved (we organized **seminars**), today, in [community name], everyone is regaining excitement for development. Really, we're trying to be close to our population."

Such efforts has laid the groundwork for other kinds of engagement in this community. “We went even further because for the next elections, we’re in favor of turning the neighborhood councils into town councils; rather than gathering cronies to form a town council and imposing it on populations. The neighborhood councils can come up with 1 or 2 people, a woman and a man (these proportions have to be respected). Therefore, there has to be (and we’re including this in our definition of a good town council) public participation,” the locally elected official said.

This official also commented:

“You know, we didn’t use to talk about public participation which wasn’t complete because there are conflicts. The texts of law are not clear. But we took to heart to move forward with the public administration to which we keep extending our congratulations every time the decentralized administration has been instrumental in the decision-making process. Every time we put forward ideas toward the achievement of the millennium goals, the administrative authorities were involved. They wanted to organize the seminar. I mentioned to you earlier the role played by [organization acronym] in the implementation of the millennium goals; [organization acronym] is going to be reorganized in order to be represented at every single millennium objective. We need to work in that direction. Therefore, [organization acronym] health commission must make sure that maternal health problems are solved. So, this must be a preoccupation.”

Community social events have focused on engagement as part of project planning and local decision-making:

“We also have to take into account that information must come from bottom up. So that everyone have, at least, the impression to have participated (not simply the impression) I’m saying it and I mean it. We had organized a twining ceremony to get more familiar with the American philosophy. Instead of enthroning, as people are used to with fabric, hats and all that, we chose a lady who acted in a noble way toward [community name], a lady who boosted the relationship with the United States Embassy; namely, [name]. We asked the whole population to participate. There was no organization. There was no one specifically selected for that. The population participated and the scene was reenacted as if the lady was coming from Ghana. She went down the same route as Queen Abla Pokou and her sister Tano Adjo. The whole population participated. Dances came from [community name]’s diverse ethnic representation. We brought in talking drums all the way from the villages of [community name] which is the village of [community name]. [Community name], right? They came from [community name] and that was a synergy. The population massively participated; Muslims, everyone gathered at this party. We have tapes of this ceremony where you can see for yourself that it wasn’t a play. It was real life, right there!” ... As things used to go before, everybody would be talking in the crowd, everybody would have their say. But the scene went well. We negotiated with each other. We’re counting on this event to show how we have ...or what our ambitions are.”

These activities also spurred interest in participating among local people. “We, in [community name], were fascinated by a philosophy,” said the locally elected official. “And therefore, in [community name], indeed, you would hear people talking about the city as the one of symbiosis amongst everyone when it comes to participation. I don’t know if my assistants want to speak or intervene. We inculcated the philosophy of symbiosis. I think that they are entitled to speak and that their word will not be rejected; symbiosis, accepting everyone. We intend to be a city of symbiosis.”

This goal of symbiosis was established “Because we think that, what we want is what our voters want. You’re asking me the question...because we think that by getting everybody involved, we believe that everybody cannot be mistaken at the same time. When people talk about participation, we go towards the priests, the ministers, the imams, the youth, the women, the associations. Everyone express themselves, even the decentralized administration. This is everyone’s symbiosis... (Whenever there is an action). All these organizations put themselves together to participate. See the risks we are taking...everything is being done for participation to be effective in our cities. Every 6 or 3 months, we’re trying to see who really likes his dog, are the dogs well treated? We’re letting them know that what they’re doing is of interests to the other. If whatever they’re doing, they’re doing it poorly, they are posing a problem to the other. They have to take their kid to school. They have to take care of their dog. They have to take care of the gutter. They have to participate in sweeping. They have to help create harmony within the community. They must make proposals.... We built listening centers. I’m not talking about public forums to come criticize, to come chat, but rather to come participate.”

The locally elected official explained the value of participation at the local level. “When we have to make decisions in [community name], it is from bottom up, because the neighborhood councils, the different associations, every group tries to give its opinion,” this person said. “For example while creating the [program acronym]. The [program acronym], the population created them. We came up with the idea. But this is something that belongs to populations.”

“Populations contribute 1,000 francs per month to take care of their children and to pay the teacher, the trainee and to also to pay educational equipment. The mayor’s office only offers subsidized help. But this is something that belongs to the population. Therefore that’s what it is. We do not participate in their decisions. Except for when they get back to us. But we let them take their responsibility. We are currently looking for ways to reinforce that. The very neighborhoods organize themselves. We’ve been approached by land tax collectors who happen to be members of the neighborhood councils. They’re considered as partners. They themselves owe taxes. They live in the neighborhood. They know each other. They know the inhabitants who rent or live in the house, how they went about selling the house; because there could be some delay when it comes to notarization and all that, they can be running behind schedule. But populations know each other. They know who owes tax. But, with the neighborhood

councils, everyone can be localized, identified. And today it takes about a week at the most for the notices to be ready to go. That's what it is, so..."

Meetings are held "often ... because the population feels the need for it," the official said. "I know, meetings are held in an informal way. I believe that as time goes we are going to institutionalized it. But, as we keep repeating, drawing people's attention, everyone gets used to it. It becomes a habit, when we're throwing out an idea, women, associations etc."

"The impact of these efforts are evident" said the official. "The results speak for themselves! Today, [community name] is practically a victim of its success; which means, we are a little everywhere. Because the idea that we develop about the population's participation, it's this very population that's its best advocate. They defend their own idea. Therefore wherever a native of [community name] is located, as soon as one talks about a project, it knows it, because information flows, with the local radio, with the neighborhood councils...except for those who refuse. There are people who don't want to do anything. Allow every citizen to be informed...But, I say: we're doing well implementing the neighborhood councils. There is no way around it because you do not live anywhere but in a neighborhood. A neighborhood, meaning a town council that chooses its leaders, implements the ideas, accompanies the projects. Therefore we think that this is a beautiful experience and we've achieved a lot of things."

There are "normal" challenges to engaging people, according to the locally elected official. "It takes solidarity to move forward. But, when everybody has their own thing, they walk alone. I share the philosophy of being together, developing together. Can you imagine, once, at 3 o'clock in the morning my cell phone rings. It was an administrator that was calling me to let me know the garbage can of the library had been stolen. I went out to verify the information. I come to see that indeed the garbage can had been dragged by man who had a mental condition and who wanted to sell it; thinking that it's their own garbage can that the people were risking going to buy. This is what we need to develop. Nothing belongs to anyone. Everything belongs to everyone. When a man does something, some come to say: no! The mayor needs to do this...See! The population has to be at the beginning of the decision-making process and take the lead of the grievance."

"I would like to say, and you can investigate on it: [Title]s change cell phone numbers every day. Some have 2 cell phones and all that...I, ever since I've been elected, have only had one phone number. I tried to make my phone number easy to remember: [phone number]. Everyone knows it. It is written on all the telephone booths. You can call me. I'll reply by telling you the truth: if there is something I cannot do, I let you know. If there is something that I can do, I do it. Therefore, I do not run away from my responsibilities," the official said.

"Therefore, every week, [Title]s change cell phones, so do municipal councilors. I used to be a municipal councilor in [community name], even the relationship between the mayor and the municipal councilors is difficult. I try, as much as possible, to make

information flow, communication; so that the taxpayer, at night or in front of a difficulty, thinks about calling his [title]. The number has to be accessible. If [title] can intervene, he must intervene. I am against these [title]s who run away from their own population and then later come to ask for ballots. Then I, when I'm asked "[Title], are you going to run for office? This is my business. I think that the result that we obtained, the job that we complete together, we must continue with it. So, I deserve even without being [title], I must continue to work. With that philosophy, in my opinion, there is no problem."

Combination of Meetings, Committees and Community Dialogue -- Face to Face; Trainings, Education and Research and Information Sharing

Public surveys for decisions regarding development. "It means that we give the possibility of action, to be able to take part; being able to allow the population to take part in any decision regarding development," said a federal administrator. In Côte d'Ivoire, **impact reports** are prepared regarding the potential project. The process could be initiated by the government or by the people, particularly "when it's about an impact report. We're the one to introduce it or often times we can receive letters underlining things concerning the process. Well, it can come from populations, from the company that's carrying out the project. With regard to the environmental code and the effects on the population of article number 16, the population, obviously, comes first, then, uh, there is also the mayor, the NGOs or the deputy prefect."

Meetings are held often at city hall to discuss the proposal as part of this process, and at this kind of gathering "the essential questions are of different kinds. Of course, how many locals are going to be hired? Well, often, when we're carrying out the **public survey**, it is because there is a movement. Therefore, the consequences generated by the movement of populations...So, I mean, if there is movement, populations wonder what kind of compensation is going to be applied. Now also, there are many technical questions, for example, on the negative impacts." For these meetings, considerable effort is made to make the public aware of it: "I would say, one thing we base ourselves a lot on... there is invitation, besides written invitations, there is the radio. Often, before the meeting, we meet the people in charge of communities. In the villages there are 'announcers.'" **Media** is generally used to create awareness. "For example, the radio," said the federal administrator. "When we broadcast, the message goes through smoothly."

While some people are aware of the public surveys, the federal administrator said, "it is true that we are not known enough. Ivorians generally do not know our services. That is at the level of the public survey. It is a true that a lot of people do not know that they have such options. There are regions where we went to; there are other regions where there are leaders. And it is whatever the leader is going to decide that is going to stick. Women are taking the lead. We tend to go more towards women, it's not because I am a woman. It has nothing to do with it but..."

The administrator said, "when we organize a public survey...we make clear from the beginning that nobody is above anybody. The word is free. Everybody can say whatever they want. When we realize that there are certain persons who...generally, when we go

into the room, the women are silent. It's right then that, the moderator says: 'Women! you have not spoken yet, if you have something to say. Ask a question' in order to really get the population more involved."

"It's true that the real solution will be to get all the target populations to get involved in the process at the same time," the administrator said. "There is also sometimes when populations hinder the project, somehow, in a little bit excessive way. I would say that, right, it is especially necessary to keep a happy medium. Not to be totally good to the developer, but not be totally in favor of populations. To take, really, the role of a referee, it is very important. Both ways: at the same time, we allow populations to give their opinion on a project; it also allows us to train them. And then, well, to better appreciate all the aspects. Now also, on the developer's side, we allow him to take into account the questioning of populations."

Investigations. A state administrator described the use of 'investigations' as a means to facilitate public participation before proposed decisions about land use (known as a 'decree') are finalized:

"Let's start within the City Hall itself; everything that's relevant to the life of a human being from birth to death. You see these registers right here? They are really important. If there are no forms there are no birth certificates. They contain: the names and first name, the declarations of birth of every child. On the other side regarding investigations; you see this map, this is the map of a site at [reference code] called [name]. We need to carry out an investigation. This is called the request to divide up. I draft a decree. And then now, the decree will be recorded. You have a decree. The decree is recorded on the investigation announcement. And now, the recording is affixed on the *opinion survey*. This survey will circulate in the media: the newspapers, the audio visual one also. Copies are sent to [organization name], to the Official Newspaper and then to the local radio station. The communiqué is aired. Now, next thing, the population comes to me, with observations. A register is opened to that end to receive oppositions or remarks, observations."

The public initiates the public survey by requesting it, the state administrator said. However, "In order to get a granting letter, the opinion of the public is mandatory. We have to carry out a neighborhood investigation to see if it's not an annoyance. Because, if it appears that the land does belong to you despite the fact that the owner already signed a document. Maybe he signed the same document for someone else as well, So the investigation shows that. And these things are quite common. Some guy said he signed a certificate for someone else and for the same site."

There is broad dissemination of the proposed decree and the associated opinion survey, the state administrator explained, since "An investigation is open to everybody."

"You saw in the sent copies. We wrote to the village traditional rulers, the landowners, even if they're not the actual owners of the site but they're the ones who manage this section of the town. The traditional ruler is informed, the ministry of [subject], the ministry of [subject], the [office name], the [office name]. Because,

whatever the state of the land, the ministry of [subject] has to be there in the first place before providing with services; the [title of person], if there is a job to be performed, technical services have to go there. After that, in this case for instance, in order to divide the land up we generally take 30 days. For an extraction, sometimes, they purchase the site, a piece of land. A patch of land is 500 to 600 m². Within 15 days, those who want to make observations are free to do so. Now, to divide the land up we take 30 days. Sometimes, people don't pay attention; therefore, we think that it could take up to a month for the communiqués to get across. After the deadline is over, one month later, I invite the commission made up of the Ministry of [subject]; the ministries of [subject], [subject], and these 4 composing bodies will make remarks regarding the way the land is divided up. For example, reservations as for the cleaning up of the batches that are located in 'dumps.'"

The administrator also commented:

"As time goes, we said, well, it's because the ministry of [subject] ...We've often been working with the ministry of [subject]...but we always realize that there are overlaps, multiple uses: Dr. Aboua could have a piece of land with his name on it and we then realize that someone else has a granting letter for it. So, now they've sorted things out and the district is able to assess in a certain way. First step: request for plot (for housing estate). Second step: forwarding of a duly justified mayor's notice. Third step: handing in a completed application for authorization; and then, the investigation, is now the fourth step. That's it for the public investigation; because, firstly, the request for plot is put in by the owner and the Chief of the village. It's agreed with, I mentioned, with the Chief of the village. Now second step: forwarding of the mayor's favorable notice to the ministry of [subject]. We collect the mayor's justified. Third step, now, it's at the district. Handing in of a completed application file; then comes the authorization. Then we carry out the investigation."

"The results gathered from the survey are brought back to us; setting up of **the commission**. That's another thing. I mean, when the commission (the one in charge of collecting the guide) is finished the memo is drafted (the positive/favorable memo) you know? Now, the guide is put into place. Regarding the guide, we go to the chief's and to the mayor's. But in the past, it was the ministry of [subject] which was issuing the guide. So, it was complete mess." [A **guide** explains "what a citizen can be entitled to.]

For example, "Dr. Aboua has number 45, patch of land 160. It's all written in it. You have to have this same number. Sixth step, MCU for project approval and then the decree goes back to the district for attribution. The ministry of [subject] issues its decree of approval. Now, it's the district that does the ultimate attribution."

"When the decree and the survey announcements are published, the chief of the village meet with the other traditional rulers. He generally convenes a **meeting** so that he collects everybody's opinion... If someone thinks that the land is overlapping with his

farm, it's up to the commission to look into that. All the people who have remarks, oppositions to make, are invited; I call them to a meeting."

"The results gathered from the survey are brought back to us; setting up of the commission. That's another thing. I mean, when the commission (the one in charge of collecting the guide) is finished the memo is drafted (the positive/favorable memo) you know? Now, the guide is put into place. Regarding the guide, we go to the chief's and to the mayor's. But in the past, it was the ministry of [subject] which was issuing the guide. So, it was complete mess."

Hearings are held by the commission. It is "very easy" for the public to participate in the hearings and to have access to the public investigation procedures, said the state administrator. "There are even people who come to make claims; we record them because the commission has invited them. You are obliged to invite them. When they come, we realize that the very site that's at stake has nothing to do with theirs."

Site visits are also completed. "Along with the commission, we go to the site," the state administrator said. "The Mayor is the president of the commission. We go to the site. We look at the site exactly the way it is. The way it looks on the map. In any case we go through the whole site, whatever the number of hectares. Once, after the extraction, the technicians went, that day, I did not go with them. And thanks to that they came across a contentious site. Just want to say that we perform a thorough visit. Now, dividing up the land is not possible without the decree of approval."

Sometimes there are difficulties in this process, as the administrator explained with an example:

"Generally, there are also, it's rare, family problems. Land (usually), whatever the family, lands belong to an entire family. The family, for instance, when we are about to split the land up; it can happen; recently, we had a young lady who was completely set against the rest of the family. She says that she does not want the land to be divided up. But her land is part of a whole site therefore if we have left her 3 hectares and split the remaining up, what's going to be left? Working on these lands are expensive. We had to resort to the villagers because the village's Chief was represented by 3 top traditional officials to find out more. In the end, whenever there is a problem, we end up getting back, once again, to the commission in order to write a memorandum. It's all about paying for, since it's expensive, the surveyor's job. If she is to split 3 hectares up, she is not going to sell them as a whole. She we will have to do it piece by piece. And it's in her interest to do so."

The memo that the administrator noted is "signed by all parties: whether it's the ministry of construction's delegation, of agriculture, all the ministries, the Chief of the village also signed. Then the memo got forwarded to the ministry of construction and to the District [district name]. Now some can make reservations. Some can say, well, I want for example a worship place."

“Generally, we think that the population listens to the communiqués” that request their involvement. “You can find a person, for example, who would be interested in this title and who did not come across the information. Oh yeah, for the population of [community name] and the surrounding villages, are necessarily informed by the mayor’s office acting has a relay.” This administrator’s wish is that “the population reads through the posters, in that sense, yes, all the media in general. These measures are meant to encourage people to participate.”

Information Sharing

Communication with the public or stakeholders occurs through *radio*. “Thanks to the local radio stations, we’ve been able to get closer to the population, a population which communicates a lot,” said the locally elected official. There is also an educational emphasis in this community, and *the library* serves as an important resource. “And we have, in order to allow the population to have a connection to reading, because we know that education is very important, we have, with the help of our twin city in Belgium, received more than 15,000 books. We’ve opened a library. The Americans were interested in our library and they’ve set up an ‘American Corner’ which allows for the spreading of American philosophy and English language,” the official said. At the library, people “have the possibility to work on ‘computers,’ ‘the Internet’ and all that...”

Trainings, Education and Research

The use of “some training” is desirable for increasing the level of participation in public surveys, said the federal administrator. “But, well, as we’re dealing with various groups of the population, obviously it would be a well suited training. It would not only be targeting those who are literate but really we could get to everybody. And we can also do television shows, films to be played on TV. Not intellectual films, the kind of films that is so educational that people can’t understand them.” The interviewee clarified further: “I mean, make a funny movie with humor, but at the same time that can be used to teach and, at the same time that can be used to sensitize people.”

Judicial decisions

An NGO leader described how this particular organization provides “*training seminars* targeting taxpayers in order to ask them what are their apprehensions, with regard to our judicial decisions, and regarding this seminar, it makes sense that we invite the taxpayers.” (A more detailed explanation of these training seminars is noted earlier in this country report.)

“What is interesting is that when we’re inviting, obviously, we participate, we have a moderator,” said the NGO leader. “But when we’re going to meet with the groups, we give those groups the opportunity to act as moderators. Indeed, the designated moderators are to show that they have understood. These groups have understood their role! Therefore, the moderators are designated depending on the place where we go and it could be a member of an NGO or a member of an organization.”

This organization maintains contact with a range of stakeholders, making it easy to convene seminars. “We’re permanently in touch with the population,” said the NGO

leader. "We maintain contact. But formally, I think that we're holding activities every 2 months. And every 2 months, it is absolutely necessary that the results of those consultations, formal or informal, are dealt with in the meeting and the activities; truly absolutely and permanently."

The impacts of the seminars are social and political. "From a social standpoint, they directly act on the population," the NGO leader said. "Therefore we need to act in such a way that these populations participate in the decision making process. At last, I think that the organizations that were created will be able, maybe, to intervene in that direction. Because setting up a health unit, for example, is of interest to the population. And therefore, this setting up should result from the consultation between the population and the authorities. It is necessary that the needs expressed by the population be taken into account in the decision making process. It is important that populations participate."

The NGO leader said it is easier for some citizens to participate in the seminars than others. "If the persons in charge at all levels, the persons in charge of these organizations of citizens understand the need for participation, it is going to be easier for the citizens to participate. But if at their level they are not penetrated with this very ideal, it is evident that it will be more difficult for the taxpayers to participate. Therefore it's all about willpower." Direct participation by citizens in Ivory Coast "would be difficult to envision....All the persons that want to participate can do so, I think that it is possible by social category. That is possible. It is evident with a population of 16 million inhabitants; it is not easy to get everyone's viewpoint, to conduct surveys. But this can be achieved at a sectorial level. The interest groups, as I said, can reflect on it based on what they know about their members, about their interests and then they can gather all this and reflect on it. And I think that this way, everyone can be, don't they? taken into account."

Moreover, those who are more actively engaged in the training offered by this NGO are individuals "that do not have the capacity to organize themselves and that don't have the capacity to have access to decision-making organs. And therefore, that's what it is all about," said the NGO leader.

"For example: the more remote villages have to endure the mayors' decisions, the regions. Because in these villages, there is no internal organization that can make sure that representatives participate, don't they in the decision-making process. Therefore, persons endure the decision that is made at the top. And therefore, for these people that do not belong to any organization can participate in a very simple way, since we're in the participation field, and these persons are interested by that, therefore when we are in the field, we do our best (because we know that everyone cannot participate) to invite those persons. In any case, not everyone, we invite the persons, the communities, that are in remote locations and that do not have any formal organizations, to designate in their midst the persons who will discuss with us in order to make decisions. Therefore, it is through this approach, by sometimes giving them a ride to the venue so they touch the realities and by getting those people without any supervision to

understand the importance of being organized and of being supervised in order to be able to participate in the decision-making process.”

Creating awareness of the NGO’s activities can be challenging. “We think that law is a very hermetic field even for the intellectuals, it is even more so for the general public,” said the NGO leader. “The fact that we’re bringing people closer to justice and we’re supporting them, I think that it is important to do so and that it increases the confidence of these people to be able to get involved in all the processes; whether they’re social, or governmental, or at community level.”

When asked about the kind of impact that the organization is having, the NGO leader responded: “A positive impact! Given that it will allow everyone at their respective level, to participate in the decision-making process. That is the most important. Because it is necessary to be able empower the people and they will understand that in reality, although they’re not ‘political decision-makers’ they can influence on the political sphere.” The challenges faced by the organization are overcome by “determination, by our patience and this is how one can see your determination. Because it is obvious that you’re working with illiterate people that understand nothing; one has to be patient, determined. As we set ourselves the objective of truly walking these people through the decision-making process; which means that (our task) it is evident that this permanent mobilization was key in getting information across.”

The NGO leader also called for a strengthening of requirements to engage people. “The measures...from a local standpoint, at a regional council level, to establish it in local organizations. It is absolutely necessary that nationwide, maybe, a law is passed so that when an important decision is to be made, a dialog is to be imposed on the population in order to collect people’s opinion on the decision, therefore I think that it has to be institutionalize. Indeed, if we want it to be long-lasting,” this person said.

The results of engagement make this need very clear to the interviewee: “In terms of action, I remember that there were 2 texts of laws: the law on the rural lands status,” said the NGO leader. “Before passing this law, there were people who were traveling to all the villages, all the places in order to collect people’s opinions. There was the law in which populations took an active part. The government took it into account. Therefore, these 2 laws materialize, symbolize, don’t they? the satisfaction in decision-making. It is clear that it is sometimes indirect (but), when the government goes to the National Assembly and then the representatives ask questions and then the representatives return to their districts and gives an account.”

Training, therefore, is an important element of developing this capacity. “We need to organize training seminars on public participation to the decision-making. If these people are not trained, it is obvious that just relying on goodwill will not be sufficient. Large-scale training seminars so that people understand their responsibility in decision-making or any training of the same kind.”

Other

Project-based engagement. A public participation practitioner spoke about efforts that engage the public as a means of responding to community needs. This particular organization focuses on “the improvement of resources. Therefore, our action indirectly participates in public participation.”

This institution intervenes in such processes “because it is the best way of meeting developmental needs expressed by the communities, their commitment to participate in the implementation of participation. It is not only the dialogue that has to be participative but taking part in the actions leading to dialogue in such a way that we reach adherence. Yes, getting people to adhere is important. Yes, there is an official requirement. We have an approach whereby we ask the participants to assess their document using a form that converts their participation as defined by the State.”

Moreover, “it is clear that there are several levels of participation; even the smallest villager who for most part is away from all formal structures,” said this person. “In almost all cultures, we consult the bases of the village community. Even at the superior level, that is the smallest entity of the territorial administration in Africa. With the municipal council, we can see them as a way of questioning the mandate that participation gives people, these modalities are, maybe, not strong enough in a way to increase the process of public participation. And that’s what prompts us to check on the mechanism. Then, we set up participation.” The organization uses “several participation tools,” rather than “one single method” to engage people at the village level.

Who is included and excluded

Ivory Coast interviewees cited a wide range of individuals and groups who are included in engagement processes.

Who is included

At the federal level, “there is no specific group [involved]. **Everybody is involved here,**” said a federal administrator. Moreover, this person said, “it is fair to say that in the Ivory Coast, it’s every time there is compensation” for participation, implying that payment is made for involvement in public surveys. As part of this official’s work, there is awareness of who participates. Specifically, the agency looks at the number of people and also “the quality of these persons. When I say quality it is not about education, but quality, I mean, are there young people...?” However, “at the level of the public survey,” the administrator said, “we are not known enough.” In addition, “It is a true that a lot of people do not know that they have such options.”

Efforts are particularly made to engage **women** during meetings, as this official noted previously in this country report. This person said, “mainly, for the women, we know that they are the cornerstone, those who make everything, so, whenever there are impacts, they are the ones who are able to appreciate it.” Like the NGO leader, the federal administrator called for codifying public participation in order to facilitate broader

engagement. “Take a decree that clarifies the participation of the public. Not just at a superficial level, but really in depth,” this person said.

A state administrator explained who is involved in investigations around land decrees. This includes **the general public** or “the population,” who provide “oppositions or remarks, observations.” It is “open to everybody.” Others who are specifically contacted include “**the owner,**” “**the village traditional rulers, the landowners, even if they’re not the actual owners of the site but they’re the ones who manage this section of the town.**” The traditional ruler is informed, the ministry of [subject], the ministry of [subject], the [office name], the [office name].” The mayor’s office is informed, and a member of the mayor’ staff also serves as a liaison to nearby communities and surrounding villages. The commission also invites people to comment or participate.

At the local level, **neighborhood council members** are engaged as well as **the public at large**. “We have, as I said: the neighborhood councils; let’s not forget the religious communities, let’s not forget genders, the women, the NGO and all that...,” said the locally elected official. This official also said, “We went even further because for the next elections, we’re in favor of turning the neighborhood councils into town councils; rather than gathering cronies to form a town council and imposing it on populations. The neighborhood councils can come up with 1 or 2 people, a woman and a man (these proportions have to be respected). Therefore, there has to be (and we’re including this in our definition of a good town council) public participation.”

At the NGO level, **taxpayers are involved**, including “different social layers” and elected representatives, “since they are the ones who pass the laws.” This organization also contacts “lawyers, notaries, public appraisers, professionals and non professional of law,” explaining that “From the worker to the scholar that are outside of the field of law” are included.

Who is excluded

At the federal level, who is excluded reflects **people who lack knowledge of proposed projects**, projects that “one does not even know about. So, they often go unnoticed. Yes, yes. It is a pity that not everybody knows about it, but those who know it use the information.”

A locally elected official described outreach encouraging development to neighborhood councils, religious communities and “ministers and the priest by stressing the fact that ‘you’re the only ones that populations trust, confide in. But you need to bring them into the world of development rather than confine them only to the world of prayer.’ I’m urging, because we must all help the youth. Which means **the young ones, the elderly, let’s not forget the executives.**”

In a particular community, a locally elected official said that even with many participating, “I do not know those who put themselves out-of-the-way. As soon as we

feel that a group does not join in, we draw their attention to it and we seize the neighborhood council which represents the executive branch, and which were appointed by populations to be their enlightened advocates and their information providers.”

Barriers to participation

Sometimes exclusion is the result of barriers to participation. Among the barriers identified by interviewees included:

- **Timing, reluctance to appreciate other perspectives.** “It’s true that the real solution will be to get all the target populations to get involved in the process at the same time,” said a federal administrator. “There is also sometimes when populations hinder the project, somehow, in a little bit excessive way. I would say that, right, it is especially necessary to keep a happy medium. Not to be totally good to the developer, but not be totally in favor of populations. To take, really, the role of a referee, it is very important. Both ways: at the same time, we allow populations to give their opinion on a project; it also allows us to train them. And then, well, to better appreciate all the aspects. Now also, on the developer’s side, we allow him to take into account the questioning of populations.”
- **Lack of resources.** A federal administrator said, “poverty, it is the only obstacle that I see; poverty.” This is “because I see that more people are poor. Really, the obstacle is poverty.” A public participation practitioner said, “The lack of resources, sometimes forces us not to be as demanding when it comes to the level of participation.” This interviewee also said, “...wherever there is participation, the issue of means has not been specifically dealt with. But we don’t always have enough required staff and resources.”
- **Lack of awareness.** An NGO leader said, “I think that people would more easily accept that their role if it’s explained to them and it is obvious that the decisions would not be going through certain difficulties such as the ones we’re observing.”
- **Lack of awareness about public participation, specifically.** “The challenges that we’re faced with, we have, for example people that have never heard about public participation,” said an NGO leader. “We’re working in permanence for the people that are penetrated with this notion (especially) so they can understand. And that is done in order to act. Public participation is all Greek to certain people; for intellectuals such as us, obviously, it is difficult for people who have never heard of it. Public participation makes teaching this notion easier. Not just teaching but getting these people to understand that by their determination those are going to make sense, otherwise this will be a hollow concept, anyways.”
- **Need for a public request to establish the investigation process.** “It’s the public that requests it,” said a state administrator. “In order to get a granting letter, the opinion of the public is mandatory. We have to carry out a neighborhood investigation to see if it’s not an annoyance. Because, if it appears that the land does belong to you despite the fact that the owner already signed a document. Maybe he signed the same document for someone else as well, So the investigation shows that. And these things are quite common. Some guy said he signed a certificate for someone else and for the same site.”

- **Administrative difficulties.** When a complaint is received about a decree, said the state administrator, “we receive the file, we call upon the commission. We sit again. Recently, we had a case, for instance, we double checked, we realized that the letter of attribution had already been signed... Even within the ministry itself, these problem are not that uncommon ...”
- **Family problems.** “Generally, there are also, it’s rare, family problems,” said the state administrator. “Land (usually), whatever the family, lands belong to an entire family. The family, for instance, when we are about to split the land up; it can happen; recently, we had a young lady who was completely set against the rest of the family. She says that she does not want the land to be divided up. But her land is part of a whole site therefore if we have left her 3 hectares and split the remaining up, what’s going to be left? Working on these lands are expensive. We had to resort to the villagers because the village’s Chief was represented by 3 top traditional officials to find out more. In the end, whenever there is a problem, we end up getting back, once again, to the commission in order to write a memorandum. It’s all about paying for, since it’s expensive, the surveyor’s job. If she is to split 3 hectares up, she is not going to sell them as a whole. She we will have to do it piece by piece. And it’s in her interest to do so.”
- **Desire to slow down the process.** “The executives are sometime the ones slowing everything down,” said a locally elected official. “They only come to funerals. They only come to take care of their personal problems. But they do not get involved in the management of the city. They are just criticizing without knowing what is happening in the city.”
- **Attitudes.** “In [community name], those who were slow to join, not to join, but who were slow to understand, are the indigenous, I mean the natives. I mean the one who think that that’s their own town. And as we do not favor this attitude of hatred and all that...They sometimes feel frustrated but we get them involved in city dynamics,” said the locally elected official.
- **Lack of established relationships.** A locally elected official who facilitated the creation of “an association of the religions” said he “was shocked that we had 30 religious communities whose leaders do not know each other. I told them that one day you’re running the risk of getting into fight without knowing each other. Therefore, it is important that you be together. We try to make sure that within each and every group dialog is always open. This is what we’re doing for them.”
- **Lack of interest.** If people aren’t interested in the ideal of participation, said the NGO leader, “it is evident that it will be more difficult for the taxpayers to participate. Therefore it’s all about willpower.” This leader also said, “It is absolutely necessary that at the level of the population initiatives be taken.”
- **Lack of physical access.** An NGO leader said his organization sometimes arranges rides to meeting venues “so they touch the realities and by getting those people without any supervision to understand the importance of being organized and of being supervised in order to be able to participate in the decision-making process.”
- **Low literacy.** An NGO leader said, “it is obvious that you’re working with illiterate people that understand nothing; one has to be patient, determined. As we set ourselves the objective of truly walking these people through the decision-

making process; which means that (our task) it is evident that this permanent mobilization was key in getting information across.”

- **‘Political takeover.’** “It is necessary to act in such a way that these populations understand that they’re working for themselves but they’re not working for anyone else,” said an NGO leader. “And if there is political takeover, it will be difficult for those persons to understand that they’re working for themselves. Because when politicians take over, they don’t go in the direction of the population. They tend to impose these things. Now, what we want is for these people to participate in the making of the decision.”
- **Lack of self-empowerment.** An NGO leader said, “it is absolutely important to get the people to understand their role, and to let them know that in fact, they are the one to make the decisions. And therefore, getting them to understand that point: that’s an effective method. Rather than to come and say ‘we want to make a decision, what do you think about it?’ We have to tell them that the decision is made by you, is made by the concerned person. It’s through their mobilization, their consultation. It’s by bringing together their different viewpoints that this decision will be made. Not because we want to make a contradictory decision, but it’s the dialectic of it. And this is coming from bottom up. It’s coming from them and they will be sensitized to this end.”
- **Lack of cultural, social, institutional support for public participation.** “I would particularly want to stress: public participation needs to be encouraged,” said an NGO leader. “Because we belong to an oral school and the population is very illiterate. This system is public participation. This way of making decision that is well-known in the corporation / western culture, it would be good for our governments, for all those that have a piece of power, to better reinforce the dialectic: the decisions to be made (most of them, rather) for all them, come from bottom up instead of the opposite. Rather than the top imposing these decisions on the bottom which means giving orders. This will also give the decision another chance to be implemented. I think that it is important to teach that to the people; provided that that the government is patient enough to understand. Because we realize that, in Africa, often times, the decisions are made without consulting the bottom and they are unenforceable because no one took the necessary time to consult the population and to truly see their will in this very matter. I think that absolutely needs to be achieved by our governments. This will allow us to have applicable laws in all regards.”
- **Lack of capacity.** A public participation practitioner said, “it is clear that there are several levels of participation; even the smallest villager who for most part is away from all formal structures. In almost all cultures, we consult the bases of the village community. Even at the superior level, that is the smallest entity of the territorial administration in Africa. With the municipal council, we can see them as a way of questioning the mandate that participation gives people, these modalities are, maybe, not strong enough in a way to increase the process of public participation. And that’s what prompts us to check on the mechanism. Then, we set up participation.”
- **Negative-reinforcing cycle.** A public participation practitioner said, “I would say that if we do not consult the population, it is clear that it becomes difficult to

perform public participation. When we look at the average timeframe, countries that deliver mandates on the spot are rare. Their problem is how the community works, as a counter power, for the people they appointed through public participation. Right, I don't have any answer. It is probably true that one can increase the capacity to analyze the laws that are taken by the parliament. These things do not help participation. Populations are consulted but sometimes their opinion is not enlightened. Then, it's always the same thing; it is always good to know why populations, sometimes, do not participate in the participation process."

- **Lack of education.** "It is necessary to increase the level of education; it may be necessary to say that in the last twenty years, decisions have been made for the communities," said a public participation practitioner. "We've seen what the limitations of such a social development method are. The benefit for the communities is huge. Therefore, we really understood what the limits are, by and large, given that their social development depends on it. At the same time, I believe that it is clear: participation can be reinforced but through what institutional links? Decentralization has been encouraged in the parliament, but this shouldn't be the end of it."
- **Lack of an exchange.** "To tell the truth, there are very few initiatives," said a public participation practitioner. "This is why laws are being passed by the people who are supposed to be representatives of the public and, as I said, are elected. There is not enough exchange between the elected officials and the public."
- **Lack of organization.** Part of the challenge of engaging people in Africa is the "lack of organization," a locally elected official said. "Our populations have the craving, they work, they take initiatives but, their production remains in their hands. They do not know how to organize themselves so that once organized, they are able to become their own buyers. They can begin by organizing themselves. Therefore, I'm trying to build a relationship with the [organization], with [organization acronym] to help and to teach our populations to organize themselves."

Hard to Reach Opinions

However, interviewees report that some opinions are harder to capture than others through participatory or deliberative processes.

A federal administrator said, "when we organize a public survey (according to me), we make clear from the beginning that nobody is above anybody. The word is free. Everybody can say whatever they want. When we realize that there are certain persons who...generally, when we go into the room, the women are silent. Its right then that, the moderator says: 'Women! you have not spoken yet, if you have something to say. Ask a question' in order to really get the population more involved."

At the local level, an elected official relayed the kinds of conversations that are had with faith leaders in this regard, viewing them as intermediaries with the public or stakeholders. "I even urge the ministers and the priest by stressing the fact that 'you're

the only ones that populations trust, confide in. But you need to bring them into the world of development rather than confine them only to the world of prayer.”

“Natives” or “indigenous” community members “were slow to understand,” said the locally elected people. “...I mean the one who think that that’s their own town. And as we do not favor this attitude of hatred and all that...They sometimes feel frustrated but we get them involved in city dynamics. Even for land tax, everybody has understood. Everyone has understood that if they participate, if they pay, that will help bring electricity to their village, participating in these actions. Therefore everybody actively participates. But, as I’m speaking, I do not know those who put themselves out-of-the-way. As soon as we feel that a group does not join in, we draw their attention to it and we seize the neighborhood council which represents the executive branch, and which were appointed by populations to be their enlightened advocates and their information providers. But I go to executives to collect their piece of the cake.”

This official has been diligent in seeking out those who are harder to reach in this particular community. “I tried everything, I succeeded, before being [title], in getting the religious leaders to set up an association of the religions. And I wasn’t [title] at that time but, I was shocked that we had 30 religious communities whose leaders do not know each other. I told them that one day you’re running the risk of getting into fight without knowing each other. Therefore, it is important that you be together. We try to make sure that within each and every group dialog is always open. This is what we’re doing for them.”

Research Question 3

What positive and negative outcomes occur as a result of public participation/deliberation in government decision-making processes?

This question sought to examine the results of participatory or deliberative processes and associated accountability mechanisms. The goal was to isolate what interviewees and their respective organizations saw as beneficial and also not beneficial as a byproduct of such efforts. The ethical dimension of engagement was also considered.

Outcomes of participatory or deliberative processes in Ivory Coast reflect the experiences of our five interviewees.

- **Project designs include public participation.** A federal administrator said that this particular agency works with various groups in order to “get them to understand that in the designing of projects we take public participation into account.”
- **Collection of opinions.** The participatory process (public surveys) for this federal agency “allows for improvement and then we’re able to see what the opinions are...especially, also, to see which procedures to adopt. I would say, well, there are texts of law, here a[ga]in we function based on

experience. As we go along, we're matching the needs of the inhabitants of the Ivory Coast," said the federal administrator.

- **Creation of 'guides,'** which state "what a citizen can be entitled to" as a result of public surveys conducted for proposed development projects.
- **New ideas and problem identification.** A state administrator said that participants are "giving their ideas as the process goes. These are the ideas of the population. The ones who 'have their hands in it'...they have a straight line ahead of them and they have to follow it while the population can make claims aimed at improving things. The population is in a better position to tell what's good (for them) and to critique the mayor. When we call, for instance, the [office name], the population participates in highway maintenance and garbage collection, pipe and gutter system...those who live there, are the ones who can tell what their problem is or what their problems are."
- **New resources and services,** including efforts to distribute books and toys, the purchase of bicycles and the establishment of Community Centers, according to a locally elected official.
- **Active involvement by administrative authorities,** according to a locally elected official.
- **Public commitment, celebratory ceremonies, such as the** "twining ceremony to get more familiar with the American philosophy," said the locally elected official and that involved a broad swath of the community.
- **Expression of what people want/enhanced understanding of community wants.** Efforts to involve the local population are pursued, said a locally elected official, "Because we think that, what we want is what our voters want. You're asking me the question...because we think that by getting everybody involved, we believe that everybody cannot be mistaken at the same time. When people talk about participation, we go towards the priests, the ministers, the imams, the youth, the women, the associations. Everyone express themselves, even the decentralized administration. This is everyone's symbiosis... (Whenever there is an action). All these organizations put themselves together to participate. See the risks we are taking...everything is being done for participation to be effective in our cities."
- **Create mutual sense of responsibility,** said the locally elected official.
- **Self-advocacy.** "The results [of participation] speak for themselves!" said the locally elected official. "Today, [community name] is practically a victim of its success; which means, we are a little everywhere. Because the idea that we develop about the population's participation, it's this very population that's its best advocate. They defend their own idea. Therefore wherever a native of [community name] is located, as soon as one talks about a project, it knows it, because information flows, with the local radio, with the neighborhood councils...except for those who refuse. There are people who don't want to do anything. Allow every citizen to be informed...But, I say: we're doing well implementing the neighborhood councils. There is no way around it because you do not live anywhere but in a neighborhood. A neighborhood, meaning a town council that chooses its leaders, implements

the ideas, accompanies the projects. Therefore we think that this is a beautiful experience and we've achieved a lot of things."

- **Honor and power.** "The participation of the public, people say the power of the public, participation or the power of the public because they now have, according to them, the power to influence decisions; which means this very power, the honor showed," said an NGO leader. "That's what it is...they see it as an honor."
- **An exchange of outcomes.** "The decision-making meeting, it's an exchange," said an NGO leader. "The meeting is an exchange during which or at the end of which (uh) the outcomes are considered as the result of everybody's participation."
- **Improved decisions.** "I think that the impact [of participation] is big," said an NGO leader. "It could have been bigger... because that's the only way we have. But if at a national level, those things could be established, I mean, the government would make quality decisions. Given that this feedback will allow them to improve the quality of decisions in the making. Therefore I think that the impact is positive. The impact can only be positive. Because I think that people would more easily accept that their role if it's explained to them and it is obvious that the decisions would not be going through certain difficulties such as the ones we're observing."
- **Creation of organizations.** "From a social standpoint, [political decisions] directly act on the population," an NGO leader said. "Therefore we need to act in such a way that these populations participate in the decision making process. At last, I think that the organizations that were created will be able, maybe, to intervene in that direction. Because setting up a health unit, for example, is of interest to the population. And therefore, this setting up should result from the consultation between the population and the authorities. It is necessary that the needs expressed by the population be taken into account in the decision making process. It is important that populations participate."
- **Influence on politics, decision makers.** When asked about the impact of this particular NGO organization, the NGO leader responded, "A positive impact!" This is because the institution's efforts "will allow everyone at their respective level, to participate in the decision-making process. That is the most important. Because it is necessary to be able empower the people and they will understand that in reality, although they're not 'political decision-makers' they can influence on the political sphere."
- **Greater involvement in organizations.** "The persons involved go now towards the organizations," said the NGO leader. "You know, when you train someone in something, they always ask for a little more. It is obvious that, before, when we're speaking with the population, these populations were reluctant to ask or to raise a number of questions. Now, they are even more easily accessible and they're asking for a little more for their participation which means that they want it to be a right for them. They're demanding to be able to scrutinize the process. And therefore, this change, I think, has gained a foothold in the population."

- **New laws, satisfaction with decision making.** “In terms of action, I remember that there were 2 texts of laws: the law on the rural lands status,” said the NGO leader. “Before passing this law, there were people who were traveling to all the villages, all the places in order to collect people’s opinions. There was the law in which populations took an active part. The government took it into account. Therefore, these 2 laws materialize, symbolize, don’t they, the satisfaction in decision-making. It is clear that it is sometimes indirect (but), when the government goes to the National Assembly and then the representatives ask questions and then the representatives return to their districts and gives an account.”
- **Provide objectivity, problem resolution, trust.** A public participation practitioner said, “the impact is multifaceted. Given that they give the decisions a certain objectivity. And sometimes, projects can go through difficulties that can be collectively resolved. It is one of the big advantages of this communitarian model of participation, more so when the project requires particular responsibilities. Therefore, I believe that it increases not only the trust in their system but it also increases the idea of putting people together in such a way to resolve problems. It also increases the credibility of the organization.”

How is feedback provided?

Interviewees also noted the use of feedback mechanisms following engagement efforts. At the state level, **a commission** is established that reviews the results of the public survey. The commission then drafts **a memo** in response to the proposed project. After this, **the guide** [which stipulates “what a citizen can be entitled to”] is prepared.

The NGO leader also noted the value of the public’s feedback since it “will allow them [the national government] to improve the quality of decisions in the making. Therefore I think that the impact is positive. The impact can only be positive. Because I think that people would more easily accept that their role if it’s explained to them and it is obvious that the decisions would not be going through certain difficulties such as the ones we’re observing.” This person also said: “We have to act in the way that the taxpayer gets feedback otherwise they would loose [sic] confidence.”

The NGO itself also updates taxpayers, said the leader. “Absolutely! **To the participating groups, we certainly give updates**, we discuss to see which sectors needs to be improved. So that everyone is at the same level.”

Efforts to balance opinions

Balancing opinions among different stakeholder groups is often challenging for interviewees. A federal administrator said, “It’s true that the real solution will be to get all the target populations to get involved in the process at the same time. There is also sometimes when populations hinder the project, somehow, in a little bit excessive way. I would say that, right, it is especially necessary to keep a happy medium. Not to be totally good to the developer, but not be totally in favor of populations. To take, really,

the role of a referee, it is very important. Both ways: at the same time, we allow populations to give their opinion on a project; it also allows us to train them. And then, well, to better appreciate all the aspects. Now also, on the developer's side, we allow him to take into account the questioning of populations."

Expectations

Not surprisingly, the expectations for participatory or deliberative processes in Ivory Coast as expressed by interviewees reflect political and personal philosophies.

A locally elected official, for example, expressed an expectation that people now work collaboratively at the community level. "Politicians wear glove to claim taxes to their population," this person said. "But it is no longer [title] who is claiming taxes from populations but it's populations who are claiming taxes from each other. Therefore, I am not bothered, I am not ... I don't have any problems, what so ever, running for an office and claiming taxes. They do it themselves. See what I mean?"

An NGO leader expects that public participation generally is not well understood. "I mean, well, we need to explain it to them," this interviewee said. "Because there are some who think that public participation means critiquing. It is not up to the actors to critique justice...Some others also think, well, that public participation is true participation; it's a real encouragement towards those actors. But there are some who understand that this is empowerment, this is an opportunity for them to influence, or to voice their opinion on a lot of topics. Therefore, it is obvious that the understanding is not even depending on whether one is at level A or level B. But nevertheless, people feel honored that, for once, they can be associated to decisions concerning them, especially when it comes to such a sensitive field as justice."

When people do come to understand the value of public participation, according to the NGO leader, they assign 'honor' to being involved. "The participation of the public, people says the power of the public, participation or the power of the public because they now have, according to them, the power to influence decisions; which means this very power, the honor showed. That's what it is...they see it as an honor."

The NGO leader also said that there is an expectation that public participation provides "advantages" to the process of implementation. "Which means that we are certain that the decisions that are made are likely to be implemented, (likely) to be more favorable especially on favorable grounds; and there is no obstacles to the implementation of those decisions. To me this advantage needs to be underlined."

Building capacity

Finally, one interviewee spoke to the effects on capacity that are the result of engaging people. "I think that it is in the population's interest. There can be 'popular chambers' to analyze, I mean, the fairness of laws. And this, depending on people's characteristics; and that's how participation is going to become a means for people to access decision-making."

Summary

Ivory Coast	
Common Terms For P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public survey (federal administrator) • Public investigation (federal administrator) • Public empowerment (NGO Leader) • Public inquiry survey (federal administrator)
Conceptual Definition For P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As political action and decision making • A means of airing grievances and establishing accountability • Honoring the 'public's power' • A way of increasing credibility of processes
Select Barriers To Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of capacity • Lack of understanding of public participation • Public attitudes, distrust • Literacy • Lack of cultural, social, institutional support for public participation. • Hard to "reach" public opinions
Select Examples Of Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training seminars for tax payers • Communication with the public or stakeholders occurs through radio • Neighborhood Councils
Select Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New ideas and problem identification • Enhanced understanding of public opinions/priorities • Public commitment, celebratory ceremonies • Mutual sense of responsibility • Improved decision-making • New laws, satisfaction with decision making