



## CAUSES OF THE 2002-2011 IVORIAN POLITICAL ARMED CONFLICT AND IT'S RAMIFICATION ON EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

*This study explored the causes of the 2002-2011 Ivorian political armed conflict and its ramification on education in the country. A qualitative methodology was used for the study. A purposive sampling technique was used to sample a cross section of twenty-five (25) Ivorians. A semi-structured interviewing schedule was used to gather data. The data was analysed using content analysis techniques. The study revealed that the causes of the conflict were: competing for scarce resources, incessant political power struggles, land claims, problematic electoral processes, unemployment, discrimination among the ethnic groups, and succession problems with political transition. The ramifications of the conflict for education were: destruction of school infrastructure, the closure of schools in the North, decrease of the student population, and fleeing of teachers for fear of insecurity. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered: the Government should assure teachers of peace and encourage them by increasing their salaries to enable them to return to the country. Traumatized educational workers and students should be counselled and the calendar of the school should be kept in order to assist the students catch up with their lost time as well as to promote pro-democratic practices and beliefs in schools.*

**Keywords:** *ECOWAS, Ivory Coast, Ramification, Education, Armed conflict*

### **Introduction**

Ivory Coast is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and is situated on the western coast of Africa in the sub-Saharan area. It covers an area of 322,462 square kilometres. It is bordered in the North by Burkina Faso and Mali, in the West by Liberia and Guinea, in the East by Ghana and in the South by the Gulf of Guinea. The political capital of the country is Yamoussoukro, located in the heart of the country, some 248 km from Abidjan (in the South), which is the economic capital. It is a country of immigrants, on account of being at the crossroad of economic and cultural exchange. It has witnessed steady urban growth since independence. Prior to the conflict, the country had an educational policy (Education for all policy) which was one of the best in West Africa (Lanoue, 2003). After independence from France in

1960, Houphouet Boigny became the first president and stayed for more than three decades. Houphouet-Boigny's policy of encouraging the immigration of workers helped Ivory Coast to become the leading producer of cocoa in not only West Africa, but in the world at large, until his death in 1993 (Global IDP, 2005).

The Nationwide general democratic election was conducted in 2000, between General Guei in PDCI and the leader of the Ivorian Popular Front Party (FPI) Laurent Gbagbo. In January 2001, a coup d'état took place after President Guei refused to hand over to Gbagbo as the victor in the then concluded 2000 Presidential democratic election. As a result, fighting broke out among the various rebel leaders, citing the controversial elections, which denied Ouattara as a presidential candidate despite international and

ECOWAS recognition that Ouattara was the winner of the polls. President Gbagbo formed a de facto government of national unity that included the RDR party which was short lived (Lanoue, 2003).

One of the major events which led to the 2002 conflict was the Supreme Court's disqualification of the leaders of the major contesting parties, namely Rally of Republicans (RDR) led by Alassane Ouattara and Democratic Party of Ivory Coast. As a result, voter turnout was extremely low which annoyed the international election monitors to withdraw before the end of the polling. The early polling results showed that Gbagbo was in the lead. This event made Guei to withdraw from the election process and consequently used his military leadership position to disband the Ivorian Election Commission and declared himself the Head of State (Amnesty International, 2009).

Disgruntled Gbagbo supporters took to the streets of Abidjan and other nearby cities. A bloody fight ensued as the mob attacked the guards protecting the presidential palace and other state facilities. The violence became so serious that General Guei was forced to flee and in the process was ambushed and killed. Many other people were killed as the violence escalated marking the beginning of the Ivorian political conflict, which lasted for almost ten years. After a brief subsidence of the violence, Gbagbo declared himself as the president (Amnesty International, 2009). In September 2002, a serious confrontation degenerated into full scale war due to the disqualification of the leader of RDR Alassane Ouattara as the winner of the election by the court (Human Right Watch, 2002).

The political instability in Ivory Coast commenced after the death of Felix Houphouet Boigny in 1993. The conflict was caused by power struggle among the political leaders and discrimination among the people, especially those from the Northern part of the country (Daniel, 2003 and Suaka, 2012). Ivory Coast attained independence from France in 1960 and became an enclave of political and economic stability in a region known for conflict. The country endeavoured to avoid the myriads of pitfalls that bedevilled other African countries in terms of poor management of their sovereignty (Global Security, 2004). It was under the leadership of Felix Houphouet

Boigny, whose personal motto was: '*La paix n'est pas UN mot, c'est UN comportement*', which means "peace is not a word but an attitude". Within this personal concept, the former president made Ivory Coast a prototype of peace in the entire continent of Africa during his reign. Unfortunately, his death threw the country into a period of instability which eventually culminated into armed conflict. The conflict devastated the economy that was once prosperous after the colonial state (Global Security, 2004).

### ***Statement of Research Problem***

Most African leaders, in a bid to consolidate their positions, disenfranchise the members of opposition political parties by eroding the basic democratic principles enshrined in their countries' constitutions. The consequences of their actions become disastrous; very often leading to conflicts and resulting in the destruction of the social and the economic structures of the country. In most cases, it is the civilians who bear the brunt of their actions. Ivory Coast, like other African countries such as Somalia, Liberia and Sierra Leone, ultimately could not escape this catastrophe, despite a lengthy period of post-independence political and economic stability (Global Security, 2002). Formerly prosperous and united, Ivory Coast is now a failed state (Robert, 2010) which is ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the world of the Failed States Index (Failed States Index, 2012). During the conflict, the infrastructure of the country was destroyed, along with its trade relations and investors' confidence. The trade revenue, and debt payments, as well as the devaluation of the national currency dropped (IRIN, 2005). The 2002-2011 Ivorian political armed conflict also divided the societies and destroyed public institutions, including its educational system. While the education sector in Ivory Coast was clearly a victim of the armed conflict, which raged until late 2004, it was also a catalyst for the 2002-2011 Ivorian political armed conflict (Sany, 2008). A better understanding of the causes and ramification of the political armed conflict on the educational system will allow for a more accurate analysis of events and provide a firmer foundation for recommendations and intervention. It is within this background that the central research question is situated. What are the

causes and the ramifications of the Ivorian conflict for education?

Furthermore, the effects of the armed conflict plague the country to this day and this study attempts to examine the effects of the armed political conflict for education during the period from 2002-2011. The researcher's observation was that scholarly works on the conflicts in Ivory Coast have focused on the ramifications of the conflicts on the educational life of the population in general. In order to study this topic, the researcher undertook fieldwork in the Ivory Coast in late 2014, and interviewed a cross section of twenty-five Ivorians in Ivory Coast.

### ***Purpose of the study***

The purpose of this study was to investigate the causes of the 2002-2011 Ivorian political armed conflict and its ramification on education. In order to understand the causes and the ramifications for education during the armed conflict the researcher investigated the previous situation and generated a comparison to understand what changes have resulted from the armed conflict. Therefore, a larger objective was to understand the situation before, during and after the armed conflict. It is through that understanding that government policy and measures taken may be assessed. Therefore, the study situates policy within that context. This also speaks to the broader issues of reconstruction after the conflict as well as limits encountered in enacting policy in such contexts.

### **Theoretical framework**

There are a number of theoretical explanations for violent political conflicts. The most prominent of these are the political, the social, the psychological, and the economic theories of conflict respectively. For the purpose of this study, I adopted "human capital theory" and "identity politics" as an analytical construct for explaining the continuum of the effects of the Ivorian armed conflict on education. The theories adopted in this study focus on both the causes and the effects of the armed conflict in Ivory Coast.

According to Becker (1962), human capital theory states that not only do people living in conflict zones suffer injuries, death and have their property destroyed, they are also displaced from their homes and lose their means of survival but education from the grassroots is destroyed and that leads to a reduction in human capital investment. Children and women were the most harshly affected by the destruction of physical capital and the deterioration of economic conditions given the age-specific aspects of many human capital investments in Ivory Coast. There were problems such as widespread malnutrition and outbreaks of infectious diseases and trauma. The destruction of human capital during childhood is a well-documented mechanism leading to poverty traps, given the severe long-term effects it can have on individual and household welfare via the future labour market outcomes and economic performance of affected children.

Kaldor (2004) states that Identity politics is a movement that mobilizes around ethnic, racial or religious identity for the purpose of claiming state power. Identity politics refers to "the claim to power on the basis of a particular identity, be it national, clan, religious or linguistic" (Kaldor, 2004: 6; see also Kaldor, 2001). The new identity politics are thus about the claim to power on the basis of labels, which tend to relate to an idealized nostalgic representation of the past. "New Wars" are a mixture of war, organised crime and a massive violation of human rights and the actors comprise local, global, public and private sectors (Kaldor, 2004). Identity politics are a war fought for particular political goals using tactics of terror and destabilisation that are outlawed by the rules and norms of modern warfare. This new type of war is in sharp contrast with the politics of ideas which are open to all and therefore to be integrative (Kaldor, 2004).

The armed conflict in Bosnia and Ivory Coast, involving state powers as well as various personal forces are clear demonstrations of 'identity politics' (Kaldor, 2000). Kaldor claims these new political armed conflicts are economic wars, in which a range of new militaries, the decaying remnants of state armies, paramilitary groups are often engaged and financed by governments to defend her. As a result of such self-defence units, mercenaries and

international troops engage in some forms of violence and that led to the systematic murder of people, forcible population expulsion, forms of ethnic cleansing and even genocide. These may then contribute to a decline in overall socio-economic conditions in that, it leads to the collapse of production, and the government is forced to rely on the diaspora for fund-mobilization such as remittances to sustain the fight (Kaldor, 2000).

With these theories in mind, the researcher is in a position to explain the broader issues in relation to the effects of the armed conflict on the education and on the Ivory Coast. It is within these theoretical frameworks that the proposed study seeks to understand the effects of the armed conflict in Ivory Coast from 2002 to 2011. Thus, the study seeks to ascertain the effects of the armed conflict on education in Ivory Coast

#### Eligibility criteria for the presidency

The immediate cause of the Ivorian crisis is attributed to the disqualification of Mr Alassane Ouattara in the 2000 presidential race (Doudou, 2003). Although Ouattara was not the only potential candidate who was disqualified, he was certainly one of the most prominent politicians to be disenfranchised. Previously, Ouattara was the Prime Minister and leader of RDR, one of the four largest opposition political parties in the Ivory Coast (UNHCR, 2004). The disqualification of Ouattara and other opposition party candidates was in contravention of the 2000 Ivorian Peace Agreement which provided that the Ivorian constitution should be amended to resolve the problems of citizenship and suffrage. The opposition parties led by Ouattara and his supporters vehemently opposed the disqualification. The uncompromising attitude of the ruling party in the face of the mounting opposition culminated in the initial outbreak of the civil war, which raged on from 2002 onwards (UNHCR, 2004).

#### *Socio-political factors*

Ethnically, the northerners are disadvantaged in the Ivorian political systems. In 1994 the new Electoral Code restricted the right to vote and to presidential candidacy nominations to only Ivorian nationals with

completely Ivorian parents. This transformed the ethnic strife into a religious one (Sany, 2010).

Ethnic and religious disparities constituted important causes of the Ivorian conflict. Ostby (2004:85) avers that " ... in cosmopolitan communities such as the Ivory Coast, unequal access to power and resources, create grievances among the groups that feel disadvantaged." The French Colonial Administration favoured the southern region which is richly endowed with natural resources and for that reason infrastructural development was concentrated there. Besides, the majority of the country's civil servants and educated elite were from the south, while the northerners were recruited into military and police forces. Obviously, the northerners had a lot to grumble about in terms of economic and educational pride (Ostby, 2004).

The ethnic structure of the population is perceived as a major cause of the Ivorian conflict (Ostby, 2004). As many as 25% of Ivory Coast's 16 million people are either immigrant labourers or descendants of immigrant labourers from the neighbouring countries of Burkina Faso, Mali, Ghana, and Niger (Ostby, 2004). This portion of the population was excluded from political participation and their civil status as citizens was questioned. Furthermore, the 2000 Constitution restricted presidential candidates to those citizens who were born in Ivory Coast and from Ivorian parents.

Since Ouattara, the former prime minister under President Houphouet-Boigny, was accused of being a citizen of neighbouring Burkina Faso, he was declared ineligible to run for the presidency in Ivory Coast (Kirwin, 2006:49). In addition, the new law called into question non-Ivorian's rights and access to land. Before a law on rural land was passed in 1998, no legislation gave customary land transactions any form of legal weight and only transactions witnessed by a notary were recognised. The 1998 land law broke new ground by recognising customary rights on a transitional basis, before converting these into formal individual rights. It was particularly ambitious, considering that 98 per cent of rural land is subject to customary management, with only one to two per cent held under title deed in accordance with statutory law. Recognising the role that custom still plays in land transactions, the law

present transitional property rights based on customary rights and transfers, and translates these into title deeds in the case of citizens of Ivory Coast, or into long-term leases for non-Ivorians. Although the aim of the 1998 law is to reduce tensions over land ownership resulting from the uncertainty of customary transactions, the formalisation of customary rights in the context of displacement complicates land disputes and increases the risk of discord. Effectively, as well as recovering the land they left behind, returnees must also assert their existing customary rights and ensure formal legal recognition of these rights (Chauveau, 2006)

The dispossessed were mainly Muslims from the north. Since the bulk of Ouattara's supporters were northerners, the policy was perceived in some circles as a political strategy to disenfranchise the people from the north. This politicization of identity based primarily on ethnicity and religion became a divisive force that tore the social fabric of this once prosperous country apart (Kirwin, 2006: 50).

#### Reform of land tenure

Land in the Ivory Coast, like elsewhere in the developing world, is an important socio-economic resource. The major factors underlying most of the ethnic and political conflicts have been land ownership, land distribution, land redistribution and land exploitation. There are two main types of conflicts over lands that are common in the world. Even historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of society now prevailing in those societies, or part of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems." These are tensions between indigenous populations and settler groups and conflict between established local populations and immigrant labourers from the neighbouring countries (Reilly & Wainwright, 2005).

In the case of the Ivorian situation, the various ethnic groups of the local population competed with the immigrant labourers for land and landownership. The

rural land tenure system could not adequately resolve the issue because the Ivorian law of December 1998 denied foreigners access to land. The implication was that foreigners residing in the Ivory Coast could not transfer rural land to their descendants unless the descendants are Ivorians. The December 1998 law created conditions of uncertainty and hardship for a large number of "foreigners" who have settled in Ivory Coast for decades (UNHCR, 2004). This law still exists among the people of Ivory Coast because of land discrimination towards land ownership,

#### *Impact on education*

The pattern emerging from this area of research is that the destruction of infrastructure, the absence of teachers and reductions in schooling capacity during armed conflicts across the world seem to have affected secondary schooling disproportionately. Chen Loayza and Reynal-Querol (2008) assert that the average recovery rate for primary-school enrolment in the period between 1960 and 2003 was greater than that of secondary enrolment in post-conflict countries. According to Stewart et al. (2001), "primary school enrollment decreased in three out of eighteen countries in their sample of countries affected by civil wars". These effects recur also in micro-level research. Akresh and De Walque (2008) examined the impact of Rwanda's 1994 genocide on children's schooling. It was also found that "school age children exposed to the genocide experienced a drop in educational achievement of half a year of completed schooling, and are 15% less likely to complete third to fourth grade". The most likely mechanism linking the genocide to educational attainment is through lack of progression to higher secondary schooling grades. Swee (2009) provides evidence on the effects of the conflict in Bosnia (1992-1995) on schooling attainment of the cohorts who were in the process of completing their primary and secondary schooling during the conflict. Swee's findings show that "individual cohorts who are affected by the conflict are less likely to complete secondary schooling if they resided in municipalities which experienced higher levels of conflict intensity". Swee (2009) found "no apparent effects on primary schooling, which might indicate successful organisation of conflict schools at the

primary level". Swee (2009) states that youth working as soldiers may be a key factor to explain these effects. All these were experienced during the Ivorian conflict from 2002 to 2011.

Alderman, Hoddinott and Kinsey (2006), Bundervoet, Verwimp and Akresh (2009), Shemyakina (2007), indicate that micro level effects of armed conflict has shown negative impacts of civil wars on education, labour and health of individuals and households can be observed decades after the conflict in Ivory Coast. Justino (2009), state that while these effects may average out at the macroeconomic level; they may contribute to the emergence of poverty traps amongst specific population groups affected by armed conflict. Thus, this study looks at a region within the country to draw out differences from local to the national level that may be glossed over in a too-wide of view of the impacts of the conflict.

Children and women were the most harshly affected by the destruction of physical capital and the deterioration of economic conditions given the age-specific aspects of many human capital investments. The physical destruction of schools and hospitals affected the education of children. Teachers fled for fear of insecurity. Children's health was also negatively affected by the worsening armed conflict. There were problems such as widespread malnutrition and outbreak of infectious diseases and trauma. The destruction of human capital during childhood is a well-documented occurrence leading to poverty traps, given the severe long-term effects it can have on individual and household welfare via the future labour market outcomes and economic performance of affected children in Ivory Coast especially in the education sector.

Sany (2010) states that the armed conflict broke out in September 2002; the national army (FANCI) was joined by the Young Patriots, a youth militia that supported the then President Gbagbo. On the other side, the rebel groups, the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP), the Movement of the Ivory Coast, of the Great West (MPIGO), and supporters of Alassane Ouattara (the current President) joined forces under the banner of the Forces Nouvelles (FN) led by Guillaume Soro. The momentum of educational reform initiated in 2000 was soon lost in the outbreak

of armed conflict. Instead, education moved to the bottom of the national priority list (Sany 2010). UNICEF (2005) estimated that 700,000 children were out of school between 2002 and 2004. This number includes students from primary school to university level. In November 2004, riots against the French forces present in Abidjan destroyed infrastructure, including many school buildings (UNICEF, 2005). The Ministry of Education in Ivory Coast found that in 2004 more than 50 % of students in the north did not have access to school education. As argued by Sany (2010), education was used by both parties in the conflict as a war tactic. The organizational and institutional challenges in delivering the basic educational facilities in wartime were less pronounced in the government held south as compared to the rebel controlled north (Sany, 2010). The government side used this circumstance as a strategy to portray the inability of non-governmental forces to provide basic education and the necessary infrastructure. Perhaps it aimed to pave the way for the government to legitimize its position, but it also forced the non-governmental opposition to come up with an alternative strategy. There were from 2002 to 2004 more than 300,000 children in the north attending NGO run primary and secondary schools (UNOCHA, 2004). The success of the NGOs in delivering education in the north indicated that the disparity in the provision of educational facilities, had more to do with the agendas of the political parties in conflict than with a fear of violence and a lack of security (Sany, 2010).

Conflicts affect education in several ways. It destroys infrastructure, displaces people and, most unfortunately, results in the deaths of students and teachers (Abdi, 1998). There were difficulties in harmonizing school calendars across conflict affected regions (Buckland, 2005). UNICEF's 2005 report shows that, during the armed conflict, schools in Ivory Coast remained closed for an indefinite period of time which had a damaging and pernicious socio-psychological impact on students.

An analysis done across countries by Li and Thyne (2007) shows that countries experiencing armed conflict, such as Ivory Coast suffer decline in school enrolment by 1.6 to 3.2% points. An exposure to landmines in Cambodia resulted in an average loss of

4 years of education per student (Merrouche, 2006). In a similar study of the mid 1990s genocide in Rwanda, it was found that the average level of educational attainment was lowered by 5 years (Akresh and De Walque, 2008). From the perspective of gender, Shemyakina (2006) found that armed conflict made no significant impact on male education rates in Tajikistan. However, females were analysed to be pointed less likely to complete the mandatory secondary schooling compared to those who had completed their education before the war broke out.

A recent study that looked at twenty-five conflict affected countries using household survey data from between 2000 and 2008 found that conflict left a legacy of fewer average years of education, decreased literacy rates and a smaller share of the population with formal schooling (Andrew and Saumik, 2012; UNESCO 2010).

The IRIN news service makes very clear that the political crisis in the Ivory Coast had been profoundly harmful to an already broken education system, with gunfire disrupting classes, teachers staying at home for political reasons and families increasingly desperate about their children's schooling (IRIN, 2010). A teacher described his school in Abidjan, the commercial capital, as much better than other schools in the city. But even in this school there were around 63 students per teacher in what was considered a small class and a positive situation. In that same school there were no tables, no chairs, and sometimes there was no light. At times students took turns to come to the classroom and sit on the few available chairs (IRIN, 2010). Education for All Global Monitoring (2011) focuses on how the Ivorian experience demonstrates that perceived injustices linked to education always lead to violence. Education as an integral part of the politicization of identity led to the fragmentation of the country and tipped it into an armed conflict in 2002 between rebels in the north and the government in the south. Rebel groups in the north cited long standing disparities in schooling as evidence of discrimination by the state. The conflict has further widened the gap between education in the north and the south (Education for All Global Monitoring, 2011).

There is empirical evidence on the effects of armed conflict on the educational outcomes amongst civilian and combatant populations affected by armed conflict. The literature shows a clear negative legacy of armed conflict on the educational outcomes of individuals and households exposed to conflicts. The first is that even relatively minor shocks to a population's level of education can lead to significant and long-lasting detrimental effects on human capital formation. These effects persist well after the conflict has ended, with long-term intergenerational consequences in terms of school achievement, health outcomes and future earnings. Second, according to Swee (2009) and Shemyakina (2006), armed conflicts affect secondary schooling more critically than primary schooling. This might indicate successful organisation of conflict schools at the primary level, and an indication that families and organisations try to give their children the smallest amount of primary education even in circumstances of persistent violence. Third, educational effects of conflict are not gender neutral.

### **Methodology**

To make this study a success the researcher employed a qualitative approach. This approach enables the researcher to translate the information collected during the study into meaningful text and stories. According to Bashir, Afzal and Azeem, (2008: 38), the qualitative approach is a research approach that includes the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials such as personal experience, an introspective life story, an interview, and observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives.

### **Research Site**

The research was conducted in three sites across the Ivory Coast. These were chosen to give breadth to the study area and ensure accuracy. The country had been split during the conflict and the researcher needed to look at the different regions and these three sites give some insight into that split and the differences and similarities of their experiences. The sites used are Abidjan, Bouake and Odienne.

### ***Population***

In this study the targeted population was Ivorians in the Ivory Coast and political analysts at the Pretoria Institute for Security Studies.

### ***Sample***

The research population included people who experienced the political armed conflict and the educational effects it had on the country. The country can be categorized into Northern, Southern, Western, Eastern and Central. The sampling process was purposefully selected for the Northern, Southern and Central population because those were the most affected places during the armed conflicts between 2002 and 2011.

As in cases of purposive sampling, criteria for participants' inclusion in the study as purveyors of the desired information, were that they had to be representative of diverse groups as regards age, ethnicity, gender, professional background, geographical location and distribution (Punch, 2001:193). The researcher chose not to use random sampling as that lends itself better to a large statistical study using quantitative methods. Random sampling would require a far too large sample to be useful for a constructivist paradigm.

All the selected participants were highly trained, experienced, educated and recognized experts in their own fields. An expert is described as someone displaying specialised skills and knowledge, derived from training and experience (Shanteau and Stewart, 1992). Through purposive sampling, the researcher was able to focus on participants whose data information was illuminative, who constituted a critical mass and answered the semi-structured research questions and the questionnaires of the study (Patton, 2002:230).

The researcher decided to pick the areas that yielded the most useful data with greater promise for the development of knowledge and of framework construction for the study. It was the researcher's view that purposive sampling was the right approach for selecting the respondents capable of yielding the desired data.

A cross section of twenty-five Ivorians were interviewed, males and females, all of them of

African descent. The ages of the participants were 20 years and older. The different age groups selected were meant to reveal the perspectives of the various age groups in the situation under study. The majority of the participants were French-speaking and the remainder spoke English. The researcher established that all were potential victims of the conflict or had extensive knowledge about the conflict. The participants comprised academics, diplomats, politicians, civil servants, teachers, traders, researchers, University students and refugees (Babbie 2001:179-182). The choice of various participants' categories offered an opportunity to interact with different respondents.

### ***Instrumentation***

The instrument used in this study was interview schedule. The researcher used face-to-face semi-structured, individual interviews with the participants due to its flexibility. The semi-structured interviews generated a rich descriptive data that helped to bring understanding of participants' construction of knowledge about social reality such as the causes and the effects of armed conflict in Ivory Coast, 2002-2011.

### ***Data Collection***

The collection of the data was carried out in Ivory Coast, where the educational effect of armed conflict in Ivory Coast, 2002-2011 rate was presumed to be high. The instrument for the data collection was an interview schedule supported with a tape recorder and field notebook. The data was collected using the instrument described above and the data collection process is described below:

### ***Interviews***

Prior to the interviews, the researcher, called participants to confirm the date of the appointment of the interviews. He also introduced himself and explained to the participants their rights. Before the interviews could start, the researcher gave the participants informed-consent forms to sign. Three months were used to conduct the interviews and about 45-60 minutes were allotted to each participant in an interview. Face to face semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant for about 35-45 minutes. The interviews were recorded

with the permission or consent of the participants. The researcher used a translator during interviews and during transcription of the interviews in order to ensure accuracy and fidelity of responses.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data analysis procedure was as follows. The responses from the interviews were copied verbatim from the interview recordings. The researcher read through them thoroughly and highlighted common and related themes (Cohen and Manion 1994:293). Prominent themes were grouped for easier identification and interpretation (Hramiak 2005). The second stage involved the grouping of common themes and the identification of variations among the themes (Wiersma and Jurs 2005:217). Developing themes and storylines featuring the words and experiences of respondents themselves was an important result of qualitative data analysis. It leads to an interpretation that adds meaning and richness to the findings revealed by the collected data (Krauss 2005:766). Hence, the different themes developed were used to structure the presentation and discussion of the data adding to their significance.

### ***Ethical Consideration***

The ethical principles of a research process, as stipulated by Burgess (1989: 16), amongst others included confidentiality, anonymity, rights of access and respect of the respondents. These were adhered to, during and after the research. The research ethics were complied with through the following steps:

The researcher provided relevant information to the research respondents regarding what the research entailed and what was expected of them as respondents. They were also given the opportunity to decide whether to participate or not. Informed consent forms were given to the respondents to make

their decisions regarding whether or not they would take part.

The researcher first met with the respondents to inform them about the purpose of the research and the need for voluntary participation in order to ensure that respondents based their participation on a full understanding of the possible risks involved (Babbie, 2001: 468). Ultimately the interviews went well without anybody being at risk.

Furthermore, for the sake of the research respondents' right to anonymity, their identities were withheld during and after the research (Berg, 2004). Also, the researcher assured all respondents that the information would be treated with confidentiality. In effect, all elements that might indicate the subjects' identity, such as names, were not used in the research. In other words, all the information and responses that were shared during the course of the study and after were kept away from the general public. This was in line with Rose, Graham, Sue and Vikki's (2006:4) assertion that confidentiality of respondents can be ensured by maintaining confidentiality of data from identifiable respondents and storing the code linking the data to these respondents.

### ***Findings and discussion***

This study sought to understand the causes of the 2002-2011 Ivorian political armed conflict and its ramification on education. Qualitative data was obtained through two main sources, namely: face-to-face interviews and document analysis. Face to face interviews were conducted in the Ivory Coast during 2014. Both men and women were interviewed and participants came from a variety of professions such as UN experts. Arising from the interviews are series of themes about the causes of the armed conflict. The interview data are also coupled to a secondary data to further contextualise and understand responses. The following table highlights main causes and broader themes under which they fall.

**Table 1: Causes and ramifications for education of the armed conflicts in Ivory Coast from 2002 to 2011**

| Codes  | Categories   | Themes  |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Poor management of political power,<br/>                     Prevailing corruption in the Ivorian society,<br/>                     Discrimination, nepotism and tribalism, Conflict of interest manifested by political leaders<br/>                     Land claims in rural areas<br/>                     Poor management of political power, Prevailing corruption in the Ivorian society, the problem of land claims, illegal sale or seizure of land, acts of corruption in government institutions, young Ivorians were jobless<br/>                     We noticed the rising insecurity due to the proliferation of light weapons. This situation occasionally led to mugging, holdups and kidnappings<br/>                     Land tenure, identity and control over and access to natural resources<br/>                     Many teachers and students were displaced both internally and externally. Drop-out rate increase as a result of the conflict.</p> | <p>Land claim, maladministration, unemployment, discrimination,<br/>                     Some western interest<br/>                     Succession problem in terms of political transition<br/>                     Teachers flee and student becomes traumatised.<br/>                     Enrollment dropped and destructions of school infrastructure, closure of schools in the Northern Part of the country.</p> | <p>The social causes of the armed conflict,<br/>                     Cultural causes of the armed conflict,<br/>                     Political causes of the armed conflict and<br/>                     Economic causes of the armed conflict.<br/>                     Ramifications for education.</p> |

Source: Field Survey, 2014

The causes that emerge fit into four themes: The social causes of the armed conflict, Cultural causes of the armed conflict, political causes of the armed conflict and Economic causes of the armed conflict. These are said to be among the common causes that perpetuated the armed conflict in Ivory Coast. In the absence of political leadership that is able to appeal to a broader and more heterogeneous electorate, the divisions that caused the current crisis will remain in place. Among the causes is the political leadership vacuum left by Houphouët-Boigny's death in 1993, politicians increasingly looked to build support through ethnic groups? The study found leadership tension between political parties. Kabashiki (2014) thus emphasises a pressing need for practical leadership, whose goal will be in pursuit of broader moral principles in the public interest— at all levels of the society regardless of gender or age

Many politicians employed the rhetoric of “Ivoirite,” or “Ivorianness” an ultranationalist discourse focusing on Ivorian identity that marginalized immigrants and northern Ivorians, groups that tended to support then Prime Minister Ouattara.

*“With the problem of Ivorianity that started in the 1990s and which excluded President Ouattara from political power. This exclusion triggered the 1993 coup d’etat in which President Henri Konan Bedie was deposed. The problem of identity was not properly resolved when General Guei came to power. This situation was noticed when President Laurent Gbagbo took over office in 2002. In 2002, there was an attempted coup d’etat that divided the country into two. Added to this problem of identity are the problems of rural land claims and those of economic hardship that the nation experienced said a UN Expert in an interview in 2015”.*

While the discourse was predominantly about politics and nationality, it was also used to bar Ouattara from contesting elections. There were other related issues such as the challenges of non-Ivorians' ability to have significant property rights. In 2002, the witness saw there was an attempted coup d'état that divided the country into two. Added to that they experienced and still experience some economic hardship [UN Expert in an interview in 2015].

Causes of the armed conflicts in Ivory Coast from 2002 to 2011

From the research findings, the notable causes of the armed conflict in Ivory Coast were noted to be the struggle for power, land claim, corruption, identity, electoral processes, unemployment, discrimination, the interest of some western countries, notably France (former Colonial power), and succession problem in terms of political transition.

### ***Socio- economic causes of the armed conflict in Ivory Coast***

Among the major causes of the armed conflict are unemployment and contested land claims. These can best be described as socioeconomic issues. This confirms Collier (1998:73) who contends that economic disparities appear to be the central reason why armed conflicts break out in countries, especially where regional imbalances in terms of the levels of development and resource distribution exist. Other researchers contend that both the economic boom that postcolonial Ivory Coast enjoyed during the 1960s and early 1970s and the steep decline that followed the 1980s helped to nurture the seeds of division between the north and the south (Collette, 2006).

Most of the respondents stated that:

*“Unemployment which falls under the economic domain led to the conflict. Rising unemployment made it impossible for the youth to fend for themselves and for this reason they followed any person who could offer them something. Also the poverty in the regions (northern) due to*

*poor and underdeveloped economic infrastructure” (Interview with Land law consultant, 2014)*

The northern region supplied the southern region with migrant labourers who worked in the cocoa and coffee industries. Ivory Coast has depended on cocoa and coffee exports for its economic growth, prosperity, and stability during the 1960s. However, the immigrant labourers were never given ownership of land that they had occupied after working on it for generations (Balint-Kurt 2005, Kirwin 2006:48). These are some of the causes that triggered the conflict. Some of the respondents said that:

*Land claims in rural areas are one of the causes of armed conflict in Ivory Coast. In the North and the west of Ivory Coast the Burkinabes settlers and the indigenes (Gueres and Krous) are often conflicting with each other when it comes to land ownership (Interview with Land law consultant (specialist), 2014)*

Land claims became a bone of contention in Ivory Coast and consequently one of the causes of the Ivorian arm conflict. This tension was between the various political leaders. Land rights, in particular, were a huge point of contestation between ethnic groups in the rural areas. Clashes between ethnic groups began happening in the rural areas, causing many to pit locals against foreigners. Just as anywhere in the world, land claims are a major cause of conflict between established local populations and immigrant labourers from the neighbouring countries (Reilly and Wainwright, 2005). With access to land becoming one of the most stable sources of food and income during the Ivorian economic downturn, the struggle for ownership became more violent than ever. The main issue was that foreigners residing in the Ivory Coast could not transfer rural land to their descendants unless the descendants are Ivoirians. From the findings, part of the cause of the problem

was also the December 1998 law that created conditions of uncertainty and hardship for a large number of “foreigners” who have settled in the Ivory Coast for decades (UNHCR, 2004). This led to the National Assembly implementing a law in 1998 that restricted property ownership to only Ivorian citizens (Bingley, 2010).

The implications of all of these were that poverty had gone up from 10 % in 1985 to over 32 % in 1993, leaving the World Bank to label the nation as one of the seventeen poorest countries in the world (Pingali, Alinovi and Sutton, 2005). People were unemployed, restless, and ready to fight for change. A respondent said:

*So young people were kind of frustrated and they want to be economically independent and fighting was the only way (Interview with Lecturer ), 2015).*

#### *Socio-political causes of the armed conflict in Ivory Coast:*

The majority of the respondents attributed the causes of the armed conflict to socio-political reasons. They argue, among other things, that: poor management of political power, the prevailing lawlessness in the Ivorian society, discrimination, nepotism and tribalism, conflict of interest manifested by political leaders were the main causes of the conflict and this is in line with the theory of Kaldor, which states that the armed conflict in Bosnia and in Ivory Coast, involve state powers as well as various personal forces as clear demonstrations of ‘identity politics’ (Kaldor 2000). One of the respondents stated that:

*We also have causes such as: Poor management of political power, prevailing corruption in the Ivorian society, discrimination, nepotism and tribalism, Conflict of interest manifested by political leaders (interview with a Trader, 2015).*

This statement corroborates Doudou (2003) that the immediate cause of the Ivorian crisis was attributed to the disqualification of Mr Alassane Ouattara in the 2000 presidential race. Although Ouattara was not the only potential candidate who was disqualified, he was certainly the most prominent politician to be disenfranchised. Previously Ouattara was the Prime Minister and leader of RDR, one of the four largest opposition political parties in the Ivory Coast (UNHCR, 2004). The disqualification of Ouattara and other opposition party candidates was in contravention of the 2000 Ivorian Peace Agreement which provided that the Ivorian constitution should be amended to resolve it, a respondent state that:

*The cause of the armed conflict can also be linked to the question of citizenship, citizenship becomes the factor of the conflict not only because it serves the national purpose but it helps in the power game that is being played among the protagonists in the country. The issue of “Ivoiriteness” which means citizens from the Ivory Coast (Nationalistic vision).The article 35 of the constitution of Ivory Coast institutionalised or legalised what will become the main factor in the downfall of Ivory Coast which is the debate around citizenship that opposed various ethnic groups in the Ivory Coast (Interview with Business law student (masters), 2014)*

The United Nation Security Council 2013 Special reports on the United Nations Operation in Ivory Coast were more on natural resources. The report states that:

*The underlying or root causes of the conflict included issues such as land tenure, identity and control over and access to natural resources, remain unresolved,*

*and are particularly acute in the west (Document analysis, 2014).*

### **Ramifications on Education**

Ramifications on education were great as many teachers and their students had to flee the country due to the conflict. Most school infrastructure was destroyed and universities in the country had to close down during the conflict. According to Justino (2009), the physical destruction of schools and hospitals affected the education of children. Teachers fled for fear of insecurity. There were problems such as widespread malnutrition and outbreaks of infectious diseases and trauma. The destruction of human capital during childhood is a well-documented mechanism leading to poverty traps, given the severe long-term effects it can have on individual and household welfare via the future labour market outcomes and economic performance of affected children in Ivory Coast especially in the education sector.

*‘Infrastructure such as hospitals, roads and schools were destroyed. Children did not have the opportunity to go to school. People died because of lack of health care. Also, the human spirit dropped in the Ivorian people and the armed conflicts impacted negatively on the quality of training and services in public establishments’.*

The conflict affected education in several ways. It destroyed infrastructure, displaced people and resulted in the deaths of students and teachers (Abdi, 1998). There were difficulties in harmonizing school calendars across conflict affected regions (Buckland, 2005). UNICEF’s 2005 report shows that, during the armed conflict, schools in Ivory Coast remained closed for an indefinite period of time which had a damaging and pernicious socio-psychological impact on students.

There is empirical evidence on the effects of armed conflict on the educational outcomes amongst the civilian and the combatant populations affected by the armed conflict. The literature shows a clear

negative legacy of armed conflict on the educational outcomes of individuals and households exposed to conflicts. The first is that even relatively minor shocks to a population’s level of education can lead to significant and long-lasting detrimental effects on human capital formation. These effects persist well after the conflict has ended, with long-term intergenerational consequences in terms of school achievement, health outcomes and future earnings.

*‘Again, we could talk about the absence of schooling which has rendered more people uneducated’*      *‘Many infrastructural structures were destroyed. We do have hospitals, schools, roads and even universities such as that of Bouake which were brought to ruin’.*

### **Conclusion**

The discussion was centered on the causes of the 2002-2011 Ivorian political armed conflict and its ramification on education. To understand in detail the causes of the 2002-2011 Ivorian political armed conflict and its ramification on education, the armed conflict in Ivory Coast was reviewed and it emerged that the causes of the armed conflicts among other things led to the breakdown of law, security and community structures, with gross human rights violations perpetrated against civilian populations. The ramifications for education of the armed conflict in Ivory Coast emanated from all manner of people from all spheres of life. The most affected were women and children. The finding as revealed through the discussions suggested that the armed conflict induced educational losses, displacement amongst others.

The causes of the armed conflict in Ivory Coast, according to the respondents include: struggle for power, natural resources, land claim, corruption, identity, electoral processes, unemployment, discrimination among the ethnic groups, interest of some western countries, notably France, and succession problem (political transitional). The respondents’ responses concerning the ramifications include: loss of life of both students and staff,

traumatisation leading to low academic performance, destruction of schools' infrastructure, teachers vacating their post due to the conflict and disruption of the school calendar due to re-occurrence of the conflict. The findings really show that the conflict had serious repercussions on education.

### Recommendations

Some suggested recommendations to aid in the peace process and economic recovery of the country are as follows:

- Traumatized staff and students should be provided with counselling and the school calendar should be kept in order to assist the students catch up with their lost time.
- There should be a strengthening of ethnic relationships between differing groups.
- There should be youth development and skill related programs to empower the unemployed.
- Promote pro-democratic practices and beliefs in schools and this should also be included in their syllabus in schools.

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