Abstract: “Promoting Integrity through Constructive Engagement in the Ivory Coast” profiles the work of Integrity Action partner Initiative pour la Justice Sociale, la Bonne Gouvernance, et la transparence en Côte d’Ivoire (Social Justice.)

In his efforts to shed light on a potential conflict of interest and to resolve community disputes in Ivory Coast, Social Justice’s Coordinator draws on the Community Integrity Building approach to highlight the importance of disclosure, the need to educate the various actors, the role of the media, and the necessity of dialogue among stakeholders.
Background: The Country Context

In a small seaside village in the commune of Jacqueville, not far from the economic capital of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, the director of a local school finds himself at the centre of a battle. He is a modern-day David facing off against the Goliath of the largest natural gas production company in the country. Recognising the challenges associated with the education system, and the specific difficulty of recruiting teachers to the rural community of Jacqueville, the company in our story set aside over $50,000 in mid-2011 to rehabilitate six teachers’ quarters – increased from an original amount of $25,000 to construct one additional building. Even though these quarters had been built some years prior, with other sources of funding, they were dilapidated and barely habitable. The poor conditions of these residences tended to contribute towards the premature departure of teachers. It was thus expected that, with the renovation of these quarters, teachers would have additional incentives to stay.

The school principal has observed that the conditions of the teachers’ housing, in particular the teachers’ quarters, had been a particular focus in the post-crisis years. In this country, primary school enrolment is below the Sub-Saharan African average and spending on education is less than 5% of GDP. Attracting and retaining teachers is a major concern. Improving the education system in Ivory Coast has become a particular focus in the post-crisis years. In this country, primary school enrolment is below the Sub-Saharan African average and spending on education is less than 5% of GDP. Attracting and retaining teachers is a major concern.

The village population—represented by the school’s principal—has experienced the increasing significance of extractive industries in recent decades. In a small seaside village in the commune of Jacqueville, the company in our story set aside over $50,000 in mid-2011 to rehabilitate six teachers’ quarters – increased from an original amount of $25,000 to construct one additional building. Even though these quarters had been built some years prior, with other sources of funding, they were dilapidated and barely habitable. The poor conditions of these residences tended to contribute towards the premature departure of teachers. It was thus expected that, with the renovation of these quarters, teachers would have additional incentives to stay.

The rehabilitation project was initiated in June 2011, and allegedly completed about one year later. However, in April of 2013, families described a far more serious state of disrepair than can be explained by normal wear and tear over the two years since rehabilitation began. As the photo above shows, families live in these houses underneath visibly collapsing ceilings, while bricks and pieces of concrete keep the shingles from blowing off the roof. Moreover, the other three buildings, which were repaired, still lack critical amenities such as toilets. Despite this state of affairs, the company has on file photos that show all six buildings as rehabilitated, as well as the signature of the village chief that declares the satisfaction of the community. As far as the company is concerned, therefore, all six buildings have been renovated as agreed.

1. The link to the World Factbook page on Cote d’Ivoire. 2. The link to the Country Profile page on Cote d’Ivoire. 3. The link to the Controversy Surrounds the Rehabilitation of Teachers’ Quarters in Jacqueville article on Integrity Action’s website. 4. The link to the Cases in Integrity Series page. 5. The link to the Fragile States Index page.
Several layers of complexity further confound the situation surrounding the Jacqueville school rehabilitation project. In particular, funds for this specific project were assigned by the Comité Pétrole Gaz, a committee established to oversee the funds allocated to local populations. The company and the state see this Comité, originally established by the community, as the sole interlocutor representing the villagers. The current president of the Comité was elected by local leaders to play this role, and representatives of both the company and the government thus refuse to interact directly with the population.

In addition, this Comité Pétrole Gaz is responsible for choosing the contractors and suppliers who will carry out the work. These contractors must present a signed testimony of satisfaction from the population in order to be awarded the work. These contractors must present a signed testimony of satisfaction from the population in order to receive their payment. Interestingly, the rehabilitation in this specific case was undertaken by the very president of the Comité, who not only was the contractor chosen for this project but also continues to enjoy the full support of the local leaders who not only were the contractors chosen for this project but also have strong personal ties to the president. The populations affected by conflict and resource extraction, such as the case of Kouadio Julien Tingan, Coordinator of Initiative pour la Justice Sociale, la Bonne Gouvernance, et la Transparence en Côte d’Ivoire (Social Justice), a civil society organisation which works to improve transparency and accountability in public funds and natural resource governance, Social Justice is a key member of the national committee of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which promotes good governance in the sector to benefit the population. The EITI relies on multi-stakeholder dialogue among government, civil society, and private sector representatives. An important consideration of the EITI is the transparency of revenues related to extraction and especially the question of companies’ social responsibility and the consequence on local populations in the affected areas.

Julien and his colleagues are currently working directly with the populations affected by conflict and resource extraction, including in Jacqueville, on the monitoring of projects and budgets, as part of the Integrity Action-supported Community Integrity Building (CIB) programme. They support communities’ constructive engagement with local authorities to bring about improvements in citizens’ lives. This approach focuses on understanding the context and different actors involved, supporting them to learn together and to collaborate across stakeholder groups.

An important piece of the approach is building the evidence base through community monitoring and tracking findings on the transparency, engagement and effectiveness of development projects through DevelopmentCheck, an online platform and mobile application for development. Julien and his colleagues use this evidence to engage key actors and to “close the loop” – communicate results and work together to find solutions to integrity problems. Under the auspices of this programme Social Justice has recruited and trained 14 local monitors from resource-rich communities, helping them to monitor over two dozen development projects in seven of the 31 official regions of Côte d’Ivoire. These projects were chosen based on monetary value and impact on the local population.

In Jacqueville, Social Justice has engaged with local stakeholders, a process that has been ongoing since 2010, and since 2013 the NGO has been working directly with local leaders to support a monitoring committee composed of representatives of local government as well as other opinion leaders. In collaboration with these actors, Julien organised a training workshop for the community and local leaders to introduce them to budgets and monitoring projects, as well as the concepts of integrity, including transparency and accountability.

The two monitors and the committee they lead work directly with both the population and with Social Justice. Their role is to monitor the activities financed through the Comité Pétrole Gaz. Thus the monitors interact with this Comité in requesting project documents, budgets, and contracts. One of the monitors, in fact, originally served on the Comité, resigning in protest of the President, refusing to provide the necessary evidence to support a monitoring committee composed of representatives from government, companies, and civil society. For more information on DevelopmentCheck, please see http://www.developmentcheck.org/
Negotiating a Solution

Thanks to his participation on the national EITI multi-stakeholder group, Julien was able to arrange a personal meeting with the Director General (DG) of the company in March 2014. A first meeting found the DG convinced that the buildings had already been sufficiently rehabilitated, based on the completed payment, the filed photos of the completed works, and the signed statement of satisfaction. Julien presented the DG with recent photos taken by Social Justice, showing that the buildings were in a far worse state than could be explained by regular wear and tear.

Justice, showing that the buildings were in a far worse state than could be explained by regular wear and tear. As well as other information necessary for the monitoring. In exchange, he requested copies of the monitoring report as well as the photos that Social Justice had taken.

At Julien’s urging, the frustrated villagers decided to organise another community meeting in April 2014 and to meet with representatives of the company in order to discuss their dissatisfaction with the rehabilitation project. They threatened, however, that if the company refused to meet them, they would organise a protest. This was communicated back to the DG and, the DG, for instance, insisted that the company was not responsible for projects that are paid for but unused by the community. He continued that the population must use the accountability structures in place – that is, the Comité Pétrole-Gaz – as the interlocutor despite the impasse between its president and the community.

Julien again explained the importance of the disclosure of documents related to the project in question. This was necessary to dispel the rumours of complicity between the company and the previous president of the Comité. Such disclosure would help to discourage corruption as well as promote accountability, competence, and ethical responsibility that are important aspects of the community integrity building process. Providing these documents would also allow the monitors to identify the outstanding issues to be addressed.

For the evidence on the transparency, community engagement and effectiveness of this project, please see DevelopmentCheck at http://www.developmentcheck.org/project-view/366.

Julien counselled the DG, who was unsure who to believe or what to do, to work with the monitoring committee on the project. Referring to the photos of the insufficiently rehabilitated structures, as well as the NGO’s positive relationships with the community members, Julien explained to the DG that collaborating with Social Justice would lead to better oversight and results of the projects financed by the company. Though unable to provide additional support, the DG initially agreed to supply the project planning and technical documents as well as other information necessary for the monitoring. In exchange, he requested copies of the monitoring report as well as the photos that Social Justice had taken.

The meeting with the DG also afforded Julien an opportunity to provide greater clarity on the role of civil society organisations, particularly with respect to promoting transparency and accountability in the sector. His explanation of Social Justice’s role in the EITI process, in particular, helped convince the DG of the value of information sharing, as an integral part of ensuring that resource revenues can be better tracked and that stakeholders can hold service providers accountable for the delivery of services. By the end of the second meeting, the DG recommitted to working with Julien and Social Justice, and pledged to supply the documents related to upcoming social projects as well.

Importantly, access to the relevant project documents would also set a precendence of transparency and accountability, ultimately helping to ensure that the company’s social projects have the intended impact on the population, and the resources do not go to waste. It would also help to strengthen relations with the local community, necessary to maintain the social license to operate.

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Julien also continued to advise the DG to engage with the population itself in order to reach a fix, in this case meaning “the resolution of a problem to the satisfaction of the main stakeholders by using transparency, accountability, integrity…” Community monitoring is a key piece of the overall CIB approach developed by Integrity Action and country partners, as is constructive engagement; the ultimate goal of Social Justice’s work is to enable the communities themselves to identify their concerns and needs, monitor projects that matter to them, and develop their own solutions.
Moving Ahead

This clearly is not the end of the story. Already the population has become more aware of and engaged in the project, thanks in large part to the work of Julien and his colleagues. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit. The trainings organised by Social Justice have served to sensitise the community on their rights and the need for them to monitor as well as be involved in the projects that are intended for their benefit.

Representatives of both the company and the state are also beginning to understand how citizen engagement can lead to better outcomes in benefit sharing initiatives, including natural resource concessions, as well as in community development. Empowered communities that are able to monitor projects and services, as well as hold providers accountable, are better able to track the use of revenue thereby optimising scarce resources and minimising waste. While both the company and state continue to be wary of the capacity of the population to understand and appropriately act on technical information related to the project, with Social Justice’s interventions, these actors are also beginning to understand the benefits of the collaborative engagement that is a cornerstone of the CIB approach – and the importance of the trust that is built through the process.

Indeed, a small victory was won for this approach in September 2014, as the objectionable President of the Comité PétroleGaz, yielding at last to the dissatisfaction of the community, finally stepped down. This paves the way for the election of a new President who Julien hopes will better serve the needs of the community he represents in his negotiations with the company.

Julien and his colleagues thus continue to play an important role in strengthening this engagement by all parties, and in promoting a collaborative approach over violence as the means to the most lasting solution. At his urging, the community has reached out again to schedule a meeting with the company, as well as with the new President of the Comité Pétrole Gaz, whom they hope will find a solution to the unfinished work. Depending on the responses to these invitations, Social Justice stands ready to help with the next steps.

Importantly, media contacts in their network of journalists are aware of the situation, and interested in intervening; at Julien’s request they are standing by in hopes of finding a solution to the problem among the relevant actors, without causing unnecessary commotion. They do, though, offer a potential additional means of pressure if necessary.

This approach – a focus on collaboration and problem solving over hostility – is applicable to any number of situations, and is particularly relevant in post-conflict or fragile settings where tensions may run higher and actors may be more inclined to violence. Especially in the high-value extractives sector, the need to engage the various actors involved in development projects, including the intended beneficiaries, is increasingly recognised.

One must hope that through constructive engagement, a focus on integrity, and the continued support of Julien and his colleagues, our little David – the director of the local school where the teachers’ quarters await satisfactory rehabilitation – will find a constructive way to engage his colossal Goliath amid a situation rife with potential conflicts of interest and misunderstandings. This will help in finding an acceptable solution for all involved, and establishing a positive relationship and precedent for future encounters.
Lessons Learnt

The experience in Jacqueville has revealed the following early lessons:

- Engagement of the media can be a useful tool to shed light on a difficult situation and to communicate results to the wider community. This can also be a means of applying strategic pressure to actors as needed; however in this sense caution should be exercised.
- Dialogue among stakeholders is a crucial piece of the CIB process and is a necessity for a sustainable solution. Choosing advocacy over more violent means of engagement, and promoting discussion and collaborative problem-solving among all actors involved, will not only support understanding and future partnerships, but in a fragile or post-conflict setting, it will contribute to improved development outcomes.

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Links & Relevant Resources
www.socialjustice-ci.net/
www.integrityaction.org/partner/cote-divoire-social-justice
www.developmentcheck.org/cote-divoire
www.goxi.org
www.worldbank.org

Dialogue among stakeholders is a crucial piece of the CIB process.
The “Cases in Integrity” Series is an initiative of Integrity Action (www.integrityaction.org/) and the Governance of Extractive Industries Program at the World Bank Group.

The series aims to distill and document practitioner experiences in monitoring extractive industry operations as well as the use of extractive industry revenues at the community level. With an initial emphasis on fragile and conflict-affected states, the case studies are intended to share emerging knowledge on approaches that have worked in using Integrity Action’s Community Integrity Building approach to empower communities and to promote transparency, accountability and inclusion in extractive industries decision-making, investment, and operations.

The series features stories from five countries – the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone and South Sudan.