

# Employment Problems and Policies in the Ivory Coast

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WITH 4½ MILLION INHABITANTS and an area of some 125,000 square miles, more or less equally divided between bush and forest, the Ivory Coast is one of the medium-sized newer African States. Still essentially an agricultural country, beset with problems of modernisation and equipment but maintaining privileged economic relations with the ex-metropolitan country, it is subject to the same constraints and imperatives as most other former colonial territories. In fact, the Ivory Coast was even less well off than they were in certain respects upon the granting of independence. School attendance levels had remained very low, with the result that "leadership material" was in even shorter supply than in certain neighbouring countries. After eleven years of independence, however, the Ivory Coast appears as something of a miracle. Its gross domestic product has been growing at a steady 8 per cent per annum, an up-to-date infrastructure has been created, the proportion of children going to school has doubled <sup>2</sup>, local industry is steadily developing, while agricultural output has increased not only in volume but also in variety.

As far as employment is concerned, the Ivory Coast started from a relatively advantageous position. Whereas independence found other African countries suffering from acute unemployment, the Ivory Coast was providing jobs not only for its own nationals but also for steadily increasing numbers of immigrants (especially from Upper Volta). In 1961 the Abidjan Employment Service recorded a greater number of job vacancies than of applications.<sup>3</sup> Younger workers, whether literate or

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<sup>2</sup> Some 60 per cent of all children, as against 30 per cent prior to independence, now go to school. Since the proportion of girls is lower, it is probable that about 75 per cent of all boys now attend school.

<sup>3</sup> *Statistiques de l'Office de la main-d'œuvre de Côte d'Ivoire* (Abidjan, 1961).

not, experienced no great difficulty in finding the sort of jobs they were looking for.

It was in 1965, or thereabouts, that the problem of unemployment began to make itself felt, especially in Abidjan. Although the economy was booming, the situation gradually deteriorated until at the end of 1969 the Government decided to see just how bad it was by taking a census of the unemployed. In the towns (that is to say, in Abidjan and in towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants), some 44,000 people were found to be unemployed. This figure may well have been an underestimate; today it is probable that at least 50,000 people are out of work.

This is a strange situation—the unemployed are multiplying fast at the same time as the economy continues to flourish. I intend first to analyse the nature and causes of this seeming paradox, and consider how the position is likely to evolve in the medium term. In the second part of the article, I shall describe the policies adopted by the Government with a view to stemming and if possible reducing unemployment.

### **Present employment problems**

Between 1950 and 1960 the only problem was the shortage of available manpower, especially in agriculture producing for export. Accordingly, an attempt was made to recruit extra labour, especially in Upper Volta.<sup>1</sup> We shall shortly see that this problem still subsists. First, however, it is necessary to investigate the position in the towns.

### **Employment in the towns**

In or around 1960 there were some 105,000 urban wage earners (including civil servants and public employees) and an insignificant number of unemployed.<sup>2</sup> Ten years later it was estimated that there were 225,000 urban wage earners for between 45,000 and 50,000 unemployed. Thus unemployment took a hold, and got worse, at a time when urban employment was increasing by an average of 8 per cent per year. The unemployment rate works out at roughly 12 per cent of the 430,000 urban inhabitants of working age.

This figure is alarming enough, but for young job-seekers the position is in fact even worse. The census showed that no more than 10,000 out of the total 50,000 unemployed were former wage earners. All the others

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Raymond Desclers: *Le problème de la main-d'œuvre en Côte-d'Ivoire* (Abidjan, 1956).

<sup>2</sup> *Statistiques de l'Office de la main-d'œuvre de Côte-d'Ivoire* (Abidjan, 1960). The 20,000 or so persons employed by the State have been added to the 83,000 wage earners employed by private enterprise and semi-public concerns. The ILO *Year book of labour statistics* gives the number of unemployed at this time as only a few hundred, while estimating that there were nearly 12,000 unemployed in neighbouring Ghana.

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TABLE I. DISTRIBUTION OF WAGE EARNERS IN THE  
MODERN SECTOR BY NATIONAL ORIGIN, 1968  
(%)

Sector	Ivory Coast nationals	Other Africans	Non-Africans
<b>Private</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>46.2</b>	<b>6.3</b>
Primary	19.2	78.5	2.3
Secondary	51.6	43.3	5.1
Tertiary	56.3	34.2	9.5
<b>Public</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>7.3</b>

Source: Ministère du Plan de Côte-d'Ivoire, Direction des études de développement: *Deuxième esquisse du Plan quinquennal de développement 1971-1975*, p. 329.

were young people looking for their first job. It may well be, therefore, that as many as 25 per cent, or even more, of the entire labour force between the ages of 15 and 29 are without work.<sup>1</sup> Hence unemployment is not something which affects all age groups to the same degree. It is obvious that we have here a state of affairs in which unemployment is produced not by the laying-off of redundant workers but by saturation of the employment market, with the result that newcomers have very little chance of finding work.

Up to now two things have prevented matters from becoming really critical. Solidarity amongst members of the same family is very powerful, and hospitality is often extended for lengthy periods to quite distant relatives.<sup>2</sup> This makes it possible for a young person to stay for several years in town waiting for a suitable job to turn up, with the result that amongst young people up to the age of 20 or even more the consequences of unemployment are not so serious as they might otherwise be.

Moreover, an economy of the traditional kind still exists and absorbs a good deal of labour; this it can do because productivity is so low. Hence if a man cannot find wage-earning employment in the modern sector, he can often fall back on some activity of this kind; it will not be well paid, but it will at least keep body and soul together.

There is one other feature of the employment picture which deserves mention, namely the impressively high proportion of the wage-earning labour force constituted by Africans from outside the Ivory Coast, despite the steady increase in unemployment (see table I).

<sup>1</sup> There are about 220,000 young men in this age group, of whom 50,000 are still at school or college (Ministère du Plan: *Côte-d'Ivoire 1965: Emploi* (Abidjan, 1968), p. 167).

<sup>2</sup> In Abidjan alone there were, in 1965 or thereabouts, some 15,000 young people aged over 20 who were supported in this way.

TABLE II. DISTRIBUTION OF WAGE EARNERS IN THE PRIVATE AND SEMI-PUBLIC MODERN SECTOR BY SKILLS AND NATIONAL ORIGIN, 1965 (%)

Skill level	Ivory Coast nationals	Other Africans	Europeans
All levels	47	46	7
Managerial staff	12	3	85
Senior staff and technicians	17	2	81
Foremen	29	13	58
Senior white-collar employees	55	16	29
Junior white-collar employees	70	27	3
Skilled manual workers	72	26	2
Semi-skilled workers	69	30	1
Labourers	35	65	0

Source: *Côte-d'Ivoire 1965: Emploi*, op. cit., p. 89.

Here, then, is a country in which more than half the wage earners in the modern private sector are foreigners. Table II, giving a breakdown by skills and national origin, is even more instructive.<sup>1</sup>

Ivory Coast nationals are to be found in considerable numbers in the intermediate grades, as well as in administrative posts (in both the private and the public sectors).<sup>2</sup> But in 1965, at any rate, more than 80 per cent of managers and senior staff were Europeans. Such nationals of the Ivory Coast as there were at this level tended to have jobs involving administrative rather than technical responsibilities.

At the other end of the scale more recent figures are to hand.<sup>3</sup> Whereas in 1961 Ivory Coast nationals formed 41 per cent of ordinary labourers, by 1968 this figure had shrunk to 31 per cent; their numbers had declined in absolute terms too. So at a time when the clouds of unemployment were gathering and the number of labourers had increased by 30 per cent, nationals of the Ivory Coast were abandoning to foreigners some of the jobs they had held shortly after independence.

Thus we have the curious state of affairs today that, in the towns alone, 50,000 people are out of work in an employment market providing jobs for at least 70,000 foreigners.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See also table A in the Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> See *Côte-d'Ivoire 1965: Emploi*, op. cit., pp. 104 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Ministère du Plan: *Éléments pour une politique de l'emploi en Côte-d'Ivoire* (Abidjan and Paris, SETEF, 1971), pp. 4 and 5.

<sup>4</sup> Probably an underestimate. The estimate for 1966 (*Côte-d'Ivoire 1965: Emploi*, op. cit., p. 88) was that there were 63,000 foreign wage earners, including Europeans.

## **The reasons**

All this obviously requires some explanation. How is it that an economic boom can go hand in hand with worsening unemployment, and how is it that, despite unemployment, so many foreigners have jobs?

The first of these anomalies can be explained by the heavy migration of men and women (mostly young) from the countryside to the towns.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon is not of course by any means confined to the Ivory Coast—it occurs in every country where industrialisation is taking place—but it has, undoubtedly, led to considerable urban unemployment. One puzzling feature about the situation in the Ivory Coast is that the drift to the towns appears to be unimpeded by a serious shortage of rural manpower, at least in the forest areas. Another strange thing is that the drift from the richer forest areas is just as marked as that from the poorer bush districts. There is no malnutrition in the villages, and in the forest areas a peasant farmer enjoys a standard of living at least as high as, and sometimes higher than, that of a town labourer, and a man can always be sure of finding work. All this notwithstanding, young people are leaving the countryside in huge numbers.

Information on the extent to which these movements vary with school attendance and educational levels can be found elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> But this does not really explain anything. The real question is why better education should systematically lead young people to abandon the countryside. The basic reason is that these youngsters are desperately keen to get on in the world, and are convinced that this is only possible in the towns. Of course, even the most innocent do not really imagine that they have only to go to Abidjan to find their dream-job dropping into their lap; all, however, believe that the only way to succeed is to "escape" from their native village. For such youngsters, rural society is the epitome of the archaic and the antithesis of progress. To remain within it is equivalent to turning one's back on the new world, in which everything is possible (though perhaps not easy). Equipped with their rudimentary primary school education, these young people can conceive of their future only in terms of city life.

This in itself, however, does not satisfy them. They see no attraction in certain kinds of job. What future is there for a common labourer? Does not acceptance of such work mean that a man renounces the promised land once and for all, and puts behind him those dreams which induced him to quit his native village? What is the point of fleeing

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<sup>1</sup> In *Côte-d'Ivoire 1965: Population*, it was estimated that between 1965 and 1969 some 160,000 persons left the countryside. Roughly half of these were women (p. 175).

<sup>2</sup> *Côte-d'Ivoire 1965: Emploi*, op. cit., p. 151. See, too, the report by an ILO-UNICEF mission which visited the Ivory Coast in 1968, and Louis Roussel: "Measuring rural-urban drift in developing countries: a suggested method", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 101, No. 3, Mar. 1970, pp. 229-246.

village constraints, if the end is just another dead-end job in different surroundings? Hence these youngsters settle down to live with a relative or friend and wait for their lucky number to come up in the form of skilled employment or an administrative job.

Here lies the explanation of the second anomaly pointed out above, i.e. the presence of so many Africans from other countries in low-level jobs despite considerable unemployment. These people have poured in to do the kind of work which nationals of the Ivory Coast are more and more reluctant to undertake—a phenomenon which can be observed in industrialised countries as well.

At the top of the scale, among managers and senior staff, Ivory Coast nationals are also poorly represented. This is partly a legacy from colonial times and partly a result of economic growth having outstripped training capacity. During economic take-off, a phase of this kind is nothing out of the ordinary. The progressive elimination of the phenomenon is nevertheless a matter to which the Government is giving high priority, and I shall have more to say about this later.

In brief, then, the existing disequilibrium of the employment market is due not so much to there being an over-all shortage of jobs available compared with the number of job applicants as to the temporary inadequacy of training facilities for nationals, and to the latter's reluctance to accept unskilled jobs, especially in agriculture. The result is that foreigners take the jobs which Ivory Coast nationals are not yet qualified to accept, or refuse to consider.

This is the position today. Hitherto, thanks to the boom, unemployment has remained of tolerable proportions. But the balance is precarious; can it last?

### **Prospects for the future**

In considering probable future trends in supply and demand on the employment market, we shall not go beyond the year 1980.

The demand for urban jobs will vary with the number of townsmen of working age. To begin with, bearing in mind the position as it is at present, we shall assume that all candidates for urban jobs will be males. We shall also assume, as a further working hypothesis, that working age extends from the age of 15 to 60.

Even if we limit ourselves to the next ten years, our estimates of population, and especially of the economically active population, become uncertain as soon as we abandon the hypothesis of a closed population (unaffected by external migrations) and try to carry out a rural-urban breakdown. But since it would clearly be absurd to consider the Ivory Coast as a closed demographic system, it is essential, if we wish to analyse the employment situation, to attempt just such a breakdown of the economically active population.

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TABLE III. ESTIMATES OF MALE LABOUR FORCE IN  
URBAN AND RURAL AREAS, 1970-80

(In thousands)

Area	Position in 1970	Growth 1970-75	Position in 1975	Growth 1975-80	Position in 1980
<b>Urban</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>805</b>
Natural increase	—	50	—	65	—
Drift from countryside	—	75	—	60	—
Immigration from abroad	—	65	—	65	—
<b>Rural</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>910</b>
Natural increase	—	65	—	60	—
Drift from countryside	—	-75	—	-60	—
Immigration from abroad	—	40	—	40	—

Table III gives estimates of the male labour force in urban and rural areas. They are virtually identical with the estimates given in the Ministry of Planning document<sup>1</sup> already quoted, to which the reader should refer for detailed explanations. The main assumption on which they are based is that the trends observed over the past ten years will continue as regards both natural increase (fertility less death rates) and movements of population (the drift to the towns and immigration from abroad).

Natural increase, the drift from the countryside, and immigration from abroad—these three factors will, it is reckoned, lead to an extra 380,000 persons looking for work in the urban areas over the next ten years (the increase being spread more or less regularly over the period in question). In other words, the number of males of working age will almost double. It will be observed that during the first five-year period it is the drift from the countryside which contributes most to this increase. During the second period each of the three factors makes a roughly equal contribution. The rural population, it is thought, will increase much less—by some 70,000 males of working age over ten years. This represents an increase of only 8 per cent for the whole period which will probably not suffice<sup>2</sup> either to meet the manpower requirements arising from the Government's agricultural production schemes, or to cope with the towns' increased demand for foodstuffs.<sup>3</sup> This being so,

<sup>1</sup> *Côte-d'Ivoire 1965: Emploi*, op. cit., p. 116. The discrepancies between the two sets of figures are insignificant (less than 1 per cent).

<sup>2</sup> Even if allowance is made for a measure of farm mechanisation and for extra labour supplied by women.

<sup>3</sup> The urban population is expected to rise from about 1.4 million in 1970 to 2.6 million in 1980.

TABLE IV. WAGE EARNERS IN THE MODERN URBAN SECTOR, 1970-80

Source of employment	Position in 1970	Growth 1970-75	Position in 1975	Growth 1975-80	Position in 1980
<b>A. Job creation</b>	<b>206 900</b>	<b>87 500</b>	<b>294 400</b>	<b>109 000</b>	<b>403 400</b>
Primary sector:					
Urban jobs <sup>1</sup>	1 500	300	1 800	200	2 000
Secondary sector <sup>2</sup> :					
Industry	40 800	26 000	66 800	34 600	101 400
Building and public works	42 000	18 000	60 000	17 000	77 000
Tertiary sector:					
Transport	35 000	12 000	47 000	14 000	61 000
Rent and services	17 600	6 200	23 800	10 200	34 000
Commerce	25 000	10 000	35 000	15 000	50 000
Public administration	45 000	15 000	60 000	18 000	78 000
<b>B. Replacement <sup>3</sup></b>	<b>—</b>	<b>28 000</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>40 000</b>	<b>—</b>
<b>C. Total (A+B)</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>115 500</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>149 000</b>	<b>—</b>

<sup>1</sup> Essentially office jobs in companies with headquarters in Abidjan. The forecasts are very approximate. <sup>2</sup> Source: *Deuxième esquisse du Plan quinquennal de développement 1971-1975*, op. cit. <sup>3</sup> Number of wage earners needed to replace those vacating jobs by reason of death or retirement. The working documents of the Ministry of Planning estimate the rate of renewal, per five-year period, at 13.5 per cent. See, for instance, *Les besoins en main-d'œuvre de l'économie ivoirienne*.

it will prove necessary to have recourse on an even greater scale to seasonal workers or more permanent immigrants from abroad.

But if the demand for labour is likely to outstrip supply in the countryside the position in the towns will be very different. True, it is even harder to estimate urban employment requirements than it is to forecast the size of the population of working age. There are so many imponderable factors that can upset existing trends. In this connection reference may be made to the working documents issued by the Ministry of Planning, and especially to the second draft of the 1971-75 five-year development plan (*Deuxième esquisse du Plan quinquennal de développement 1971-1975*) already quoted. This draft provides forecasts of manpower needs for different industries and occupations for the years 1971 to 1980, based essentially on private and public investment projects that have already been decided or are just probable. From this it will be seen that while a nucleus of reliable data is available (especially for the first five-year period), these forecasts should be accepted with some circumspection. Table IV summarises the chief estimates.

These forecasts anticipate a considerable increase in employment: over-all, a doubling of the number of jobs available, and in certain



sectors (industry), a growth of very nearly 150 per cent. Is such a document guilty of lack of realism? To this the authorities could well retort that the growth envisaged is about the same as that obtained during the preceding ten-year period, and that the assumed annual growth in employment (8 per cent per annum on the average) is no higher than the increase in gross national product achieved over a long period of years. Let us, then, accept these estimates as valid, at least in the aggregate, and see how the employment supply is likely to compare with the population of working age.

It is at once obvious that, compared with the over-all figures for the increase in the number of men of working age, there are tremendous shortfalls in the number of jobs available: 75,000 for the first five years, 40,000 for the second. But other factors have to be taken into account. Firstly, quite a number of young people between 15 and 19 years of age continue their studies. However, this reduction in labour supply is to some extent offset by the arrival on the market of students who prolonged *their* studies but have now completed them. Hence we shall simply have to make allowance for the increase from one period to the next in the number of young townspeople who continue their schooling after the age of 15. Let us assume that in relation to 1965-69 this growth is 15,000 for the period 1970-74, and 20,000 for the following five years.

Secondly, the modern sector does not represent the whole of the employment market in the towns. Activities of the traditional kind may also provide an opening, at least for young people who are illiterate or have little education. Here again, let us be optimists and assume that in this sector, during each five-year period, work can be found for 20,000 people.<sup>1</sup> We may then draw up the following balance-sheet for the urban employment market:

Source of supply and demand	1970-74	1975-80
<b>Additional urban jobs required</b>	<b>175 000</b>	<b>170 000</b>
Increase in the urban male population of working age	190 000	190 000
Less increase in number of students over 15	-15 000	-20 000
<b>Additional urban jobs available</b>	<b>135 000</b>	<b>165 000</b>
Modern sector	115 000	145 000
Traditional sector	20 000	20 000
<b>Excess of demand over jobs available</b>	<b>40 000</b>	<b>5 000</b>

<sup>1</sup> Even if non-wage-earning employment is included, this figure is probably over-optimistic for two reasons: firstly, some young people have such a strong preference for employment in the modern sector that they will rather remain unemployed than take a job of the traditional kind; and secondly, it seems most likely that the traditional sector, far from expanding, will gradually be ousted by the modern one.

Truly an alarming state of affairs since by 1975 unemployment will, on these calculations reach 90,000<sup>1</sup>, remaining more or less at that level between 1975 and 1980. However, this is not the whole picture, quantitatively or qualitatively.

Firstly, for simplicity's sake we have taken into account only the demand for male labour. True, in 1965, the number of females working in the modern sector was no more than 6,000<sup>2</sup> or so out of 180,000 wage earners, or a little over 3 per cent. But between 1955 and 1963 the female participation rate in the capital had increased from 6 to 13 per cent, while in Accra, no great distance away, it reached 55 per cent in 1965.<sup>3</sup> It is as certain as anything can be that changes in modes of life, plus the fact that girls are going to school in ever greater numbers, will quickly boost the female participation rate. The 6,000 women working in the modern sector in 1965 had become at least 10,000 by 1970, and their number may triple by 1980.

Qualitatively, there is a further consideration of capital importance. With the spread of education, and especially with greater access to secondary education, there is a strong probability that job aspirations are going to be set even higher. Having attended a secondary school, even if for no more than two or three years, young people are not going to settle for anything less than an office job. This being so, Ivory Coast nationals will be the first to suffer from unemployment, since foreigners are not shy of working as labourers; in any event they can always go home should they be without work for any length of time.

Lastly, it may be of interest to provide some information about probable trends in the demand for manpower with different levels of skills. The figures given in table V are, generally speaking, in line with those appearing in table IV. The primary sector is not included. If replacement is taken into account, the data given in all the sources quoted are reasonably concordant.

Clearly, such estimates can serve to give us no more than a general idea, and will have to be adjusted in the light of what actually happens. This having been said, it remains highly probable that more than half of the jobs that come on to the market will be labouring ones. Should the people of the Ivory Coast continue to shun work of this kind and occupy no more than their present small percentage of such jobs, then another 100,000 or so labourers<sup>4</sup> will have to be brought in from abroad.

As regards highly qualified staff, the imbalance by 1980 will be very serious indeed. Some 7,000 such persons will be needed by that time, yet at

<sup>1</sup> The 40,000 new unemployed plus the 50,000 of 1970. These figures would be in accordance with an assumption sometimes made to the effect that by 1975 there will be 50,000 unemployed in Abidjan alone, if present trends continue.

<sup>2</sup> *Côte-d'Ivoire 1965: Emploi*, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

<sup>3</sup> *Etude socio-économique de la zone urbaine d'Abidjan*, Report No. 8 (SEMA, 1964).

<sup>4</sup> That is, two-thirds of the 163,500 extra labourers required.

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TABLE V. MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS BY LEVEL OF SKILLS

Period	Managerial staff	Medium-level staff	Skilled workers	Labourers	Total
1971-75	3 200	10 800	32 000	66 800	112 800
1976-80	3 900	11 500	37 000	96 700	149 100
Total	7 100	22 300	69 000	163 500	261 900

Source: *Les besoins en main-d'œuvre de l'économie ivoirienne*, op. cit., "Secteur moderne", p. 22.

present no more than a few hundred graduates are turned out each year. Here again, foreign assistance will be temporarily required if this shortfall is to be overcome.

The rate of growth expected between now and 1980 means that some 6,000 skilled workers per year will be needed. In 1968, 400 graduated from technical training colleges<sup>1</sup>, and while some progress has of course been made since then, a tremendous amount of leeway has to be made up if output is to match demand.

Our preliminary balance-sheet appears a good deal more sombre when these factors are taken into account. The imminent arrival of more and more women to swell the labour force, the growing army of literate unemployed, the employment of foreign wage earners while young nationals remain without work—the Government by no means underestimates the gravity of all these things and in fact is now giving priority to the problem of employment. In the next part of this article we shall look at some of the plans being made to solve it.

### Employment policies

The analysis undertaken above showed that the swift growth of unemployment has been due, not to some momentary downturn in the economic cycle, but to permanent imbalances between town and countryside, the high hopes entertained by the young, the structure of urban employment, and the inability of training facilities for national managerial and senior staff (technicians in particular) to keep up with the rapid pace of economic development.

Should the Ivory Coast try to deal with unemployment by stopgap measures without removing its fundamental causes, the respite would be but brief. The employment position would in fact quickly deteriorate

<sup>1</sup> M. A. Achio: *Ressources humaines et perspectives d'emploi. Côte-d'Ivoire 1968-1975* (Abidjan, Ministère du Plan), p. 301.

again, since mere palliatives would be bound to aggravate matters in the long run. Hence the Government's primary aim is to restore and consolidate the equilibrium of the employment market by a programme of real structural change. Before we turn to this general policy, it might be well to consider the Government's attitude towards certain traditional methods used to combat unemployment or to make life more bearable for its victims.

### **Short-term action**

The Government's first concern is that the employment market should operate smoothly. This is chiefly the responsibility of the Employment Service, the funds available to which have recently been increased. A few figures will suffice to show the growing importance of the Service's role:

APPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND VACANCIES HANDLED BY THE  
ABIDJAN EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Year	Job applications	Job vacancies
1958	6 200	3 200
1962	8 000	4 500
1969	46 900	27 900

Source: *Statistiques de l'Office de la main-d'œuvre d'Abidjan.*

Every day, news of vacancies that have to be filled quickly is given over the radio—a procedure which has produced excellent results.

A number of other measures that have sometimes been taken in Africa or elsewhere have doubtless been contemplated by the Government of the Ivory Coast. So far, however, no use has been made of them either because they were considered ineffective or because it was felt that they ran counter to the basic principles on which national policy is based. For instance, the Government feels that the forcible removal from Abidjan of even some of the numerous unemployed youths would in all likelihood prove useless, and would certainly be incompatible with the preference for voluntary procedures which characterises official policy.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, it is considered that to abruptly put an end to immigration from abroad would be not only unrealistic but also contrary to the co-operation for which the countries of the *Entente*<sup>2</sup> are striving. Even today, the presence of workers from other African countries is considered

<sup>1</sup> The introduction of a compulsory work permit has, however, been envisaged.

<sup>2</sup> Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Niger, Togo and Upper Volta.

to be "a mainstay of the national development policy".<sup>1</sup> This liberal attitude ought, however, to go hand in hand with stricter application of the existing labour legislation. I do not wish to give the point more importance than it deserves but it may well be that foreign workers are exploited by some small concerns, and if so this could lead to improper competition between national and other African workers.

An even more delicate question than this, perhaps, was whether or not encouragement should be given to labour-intensive industrial techniques. The Government declined to opt wholeheartedly for this, for two reasons. Firstly, it was felt that because Ivory Coast nationals are at present so reluctant to take labouring jobs, labour-intensive methods would lead to a further increase in the percentage of foreign labour employed. Secondly, the maintenance or adoption of obsolete techniques would run counter to the official decision to create modern industries capable of competing in international markets.

This being so, and pending such time as the medium-term measures produce results, ought the workless to be offered substantial assistance in the form of a daily unemployment benefit? The Government, not without reason, has refused to consider this. Of course, the official attitude might well have been different if unemployment primarily affected adult workers without means of subsistence. In the case in question, however, most of the unemployed are young (and able to return to their native villages), or else foreigners who can always go home. Had unemployment benefit been provided in circumstances such as these (giving a new fillip to the drift from the land and to foreign immigration alike), the position would very quickly have become even worse.

On the other hand, it does seem as though the Government is beginning to favour the idea of setting up large work sites close to the towns. No problem of accommodation would arise because the unemployed finding work there could travel to the site each day. This should assuage the fears of a population that would react with particular vehemence to any suggestion of workers being "deported" for "forced labour". But here too, quite apart from any financial considerations, there are certain pitfalls to be avoided. The projects undertaken would have to be economically worth while, for there is no point in putting men to work on tasks that are of no benefit to the national economy. The question of remuneration would also require very careful consideration. While the wage offered should not be too low, it should not be as high as that of an ordinary wage earner; otherwise it would encourage even more young people from the countryside to migrate to the towns, secure in the knowledge that these work sites would guarantee them a standard of living equivalent to that of the urban population.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Eléments pour une politique de l'emploi en Côte-d'Ivoire*, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> See Ministère du Plan: *Le problème du chômage et du sous-emploi* (Abidjan, 1970).

Be that as it may, the scheme has not yet got off the drawing-board. Its importance lies in the fact that if the unemployment problem were to grow much more acute, the Government would doubtless try this approach before taking other action.

The above account may give the impression that official circles have been rather timid, or even passive, in their attitude towards unemployment. Against this it may be argued that the Government was surely wise to pass up expedients which, when applied elsewhere, have proved costly, ineffective, and sometimes downright harmful.

### **Long-term action**

Unemployment is fed, above all else, by an excessive drift from countryside to town, and the Government's first concern is to stem this exodus. For how can the employment market ever be stabilised if more and more young people keep streaming in from the countryside (which is already short of labour) to swell the ranks (which are already overfull) of the urban labour force, or rather the urban unemployed?

As we have already seen, the Government believes that in the long run compulsion is no answer. On the other hand, it is perfectly well aware that not much is gained, either, by simply exhorting the young country-dweller not to leave his village. There is, then, but one way out, namely so to change things that young people have every inducement to stay where they are. Logically, the most effective way of combating unemployment is to improve conditions in the villages. True, modernisation had to begin in the towns, since it was there that the work of administering, controlling and "commercialising" the development effort had to be centred. The result has undoubtedly been to put the townsman in a privileged position, which is precisely why it is now a matter of urgency to extend the benefits of development to the countryside.

In the first place, this means that peasants' incomes will have to be increased.<sup>1</sup> Much has already been done with this in view. Output has been substantially increased, thanks to the technical assistance and advice provided. Farmers now enjoy greater income security thanks to crop diversification, a policy that will certainly be maintained because, apart from anything else, it offers the only chance of raising the tonnage of agricultural exports to the much higher levels called for by the Five-Year Plan. Moreover, the growth of towns will lead to a considerable extension

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<sup>1</sup> It is by no means easy to compare a townsman's income with a peasant's. As a very rough guide, an urban wage earner in the modern sector is paid, on the average, 20,000 CFA francs a month (\$1=278 CFA; £1=632 CFA). The guaranteed minimum wage or SMIG (fixed at 58.30 CFA an hour in 1969) corresponds to a monthly wage of over 11,000 CFA. The law provides for leave at the rate of a day-and-a-half per month worked, and seven public holidays a year. Clearly, no young peasant, be he independent or working for his family, has much chance of enjoying such advantages.

of market gardening, thus making its own contribution to improving rural standards of living.

Taken all together, will the various measures described above suffice to secure the desired result? It seems unlikely. On the bigger farms and plantations of the traditional kind <sup>1</sup> wage earners already enjoy the same advantages as in modern industry. But the proportion of indigenous labour among the ordinary workers on such farms does not exceed 20 per cent. It follows that if young nationals are to be induced to seek work in agriculture, the certainty of earning a wage equivalent to that of an urban worker is a necessary, though by no means a sufficient, pre-condition.

The second draft of the Five-Year Plan provides for the establishment of permanent bodies to carry out an overhaul of existing rural structures. The modernisation programme will have three main emphases:

(1) The creation of regional rural development funds to ensure that the countryside is satisfactorily equipped. Programmes will be drawn up by the responsible authorities in the region concerned. The money required will come jointly from state subsidies and local contributions. The provision of modern housing has already led to vast changes in the living standards of many peasants, and the development of the rural infrastructure should further narrow the gap between urban and rural ways of life.<sup>2</sup>

(2) A rural development agency will be responsible for handling all the problems involved. It will be in charge of devising development programmes and training men capable of putting them into effect. One interesting feature is the proposed creation of small "zones" (each containing some 5,000 people on the average) radiating around a central village; these zones will constitute the basic units from which the modernisation drive will start.<sup>3</sup>

(3) In the villages elementary schooling will be better adapted to rural needs. Post-school training, resembling agricultural or craft apprenticeship, will also be made available.<sup>4</sup> This will take the form of practical work rather than theoretical instruction and should give young people a useful grounding in the technical and economic aspects of rural life.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, all sorts of things have been done, or are envisaged, with a view to making it easier for the young farmer to set himself up:

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<sup>1</sup> Such as the SODEPALM oil-palm plantations, which employ several thousand workers.

<sup>2</sup> *Deuxième esquisse du Plan quinquennal de développement 1971-1975*, op. cit., pp. 183-184.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 341 ff.

<sup>5</sup> The new training bodies would not, at any rate for the time being, mean abolition of the *service consigne*, the object of which is to train young farmers in modern farming skills. It would be unfair to say that the service in question has been a failure; certainly, however, it has proved somewhat disappointing.

overhaul of the traditional rules governing inheritance<sup>1</sup>, reform of the land tenure system, and the allocation of especially profitable plantations (palm-oil plantations, for instance) to young farmers.

Generally speaking, the projects outlined above accord quite closely with the conclusions of an ILO memorandum submitted to the Ivory Coast Government on the exodus of young people from the rural areas.<sup>2</sup> The memorandum urged a speedy and substantial increase in investment credits destined for the rural infrastructure. But above all it recommended that the educational and training system be thoroughly overhauled to ensure that the achievement of universal education in the countryside does not necessarily lead to a universal exodus to the towns.<sup>3</sup> Only if this be done can the country be endowed with modern-minded farmers and craftsmen quick to take advantage of the changes now under way. For without these people, the effort made to modernise the infrastructure and improve conditions of life will inevitably be barren. Hence, priority to the countryside, and at the same time, investments in materials and human resources.<sup>4</sup>

Although the drift to the towns is the main cause of unemployment, a major contributory factor is the repugnance evinced by Ivory Coast nationals for any form of manual labour, even in the towns. How is unemployment ever to be overcome if this attitude persists? To create more labouring jobs would simply mean speeding up the rate of immigration from abroad. Nevertheless, work done in preparation for the Five-Year Plan provides for a higher proportion of nationals in ordinary manual jobs (an increase from 31 per cent in 1968 to 50 per cent in 1975, the primary sector included).<sup>5</sup> Present trends, therefore, have to be reversed, and very soon too.

An appropriate wages policy could obviously contribute to this result. In 1969 wages and salaries rose by an average of more than 20 per cent<sup>6</sup>, but the gap between highest and lowest remunerations hardly narrowed at all. The humblest clerk in a government department or private firm earns more than a navvy. The free play of supply and demand

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<sup>1</sup> Under the matrilineal system, which is still widespread in the Ivory Coast, the nephew could inherit instead of the son, even though the latter had helped to work his father's farm. Vigorous action by the Government is now tending to modify this custom.

<sup>2</sup> ILO: *Mémoire au gouvernement de la République de Côte-d'Ivoire concernant l'exode des jeunes ruraux et les actions préconisées pour améliorer leurs conditions de vie et leurs possibilités d'emploi* (Geneva, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> For the detailed proposals the reader is referred to the memorandum itself.

<sup>4</sup> Although a policy of this sort is very much in the peasants' interests, they should be asked to air their views before it is applied. Consultation regarding the measures to be taken on their behalf is a prerequisite for raising the status of the farmer or cultivator to that of the townsman. In this respect, the rural development agency will constitute one of the channels through which it is hoped to promote a constant exchange of views between the Government and the peasants.

<sup>5</sup> *Éléments pour une politique de l'emploi en Côte d'Ivoire*, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> The guaranteed minimum wage, for instance, went up from 44 to 56 CFA.



cannot in itself lead to an adjustment in the wage scale, since foreigners are always there to oust local workers in jobs otherwise difficult to fill. Hence a deliberate wages policy is needed to restore the balance.<sup>1</sup>

An overhaul of the existing scale would not, incidentally, suffice to change things very much. As was explained above, young people fight shy of unskilled jobs for the same reason as they do not want to stay on the land. They are convinced that there are today two entirely different worlds: in the first a man can hope to make his way and satisfy the legitimate aspirations of a "modern" citizen, while in the second he has to resign himself once and for all (or so they believe) to a degradingly low and archaic standard of living. Hence what young people want above all is to live and work in an environment where they have a chance to make their way up the ladder of success.

If young people, especially those who can read and write, are to be induced to accept manual work, it is essential that the upward mobility be genuine and to some extent "institutionalised"; moreover, they must be clearly told that such opportunities for advancement exist. Action must be taken to ensure that ordinary labourers, if they have the requisite skill and determination, can gradually improve their qualifications, without necessarily having to pass through secondary schools and technical training colleges. This, however, brings us face to face with the problem of education and training, which will have to be dealt with at rather greater length in discussing the third aim to be pursued, namely the replacement of foreign managerial staff and technicians by nationals of the Ivory Coast.

It is in the logic both of political independence and of economic development that this should be done with all possible speed, as long as production does not suffer in the process. The rate of expansion provided for will in any event require increasing numbers of non-African "assistants" between now and 1980. This is an additional reason why the whole problem of training deserves reconsideration, with a view to reducing to a minimum the period during which the country is technically dependent on foreigners. The aim pursued will accordingly not be properly attained by a hasty and ill-considered transfer of responsibilities; the only practical way is to speed up the training of qualified indigenous staff. But this brings us once more face to face with the problem of education and training.

The President of the Republic has recently given striking proof (by himself taking over the portfolio of national education) that the Government attaches the very highest priority to an overhaul of the educational system. Although the efforts made in this direction since 1958 have been considerable, the educational authorities are only too well aware of the present system's defects and shortcomings. True, the system existing

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<sup>1</sup> As regards wage structures, see tables B and C in the Appendix.

before independence has been substantially enlarged. But it has not been radically changed, with the result that, as experience has shown, it is ill-adapted to the needs of an economy growing at the rate of 8 per cent per annum. The fact that the Head of State should have decided to take personal responsibility clearly heralds far-reaching reforms. Whatever shape these take, it is to be hoped that, throughout the system, there will be fewer drop-outs, fewer cases of pupils having to repeat a class, and a reduction in unit costs.

Academic standards would doubtless be improved if scholarships were meted out somewhat less generously than at present. They could be distributed liberally enough to pupils entering the first form, but thereafter should continue only if the beneficiaries work satisfactorily throughout the school year.

Another innovation was the establishment in 1970 of the Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training. Joint committees, composed of officials and managers of undertakings, will meet under its auspices and devise policies to ensure that the content and form of training correspond to the needs of the economy.

These discussions will very likely show up the need to provide more channels of advancement other than a university education. Senior staff will, as is the case already, normally be persons with a secondary school and university background. But the times are not normal, and in a period of economic take-off exceptional measures are called for. Retraining courses, advanced training, in-plant training—all these things are needed to create the vertical mobility which is so urgently required.

In a free enterprise economy such as the Ivory Coast's it is important that personal merit, rather than social background, should be the key to success. It is essential for the health of society, but it is also indispensable if the nation is to lose no time in procuring the skilled personnel its development requires. In this fashion, real vertical mobility would be assured, and the excessive gulf between town and countryside, between skilled and unskilled urban worker, would be overcome. In brief, the solution of the Ivory Coast's employment problems lies in substituting harmonious economic development for the somewhat anarchic growth of the past.

It is in recognition of this fact that the Ivory Coast has made no attempt to alleviate the long-term employment problem by encouraging a reduction in the birth rate. The country is as yet comparatively thinly populated (39 inhabitants to the square mile)<sup>1</sup>, and there is still plenty of room. All in all, the Government takes the view that an increase in population—even a rapid one—is to be welcomed rather than feared.

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<sup>1</sup> The annual rate of population growth is roughly 3 per cent (including the balance of migration). If this percentage is maintained, the population should easily exceed 6 million by 1980 and be approaching 9 million by 1990.

### **Conclusion**

As we have seen, the employment situation in the Ivory Coast is a curious one. Rising unemployment goes hand in hand with steady economic development, which by itself will clearly never provide a real solution to the employment problem. In the not-too-distant future, many more women will be seeking work in the modern sector; this will be a valuable addition to the country's labour force, but will also create a risk (difficult to assess with any accuracy) of further unemployment. This latter factor is perhaps the one that will have the greatest impact in the decade to come. Little time remains before these newcomers appear on the employment markets, so studies will have to be carried out and action taken as a matter of urgency to ensure their smooth absorption.

For a country at grips with employment problems as formidable as these, the Ivory Coast would seem to have chosen the only conceivable course, at any rate in the long run. Modernisation of the rural environment, measures to encourage vertical mobility, and the priority given to training should bring the drift to the towns under control, change young people's attitudes towards unskilled jobs, and equip Ivory Coast nationals to take over managerial and technical responsibilities.

Splendid as these principles are, the policy embodying them remains somewhat nebulous. Most of the bodies responsible for rural modernisation as yet exist in name only. Not a great deal has been done so far, especially in the countryside, to reform the educational system, and vertical mobility is still a very distant goal.

True, the Five-Year Development Plan does define the aims and describes the means whereby they are to be attained. But though the Plan has force of law, it consists more of an array of feasible projects than of an inventory of measures on which definite and binding decisions have been taken. It would be unfair to blame the authors of the Plan for not having given priority to full employment, since they take the view that this can be achieved only through rapid economic development and rural modernisation. But it is a little worrying to observe that the various reform measures seem to be lagging behind the factors which cause imbalances on the employment market. It is often believed—wrongly—that a medium-term programme will not lose a great deal if its implementation is delayed. The Ivory Coast authorities are perfectly aware that reform is urgent; however, it will require no little tenacity and political courage to see it through. Only by setting in motion the whole machinery of State will it be possible to bring about the requisite changes.

## APPENDIX

The following three tables are taken from Ministère du Plan: *Dossiers pour l'exploration du long terme—Consommation et mode de vie* (Abidjan and Paris, SETEF, 1971), pp. 24 and 26.

TABLE A. DISTRIBUTION OF WAGE EARNERS IN THE SECONDARY SECTOR BY SKILLS AND NATIONAL ORIGIN, 1968-69  
(%)

Skill level	Ivory Coast nationals	Other Africans	Total Africans	Non-Africans
<b>All levels</b>	<b>56.0</b>	<b>39.1</b>	<b>95.1</b>	<b>4.9</b>
Managerial and senior staff	5.6	0.8	6.4	93.6
Foremen	29.6	8.5	38.1	61.9
Skilled workers	65.2	31.0	96.2	3.8
Unskilled workers	56.9	43.0	99.9	0.1

TABLE B. DISTRIBUTION OF WORKFORCE AND WAGES IN THE SECONDARY SECTOR BY SKILLS AND ORIGIN, 1968-69

Category	% of total labour force	% of total wages paid
<i>Skill level:</i>		
Managerial and senior staff	1.6	18.2
Foremen	4.5	21.4
Skilled workers	14.5	18.4
Unskilled workers	79.4	42.0
Total	100.0	100.0
<i>Origin:</i>		
Africans	95.1	64.3
Non-Africans	4.9	35.7
Total	100.0	100.0

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TABLE C. DISTRIBUTION OF AFRICAN WAGE EARNERS BY LEVEL OF WAGES  
AND SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT, 1967

(%)

Monthly wage (CFA francs)	Modern secondary sector			Modern trade in Abidjan	Government
	Ivory Coast nationals	Other Africans	Total		
5 000- 9 999	7.1	29.7	18.4	18.0	—
10 000-14 999	37.9	38.2	38.1	28.0	2.1
15 000-19 999	19.6	15.5	17.5	14.0	8.0
20 000-24 999	13.1	5.5	9.3	13.0	9.5
25 000-29 999	7.6	4.1	5.8	8.0	11.6
30 000-34 999	4.4	2.7	3.6	5.0	10.8
35 000-39 999	3.1	1.3	2.2	3.0	17.4
40 000-44 999	2.1	0.8	1.5	2.0	15.4
45 000-49 999	0.9	0.6	0.7	3.0	9.6
50 000-59 999	1.2	0.8	1.0	2.0	2.0
60 000-69 999	1.3	0.3	0.8	1.5	4.2
70 000+	1.7	0.5	1.1	2.5	9.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0