

U4 HELPDESK ANSWER 2026:13

Corruption risks in the green sector in Côte d'Ivoire

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While direct evidence is limited, there are indications that Côte d'Ivoire's expanding green sector faces corruption risks. Evidence taken from related sectors in Côte d'Ivoire, other countries and the available evidence on the green sector points to risks of politicised decision-making, procurement collusion, bribery, illegal logging, wildlife trafficking and weak land governance. These vulnerabilities could undermine renewable energy, conservation and reforestation investments.

Mitigation measures include transparent procurement and licencing, stronger independent oversight, timber traceability, coordinated enforcement and meaningful community participation, while respecting land rights and ensuring accessible livelihoods for forest dependent populations during the country's climate transition.

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[Corruption and anti-corruption in the forestry sector \(2026\)](#)

[Land corruption risks in the green energy sector \(2023\)](#)

[Sub-Saharan Africa: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption \(2020\)](#)

[Anti-corruption in the renewable energy sector \(2020\)](#)

Caveat

This Helpdesk Answer uses the term “green sector” to refer to sectors that contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Examples of these, according to BISE (n.d.), are biodiversity protection, energy, water, agriculture, fisheries and forestry, among others. This Helpdesk Answer focuses on three in particular: energy, biodiversity protection and forests.

Query

Please provide a summary of the key corruption risks and potential mitigation measures in the green sector in Côte d'Ivoire.

Main points

- Côte d'Ivoire's government has made several commitments to achieve its targets in terms of climate mitigation and adaptation, with ambitious goals such as achieving 45% of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030. As such, the country is investing in relevant infrastructure, funded by the government and international organisations such as UN-REDD, the European Commission and development agencies.
- There is, to date, little direct evidence of corruption in the renewable energy sector in Côte d'Ivoire; however, this is a relatively new sector, therefore there are few evaluations and assessments. In terms of energy sourced from fossil fuels, there have been some documented cases of possible corruption, implying that such risks could also affect the renewables sector.
- Moreover, there are some reported deficiencies in the institutional governance framework in the energy sector. These include reported politicisation at the public agency responsible for the sector and local companies having few opportunities to participate in decision-making.
- The literature points towards public officials (such as law enforcement agents) collaborating with illegal loggers and wildlife traffickers in the country. There appear to be difficulties in prosecuting these individuals and groups due to their connections with law enforcement and other public authorities. Organised criminal groups exploiting the natural resources and wildlife in protected areas have also been noted to drive corruption.
- The majority of deforestation is caused by cocoa farming. This is further exacerbated by smallholders and local communities who sometimes illegally use the land for agriculture and timber to support their socio-economic livelihood. Local communities were previously displaced from the forests, leading to further tensions in the sector.

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Background

Côte d'Ivoire is a country situated in the West African region, bordering Liberia, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana. It has undergone dramatic political and economic transformation since its independence from France in 1960. It is recovering from armed conflict that ended in 2011 and today is classified as a “partly free” by Freedom House (2026) in terms of its political rights and civil liberties. It sits in the medium human development category, below the global average, at 157 of 193 countries and territories (UNDP 2025).

According to observers, corruption is rarely prosecuted when officeholders and high-ranking officials are involved (BTI 2026). In Transparency International's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index, Côte d'Ivoire scored 43/100, placing it in the bottom half globally and indicating that public sector corruption is perceived to be a significant challenge in the country (Transparency International 2025). The BTI Transformation Index (2026) notes that there is a long history of presidential control over the political process and that the parliament is dominated by ruling parties and coalitions, resulting in it being ineffective in exercising oversight over government activities.

There have been criticisms that the High Authority for Good Governance (HABG), the government's anti-corruption body, is not empowered to act independently (US DoS 2023). Moreover, corruption is reportedly a prevalent issue affecting the police and security forces in the country (US DoS 2023). The independence of the judiciary has also been weakened several times over recent years, with some accusing authorities of focusing on corruption cases concerning lower level officials rather than senior ranking figures (Amnesty International 2024:3). Human rights organisations have also criticised the lack of professional expertise in the justice sector, with others noting that it is considered as one of the most corrupt sectors in the country (US DoS 2023; BTI 2026).

Côte d'Ivoire is the world's top exporter of cocoa and raw cashew nuts, and its economic development has largely been based on capitalising on its natural resources (Interactive Country Fiches n.d.). As such, the national economy is highly vulnerable to climate change, which can impact sectors such as agriculture and energy through changes in temperature and extreme weather events (Interactive Country Fiches n.d.). Moreover, mainly due to cocoa plantations, 80% of its forests have disappeared, which makes its soils even more vulnerable to climate change (World Bank 2022).

The government has made a number of recent commitments related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. In 2016, the country ratified the Paris Agreement and adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (Interactive Country Fiches n.d.). Côte d'Ivoire has since committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 33.07% below current projections by 2035 (NDC Partnership n.d.). Its mitigation priorities include energy efficiency, industrial processes and product use, agriculture, conservation and waste. While its adaptation priorities include sustainable agriculture, coastal ecosystem protection, sustainable forestry, climate resilient health planning and climate resilient infrastructure (NDC Partnership n.d.).

The country has committed to large-scale infrastructure projects to meet these targets. For example, the government has commissioned an approximately US\$71.4 million solar power plant in the Tchologo region, which is expected to generate enough electricity annually to supply more than 370,000 households (Agence Ecofin 2026). Table 1 below summarises several of these commitments and targets:

Table 1: The commitments, targets and relevant stakeholders involved in the renewable energy sector, biodiversity conservation, afforestation and reforestation in Côte d'Ivoire

	Current commitments and targets	Implementing partners
Renewable energy	- increasing access to electricity for 550,000 households annually 45% renewable energy target by 2030; 33% hydroelectric power and 12% biomass and solar	- Ministry of Energy - utility companies - private sector partners - development partners
Biodiversity protection	- protecting 17% of its natural territory - expanding marine reserves to cover 10% of coastal and nearshore ecosystems by 2030	- Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development and Ecological Transition - Ministry of Water and Forests - local communities and farmers - private sector companies - development partners and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)
Reforestation, afforestation and the	restore 1.5 million hectares of forest	Ministry of Water and Forests

timber value chain	• increase forest area by at least 20% by 2030	• SODEFOR (Société de Développement des Forêts) • local communities and farmers • private sector companies • development partners and NGOs
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Sources: African Development Bank 2025; CBD n.d.; Morrison 2026; Agence Ecofin 2025; Carlucci and Guzzetti 2024.

There is also a large amount of investment from external funders supporting the country’s climate change related projects. The Green Climate Fund (n.d.) (the world’s climate fund for developing countries) currently has 20 ongoing projects in Côte d’Ivoire, with a total of US\$227 million in financing. This includes projects on zero deforestation cocoa production, improving the resilience of local farmers to climate change and other forest protection initiatives (Green Climate Fund n.d.).

In 2025, Côte d’Ivoire launched the sustainability-linked finance (SLF) framework, which was developed in collaboration with the World Bank Group, and which lays out targets in renewable energy and forestry (World Bank 2025). By 2030, it aims to increase the share of renewable energy and commit to deforestation controls to ensure that forest cover losses do not exceed 300,000 hectares between 2025 and 2030 (World Bank 2025). The SLF framework offers an interest rate reduction in borrowing if these targets are surpassed (World Bank 2025). Additionally, in 2025, the government, the European Union and the European Investment Bank announced €300 million in financing to support strategic sectors promoting climate action, sustainability in cocoa production and reforestation in the country, as part of the Global Gateway initiative (EIB 2025).

In terms of conservation, UN-REDD also supports Côte d’Ivoire in developing economic models for sustainable cocoa production and financial solutions to support restoration in the country (UN-REDD n.d.). It also provides financial support to the Governors’ Climate & Forests Task Force (GCFTF) initiative for forest conservation and restoration with cocoa production (UN-REDD n.d.). In addition to this, the country has eight national parks, six nature reserves and 16 botanical reserves, some of which are not open to the public to protect endemic species.

As such, a large number of financial investment and large-scale infrastructure projects are currently ongoing in Côte d’Ivoire’s green sector. The governance and oversight of such projects is paramount to their success, yet, as noted by the literature, these projects are often being implemented in difficult environments, such as remote locations, with overlapping land uses and claims, as well as tensions between customary and other land claims. These complications are compounded by

the fragmented governance of the forestry sector in Côte d'Ivoire, with corruption further marginalising local communities.

This Helpdesk Answer focuses on corruption risks associated with a number of green sector interventions. It will focus on one measure of climate change mitigation (renewable energy/energy efficiency) and two measures of climate change adaptation (ecosystem protection and forestry protection). While the number of studies on corruption risks in Côte d'Ivoire's green sector specifically is limited, the country's broader governance context suggests that these emerging sectors may be vulnerable to many of the corruption challenges observed elsewhere in the economy, particularly where the same public institutions, private actors and regulatory processes are involved. Rather than documenting widespread corruption, the available literature primarily highlights governance weaknesses, regulatory gaps and enforcement challenges that could create opportunities for corrupt practices. To address these evidence gaps, the analysis also draws on corruption risks commonly identified in comparable sectors across sub-Saharan Africa, including risks related to licencing and permitting, land and resource allocation, regulatory capture, weak oversight and limited transparency.

Corruption risks in the green sector

Renewable energy

Côte d'Ivoire has the third largest electricity system in West Africa, after Nigeria and Ghana, and aims to become an energy hub in the region (Yeo 2024:2). As of 2023, 69% of its electricity generation came from natural gas, 23.5% from hydropower, 5.4% from oil and 1.7% from biofuels (IEA 2023). However, as previously noted, the government has committed to increasing the share generated by renewable energy sources to 45% of its total energy by 2030, through scaling up thermal power, hydropower, solar and other renewables (ITA n.d.).

The transition to deploying renewable energy technologies puts significant pressure on bureaucracy and state administration, even in higher income countries, which can encourage corruption (Agence Ecofin 2023). This is largely due to the significant inflows of financing which are at risk in contexts where there are institutional and regulatory deficiencies (Agence Ecofin 2023). Moreover, there are often risks linked to political interference in the procurement of goods and services for projects (Agence Ecofin 2023).

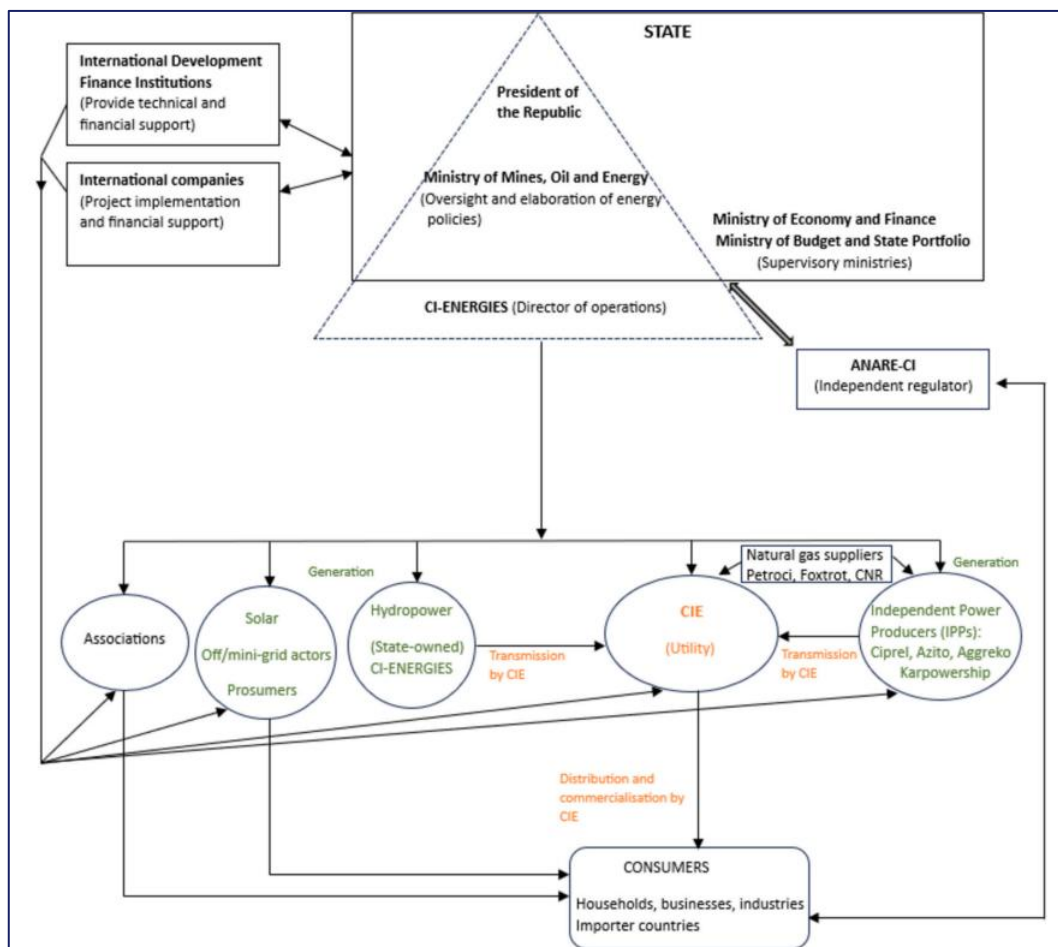
Given that the renewable energy sector in Côte d'Ivoire is new and emerging, the literature on corruption risks is sparse, despite the government recently committing to a large increase of financing in this sector. Most of the corruption risks in this section are therefore extrapolated from the broader literature on corruption risks in the renewable energy sector as well as risks that are already noted in the broader fossil fuel energy sector.

There have been some high-profile bribery scandals in Côte d'Ivoire involving the fossil fuel energy sector, suggesting that there could be similar risks in the renewable energy sector. For example, in 2022, Glencore (an Anglo-Swiss commodities trading company) admitted to paying bribes to secure oil contracts in five African countries, including Côte d'Ivoire (Koffi 2022). In total, a Glencore agents paid bribes of more than US\$29 million to state-owned oil companies to gain preferential access to oil in the country (Koffi 2022; PA News Agency 2022). It was fined US\$311 million for the misconduct, and the judge overseeing the case in London noted that "corruption was clearly part of the culture of a number of staff members in the [Glencore] West Africa office" (Business and Human Rights Centre 2022).

The renewable energy sector in Côte d'Ivoire may also face heightened corruption risks stemming from certain weaknesses in the institutional and regulatory arrangements governing the wider energy sector. The Ivorian electricity code of 2014 reinforces the role of the state in decision-making processes in energy policy, regulation, project implementation and other activities in the sector (Yeo 2024:4). Under this framework, ANARE-CI is the independent administrative authority placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Petroleum, Energy and Renewable Energies and is responsible for overseeing the electricity sector and regulates companies within it (ANARE-CI n.d.). Under this, CI-ENERGIES is the state-owned operational entity that mainly plays the role of the execution agency and plans electricity supply and demand, ensures the management of investments in terms of generation, extension, reinforcement and renewal of the transmission, distribution networks and rural electrification (Yeo 2024:4). However, some of the literature suggests that CI-ENERGIES is a politicised public body, suggesting there could be issues with its independence.

For example, in 2024, Yeo conducted a political economy analysis of the electricity sector in Côte d'Ivoire and came to some interesting conclusions in terms of the governance of the sector. CI-ENERGIES, the president of the republic and the Ministry of the Energy are highlighted as the institutional trio which are the most powerful decision-making bloc in terms of Ivorian electricity, resulting in the Ivorian electricity sector being a highly politicised sector (Yeo 2024:4). Figure 1 below illustrates the interactions this institutional trio has with other stakeholders in the sector:

Figure 1: The key players involved in the electricity sector in Côte d'Ivoire



Source: Yeo 2024:5.

Stakeholders interviewed in the analysis noted that this institutional trio (the president of the republic, the Ministry of Mines, Oil and Energy and CI-ENERGIES) wield power through a top-down approach to decision-making and selective participation and that development finance institutions also wield power in the sector (Yeo 2026:6-7). The author argues that international finance for electricity projects does not develop local companies and creates market opportunities for foreign companies instead, as seen with the company Expertise France benefiting from opportunities financed by the French development agency (Yeo 2026:7). As such, Yeo (2026) concludes that local companies in the country often fail to be involved in the decision-making processes.

Another risk identified in the wider energy sector regards Petroci, the state-owned national oil and gas company of Côte d'Ivoire. Although Petroci does not operate in the renewable energy sector, its experience suggests that similar risks could potentially extend to companies operating within Côte d'Ivoire's emerging renewable energy sector. These examples highlight potential governance and operational risks associated with state-owned enterprises in the country.

In 2020, Petroci (the National Petroleum Operations Company of Côte d'Ivoire) was flagged by the US Treasury for “dubious financial transactions” (Cenozo 2020). The investigation was conducted by L'Eléphant Déchaîné and Eburnie Today, with the support of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and BuzzFeed News as part of the FinCEN Files project, which revealed that the oil company received an electronic funds transfer of US\$6,292,072.60 in 2015 from a Nigerian company, Petrowest SA, which is based in the Seychelles (Cenozo 2020). However, as of 2026, there is no publicly available evidence that CDI authorities investigated the allegations further.

Then, later, in 2023, a scandal was reported at Petroci as investigations into a breach of contract with an American company, ETS MIR, were conducted (Yala 2023). The suspended director general of Petroci potentially received 1 billion CFA francs (approximately US\$1.75 million) as a discretionary fund during his tenure (Yala 2023). However, this is based on audit reports and there is no available information on any later follow-ups to these claims.

Common corruption risks in the renewable energy sector

The literature provides several common corruption risks in the renewable energy sector. However, due to the limited current evidence breadth in Côte d'Ivoire, it is not possible to ascertain the extent to which these risks are present in the country.

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (Zinnbauer and Trapnell 2023) provides a comprehensive overview of these risks as countries transition to these energy sources to meet net zero goals by 2050. As renewable projects in many countries are relatively new, there are additional risks that may not occur in fossil fuel markets as fossil fuel projects build on existing ancillary infrastructures, have well established supply chains and a more professional services marketplace (Zinnbauer and Trapnell 2023:14). The report identifies the following corruption and integrity risks in the sector:

- Regulatory uncertainty and policy capture: there is often a lack of clear rules and regulations in the institutional and regulatory landscape as the sector is often new in many countries and there is a lack of expertise among personnel, which can increase the risk of policy capture.
- Collusion, favouritism and other integrity challenges in licencing and auctions: public procurement in many countries is already at risk of corruption, and renewable project contracts are generally awarded through auctions. Often, a small number of larger-scale developers bid for projects, and there is a risk that these players decide to divide up the market and manipulate it (collusion).

- Abuse of subsidy schemes: to scale up the renewable energy sector, governments often offer subsidy programmes. These can be opaque and vulnerable to favouritism and corporate capture, as well as abuse by organised criminal groups.
- Imbalances in contract negotiations: developers with strong legal teams could exploit inexperienced bureaucrats to secure terms that disproportionately benefit them, locking in high costs and public liabilities for the host country. This is often a risk associated with multilateral companies.
- Violations of land rights: large-scale renewable projects such as wind, solar and hydropower require access to large amounts of land in regions where land ownership and tenure rights are often administered by agencies susceptible to corruption. Consultation and informed consent with local communities may be manipulated and/or tokenistic.
- Political interference in the procurement of goods and services: the awarding of projects can be linked to personal ties and are often vulnerable to rent-seeking behaviour by local officials.
- Fraud and business scams: given that the renewable energy sector is characterised by innovative business ideas and untested technologies, this can make it prone to abuse and scams by companies. Pressure is also exerted to policymakers and investors to identify and help scale up innovation.
- Grid connectivity bottlenecks: renewable energy projects face the challenge of connecting to the electricity grid, most of which are built around conventional power plants. This makes them ill-equipped to accommodate renewable energy projects in remote locations, meaning business owners might expedite connections through questionable means and in short timeframes which can create integrity issues.

As noted in Table 1, Côte d'Ivoire's main renewable energy developments focus on 33% hydroelectric power and 12% biomass and solar. Sovacool (2021:10) identifies common corruption risks in the hydropower sector, which is prone to corruption due to the scale of money and investment needed. Corruption can occur at every stage of the project cycle, from project planning, contracting and bid evaluation, construction and implementation to operation and rehabilitation. Bribery and the misappropriation of funds are of particular concern.

In the solar energy sector, corruption risks occur primarily due to the complexity of bureaucratic procedures and bribery risks during the contracting or constructing phase (Sovacool 2021:6). These projects can also lead to rent capture and the misuse of public funds.

Biodiversity protection

In Côte d'Ivoire, there are four main types of ecosystems:

- terrestrial comprising of forests, plant formations in the mountains, pre-lagoon savannahs and open forests
- inland waters
- marine and coastline including lagoons
- wetlands, which comprise of riparian forests, flooded forests, wet clay soils, swamp forests and mangroves

Over several decades, the protected areas¹ in Côte d'Ivoire have been undergoing degradation, leading to authorities responding with a number of interventions to protect these areas (Kouamé Kra 2019). For example, the government's [Plan d'Actions Nationaux pour la Biodiversité 2025-2030](#) commits to environmental protection, promotion of ecological transition, transition to greener production and consumption patterns, awareness raising regarding biodiversity conservation, establishing a multisectoral platform among relevant stakeholders, among other interventions by relevant ministries (Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Transition Ecologique 2026:37).

Evidence suggests that wildlife crimes are still a major issue facing protected areas. A local NGO that specialises in countering illegal trafficking of protected animal species, Aigle-Côte d'Ivoire (2025), recorded that ten traffickers were arrested in the country in 2025, with more than 40kg of elephant ivory and other animal parts. The organisation's annual report notes that Côte d'Ivoire serves as both a local market and a transit zone, with wildlife products exported through well-established networks. However, this specific report did not highlight any public officials as having been accomplices to the trafficking.

Other evidence suggests that protected area management in Côte d'Ivoire continues to face significant human, technical and financial constraints (Lebrun 2023). Recent assessments have found that only 10 out of the 17 protected areas possess the minimum resources required to carry out management of the protected areas (Lebrun 2023). Indeed, the World Bank (2022:9) in their analysis of the forestry sector in Côte d'Ivoire notes that uncontrolled logging and the expansion of both legal and illegal agriculture have been a growing threat to the biodiversity of the country, which has seen a notable decline in recent years.

A pressing issue in the sector is that poorly paid staff working in remote locations with irregular salary payments have been reported to use their authority to secure alternative sources of income, at times through corruption (Lebrun 2023). Weak leadership and inadequate oversight can further contribute to abuses of power and

¹ Protected areas generally refer to national parks, nature reserves, classified forests and forest areas without official conservation status but recognised for their proven ecological importance and protected by specialised organisations.

lead to corruption risks. Finally, Lebrun (2023) also notes that there have been reports of eco-guards engaging in routine extortion along roads.

Horion et al. (2025) examine the selling of lion and leopard skins in West Africa that originate from Côte d'Ivoire. Corruption is reportedly cited as a prevalent factor in this illicit market as it is often used to circumvent controls by both sellers and traffickers. Sellers pay law enforcement officers to bypass the bans as well as paying at the border to avoid sanctions. One seller who was interviewed stated that “often, you can get arrested, but you just need to pay to get through” (Horion et al. 2025).

Kouamé Kra's (2019) report notes the rules governing the management of the Ivorian protected areas are not being applied consistently and contain contradictions and inconsistencies that are misused for illicit activities. These contradictions occur at two levels. First, different ministries pursue conflicting policies: cocoa produced illegally in protected areas is still marketed through authorised channels under the Coffee and Cocoa Council and the Ministry of Agriculture, while the Ministry of Water and Forests prohibits and polices cocoa cultivation in those same areas. Second, contradictions exist within the enforcement system where some officials reportedly accept bribes to overlook illegal activities such as farming, poaching, logging and mining. These inconsistencies create ambiguity in policy implementation, with enforcement often appearing sporadic and ineffective, allowing unlawful activities to persist (Kouamé Kra 2019).

Other issues involving protected areas and protected species include conflicts regarding the use of the land, which increases the risk of land corruption.² Land conflicts are reportedly commonplace in Côte d'Ivoire, with numerous accusations of corruption against officials at the Ministry of Construction (Jeannin 2025). Land conflicts are often fuelled by the incompatibility between customary rights upheld by village chiefs and the modern land ownership system (Jeannin 2025). This is further complicated by the fact that the village land certificates that are issued by village chiefs are not computerised or centralised. Although a reform in 2024 was adopted to establish a customary land use right certificate (ADU) to replace the village land certificate, its implementation rollout has been slow (Jeannin 2025).

Land conflicts are also a major risk in the country's protected areas. Many of Côte d'Ivoire's protected areas were created during the colonial period, often through the expropriation of community lands in the name of conservation (Koussai and Ongolo 2023:173). In Marahoué National Park, for example, around 100,000 hectares were transferred from the Gouro people to the colonial administration beginning in 1933

² Land corruption refers to corrupt practices within land administration and management such as paying bribes during the land administration process or when a community is excluded from participating in land deals between private investors and local authorities (Transparency International n.d.).

and incorporated into the Marahoué protected area, which was established as a national park in 1968 (Koussai and Ongolo, 2023:173).

Moreover, newcomers in and around the park own significantly larger landholdings than the Gouro, fuelling perceptions of historical injustice and dispossession. Local communities also argue that migrants have undermined the conservation objectives for which their ancestors were compelled to surrender their land (Koussai and Ongolo 2023:173). While this is not direct evidence of corruption, these issues and tensions suggest that there may have been a lack of free, prior and informed consent regarding the land use of protected areas that was previously inhabited by the local communities.

Concerns about the legitimacy of governance arrangements in protected areas are well documented in the literature. Research indicates that when promised livelihood projects fail to materialise or deliver meaningful benefits, local communities often develop feelings of mistrust and injustice (Taye, Mawugatie and Estifanos 2025). This can increase their vulnerability and, in some cases, contribute to higher levels of illegal resource extraction (Taye, Mawugatie and Estifanos 2025). As such, authors emphasise the importance of building trust with local communities to restore the legitimacy of protected area governance (Taye, Mawugatie and Estifanos 2025).

The tensions between different stakeholders and institutions in Côte d'Ivoire's protected areas can be seen through the understanding that these spaces are characterised by overlapping authorities, contested land claims, fragmented state institutions and competing interests (Williams and Gargule 2026). In the wider natural resource sector, the lines between legality and illegality are often blurred, and corruption is frequently embedded in the design and operation of governance systems to capture resources, resulting in local communities being dispossessed and losing their livelihoods (Williams and Gargule 2026:3-4). Corruption can facilitate "green grabbing", where conservation efforts are used to legitimise this appropriation of land and resources.

Common corruption risks in biodiversity protection

Organised criminal groups are known to exploit corrupt practices within the biodiversity protection sector, weakening governance and compromising conservation outcomes. ECO-SOLVE (2024:5) notes that environmental crimes in wildlife trafficking are often facilitated by corruptible institutions, particularly where illegal environmental products can be laundered into legal markets. They note that research in South Africa, for example, has found that every government agency tasked with countering abalone poaching in the country has been compromised to some degree by corruption, from bribes paid to low-level inspectors to more serious allegations against senior public officials (ECO-SOLVE 2024:5). This corruption along the supply lines has allowed

environmental crimes to converge with other types of organised crime where the same routes are used to move around other illicit goods.

The report also shows that regulatory and enforcement loopholes are often created to enrich those in power. In their research, they found patterns where funds and support would be increased for law enforcement agencies, whereas oversight bodies such as the judicial and prosecutorial bodies would be deliberately weakened (ECO-SOLVE 2024:9). The investigation found that this resulted in the manipulation of laws and the avoidance of corrupt law enforcement officials from facing accountability by underfunded oversight institutions.

In terms of biodiversity protection, protected areas may be at risk of corruption in land governance, where government officials may seek to adopt or amend legislation or policies that undermine the effectiveness of established mechanisms in ways that benefit private actors (Barnes 2024:5). Additionally, research shows that land corruption can disproportionately affect groups at risk of discrimination (such as rural communities) and that they may be excluded from justice mechanisms and denied effective redress and support (Barnes 2024:124-125).

According to Williams and Gargule (2026:3), even with participatory reforms in the natural resource sector accountability risks being reconfigured upwards. In these cases, climate finance initiatives may reinforce governance fragmentation by shifting reporting and decision authority away from community institutions, toward donors and higher administrative levels.

Reforestation, afforestation and the timber value chain

In the last 60 years, Côte d'Ivoire has lost more than 80% of its forest cover (World Bank 2022:1). The World Bank (2022:12) in its analysis of the Ivorian forestry sector notes that between 1990 to 2015, 62% of deforestation occurred through agriculture, 18% by forestry operations and 10% by infrastructure expansion, the majority of which was legal. Cocoa cultivation dominates classified forests in Côte d'Ivoire, covering more than 60% of rainforest classified forests and over 40% of those in mesophilic and montane zones. Cashew plantations are also common in northern and central rural areas (Cuny et al. 2023:56).

While deforestation rates fell from 2.69% (2000 to 2015) to 0.51% (2015 to 2020), this decline largely reflects the depletion of forest land available for conversion, especially in southern Côte d'Ivoire (Cuny et al. 2023:56). This is largely caused by the slash-and-burn methods by farmers. Smallholders account for a large portion of

cocoa production and subsequent deforestation; however, these communities rely on the income generated from this sector and generally lack secure land tenure themselves (Howland et al. 2025:5). Some evidence suggests that land tenure insecurity is in fact one of the incentives for rapid and uncontrolled exploitation of forests and is a constraint to tree preservation (Iritié 2020).

However, while the country is investing more in reforestation and afforestation projects, continued deforestation threatens forest conservation efforts, a problem worsened by the corruption that facilitates illegal logging. The economic impact of deforestation in Côte d'Ivoire is far-reaching as much of the population relies on non-timber forest products such as food, plants for traditional medicine, bark and fibres for clothing (World Bank 2022:6).

While the production of cocoa is the leading cause of deforestation in Côte d'Ivoire, Ngari and Guma (2022) also argue that this legitimate sector fuels the illegal timber trade. Loggers cut down trees in areas targeted by cocoa farmers, and, in violation of the 2019 forestry law, these loggers process the timber into semi-finished products on site, much of which is reportedly facilitated by corruption (Ngari and Guma 2022).

In an earlier 2016 commentary, Valussi noted that corruption was an integral part of the issue of informal logging as officials were accepting bribes at every stage of the supply chain. Valussi (2016) interviewed the president of Malebi, an association of women producers and sellers of environmentally friendly charcoal, who stated that the police or an official from the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests occasionally tried to stop the illegal loggers, but then they extorted money and let them go.

Illegal logging in Côte d'Ivoire is reportedly sustained by a network of interconnected actors operating through mutual support and shared interests (Kouamé Kra 2019). This clandestine chain includes plot tenants who lease land to loggers, illegal loggers who harvest timber, buyers who launder and export wood, corrupt officials who overlook these activities in exchange for bribes and landholders who benefit from the clearing of land for cocoa cultivation. Together, these actors enable and perpetuate the illegal timber trade in protected areas (Kouamé Kra 2019).

For example, in 2021, investigators from the Major Crime Unit apprehended a logging company operator for criminal conspiracy, corruption, extortion, unauthorised logging of forest land, money laundering, illicit enrichment and harassment (Jeune Afrique 2022). It was reported that the logging operator has set up a racketeering system with the complicity of numerous regional officials and private operators, leading to the resignation of the Minister of Water and Forests (Jeune Afrique 2022).

Kouamé Kra (2019) likewise notes that illegal loggers often evade justice due to their connections with authorities. There have reportedly been cases where illegal loggers

have been arrested and made a phone call, which resulted in their release. There have also been cases where law enforcement officials dissuaded protected area surveillance officers from patrolling, implying complicity with the illegal loggers (Kouamé Kra 2019). Other instances include unmarked logging trucks being seized carrying illegal timber, but other public officials allow the trucks to continue (Kouamé Kra 2019).

There have been interventions to curb illegal logging, such as a cocoa certification involving multinational companies in the international cocoa industry to promote the sustainability of the sector (Ngari and Guma 2022). This is influenced by the [European Union Timber Regulation](#) and the [New York Declaration on Forests](#) (Ngari and Guma 2022). However, this certification is too expensive for the majority of farmers in Côte d'Ivoire, leading to organised criminal networks exploiting the expansion of cocoa cultivation in forests, fraudulent practices and the corruption of officials who accept bribes at every stage of the timber supply chain: harvesting, transport and sale (Ngari and Guma 2022).

Moreover, a 2019 report by the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation identified weaknesses in Société de Développement des Forêts' (SODEFOR) oversight of forests, including logging outside approved areas, irregular permits for protected tree species and operations authorised without proper inventories or monitoring (Ngari and Guma 2022). The World Bank (2022:45) analysis also identifies problems with SODEFOR and its lack of effectiveness in managing forests. These findings also suggest a limited capacity to regulate private companies and enforce Côte d'Ivoire's forestry law (Ngari and Guma 2022).

Illegal encroachment into protected forests reportedly faced little government resistance and was even indirectly supported through the construction of public infrastructure such as schools and health centres within these areas (World Bank 2022:20-21). At the same time, state control over forest resources concentrated economic benefits among political elites through the allocation of logging permits and the declassification of protected forests. In response, many rural communities reoccupied protected forests and national parks, viewing this as a legitimate reclamation of lands from which they had been excluded during the colonial and post-colonial periods (World Bank 2022:20-21).

Indeed, Côte d'Ivoire reportedly has limited long-term experience with the co-management of forest resources between different ministries or coordination among government agencies, local authorities and communities (World Bank 2022:21). On this, research by Iritié and Tiémélé (2025) on the causes of deforestation in Côte d'Ivoire finds that the quality of institutions in the country is insufficient to positively influence forest cover. For example, its Interministerial Committee for the Coordination and Steering of Forest Policy (CICPPF), which was created in 2001 (composed of 12 ministries), was tasked with coordinating forest policy actions but met only once and was dissolved in 2005 (World Bank 2022:21). Although the

government has committed to decentralisation, including in environmental governance, effective forest management is widely recognised as requiring stronger local participation than currently exists in the country (World Bank 2022:21).

Common corruption risks in the reforestation, afforestation and the timber value chain sectors

Resimić (2026) identifies the main drivers in corruption in the forestry sector as relating to the high economic value of land and forest resources, the geographical remoteness of forest areas that limits oversight and enforcement, the involvement of multiple governance stakeholders, ineffective legislation and protection, a lack of transparency in issuing licences and permits, unclear land tenure rights and low salaries among forest law-enforcement officers.

The main corruption risks noted by Resimić (2026) may include:

- Abuse of office: misusing official authority to influence the issuance of logging permits or manipulating forest conservation policies
- Nepotism: granting preferential access to forest-use contracts to relatives of public officials
- Rent-seeking: organised criminal groups finance their activities through illegal rents generated by control over forest resources and buy officials with these rents
- Land grabbing and land corruption: this can include paying bribes during the land administration process, women being sexually extorted in exchange for a land title, people being denied land rights and excluding communities from participating in land deals between private investors and local authorities (Transparency International n.d.)
- State capture: involving politicians being bribed by domestic and multinational companies to influence legislation, such as lowering due diligence standards for importing forest risk commodities (Resimić 2026)

In addition, reforestation and afforestation projects may encounter corruption risks such as:

- Political corruption: where the access to land may be skewed towards the vested interests of politicians
- Elite capture: where reforestation and afforestation projects are captured by politically or economically powerful groups
- Bribery, kickbacks and embezzlement: reforestation and afforestation project proponents may offer bribes to heads of neighbourhood committees to gain their support and/or extort local community members for access to land that was not in their original project plan

- Fraud: where project implementers may over-represent the impact of reforestation and afforestation projects to receive funding and/or additional carbon credits to sell on the carbon market (Maslen 2023)

Mitigation measures

Given the limited evidence on corruption risks in Côte d'Ivoire's green sector, particularly in renewable energy, there are relatively few sector specific mitigation measures documented in the literature. Nevertheless, there is some evidence of the government taking steps to address potential future risks, as well as recommendations from the World Bank (2022) relating to the forestry sector. This section also draws on broader anti-corruption and natural resource governance literature to identify relevant mitigation measures.

Current initiatives in Côte d'Ivoire

In terms of anti-corruption commitments more broadly, the country's anti-corruption agency, the High Authority for Good Governance (HABG), is reportedly "one of the most visible faces in the fight against corruption in Côte d'Ivoire" (OGP 2025). HABG's national anti-corruption strategy (2024-2028) covers five priority areas: reforming the legal framework, strengthening controls, improving administration, consolidating anti-corruption bodies and involving citizens (OGP 2025). OGP notes that there have been commitments focusing on the integrity of public services and mandatory asset declarations.

Steps have also been taken to increase the integrity of the forestry sector. Côte d'Ivoire is implementing its FLEGT voluntary partnership agreement with the European Union, which commits the country to major reforms in how its forests and timber sector are managed as well as steps to achieve compliance with the EU Deforestation Regulation (European Commission 2024; EFI 2024). To do so, it will accelerate reforms that strengthen forest governance, including: legal provisions for forest management; establishing a timber legality assurance system³; enhancing its unified traceability and transparency verification system; countering illegal logging; and introducing forest law enforcement, governance and trade (FLEGT) licences⁴ (European Commission 2024). The now mandatory National Traceability System includes a producer card, electronic payment terminals, and traceability seals attached to cocoa bags (Konan 2025).

In 2021 in Abidjan, the directorate general of energy held a workshop on information, awareness raising and reflection on a strategy for countering fraud in the electricity

³ A timber legality assurance system verifies that wood products conform to national laws. Once verified as legal and not through possibly illegal origins, partner countries can give licences to timber products (Forest Policy 2022).

⁴ A FLEGT licence certifies that timber and timber products exported to the EU originate from legal sources.

sector and brought together all regional and departmental directors of the Ministry of Mines, Petroleum and Energy (AIP 2021).

Further efforts since 2021 have aimed to introduce a more participatory approach to protected area governance by involving local communities. However, according to a representative of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MINEDD), implementation has been slow due to insufficient funding (Lebrun 2023). As the initiative remains relatively recent, its operational strategies and activities are still being developed.

The government has increasingly encouraged the establishment of community managed reserves. In this model, MINEDD provides technical support and ensures legal compliance, while local communities take primary responsibility for day-to-day management activities. According to ministry representatives, this collaborative approach has helped foster a sense of ownership among local populations and increased awareness of conservation objectives (Lebrun 2023).

Recommendations for the green sector

Regulatory bodies

As the literature shows, Ivorian public institutions that are responsible for the regulation and oversight of the renewable, reforestation and afforestation, and biodiversity protection sectors could be strengthened, and provide for additional avenues for local company and local community participation in decision-making.

The need for regulatory independence is highlighted throughout the literature on Côte d'Ivoire's green sector. Moreover, recent research has found that the independence of regulatory agencies has a positive and significant influence on the rate of access to electricity networks (Bidiassé 2025).

The OECD (2014) provides [Best Practice Principles for Regulatory Policy](#), which applies to regulators more broadly, but is relevant to the Ivorian context:

- setting the roles for regulators into legislation so that they are clear to the regulator's staff, regulated entities and citizens
- independent regulatory decision-making at arm's length from the political process
- all regulators should operate within the power delegated by the legislature and remain subject to long-term national policy
- new or major policy decisions should be justified by the regulator based on an empirical basis and in the light of evaluation of previous measures, and the reasoning should be made publicly available

- where legislation empowers the minister to direct an independent regulator, the limits of the power to direct the regulator should be clearly set out; the legislation should be clear about what can be directed and when; any direction made by the minister or politicians should be documented and published; in the case of economic regulators, it is preferred that legislation should not permit powers to be directed by ministers
- any communication between the minister, the ministry and an independent regulator should occur in a way that does not compromise the actual or perceived independence of regulatory decision-making
- the criteria for appointing members of a regulator's governing body, and the grounds and process for terminating their appointments, should be explicitly stated in legislation. The process should involve the legislature or judiciary for greater transparency and accountability
- a framework agreement between independent regulatory decision-makers and a ministry can be established to outline the budget of the secretariat, whether it will be separate from the ministry, whether it has a corporate identity separate from the ministry, who selects the staff, and other important issues (OECD 2014).

Other stakeholders

In their study, Iritié and Tiémélé (2025:21933) highlight environmental planners, non-governmental forest protection organisations and civil societies as necessary to work closer with to ensure stronger resource governance. They note the importance of integrated forest management projects in Côte d'Ivoire (also known as community projects) that brings together a shared ownership between local communities, governmental and non-governmental agencies and international partners (Iritié and Tiémélé 2025:21933). The sharing of benefits generated from REDD+ and carbon credits is also an important component of this. Finally, Howland et al.'s (2-25:26) analysis of achieving zero deforestation and climate change mitigation in Côte d'Ivoire also concludes on the importance of promoting participatory processes within policy documents with a particular focus on women and youth.

The forestry sector

In the World Bank's analysis of the Ivorian forestry sector, the authors provide a set of recommendations relevant to the governance of the sector in Côte d'Ivoire. These include (World Bank 2022:34-46):

- land conflicts with communities and riverside communities should be managed in a way that is compatible with the government's environmental objectives and with respect for human rights and the well-being of these populations; this includes minimising the social and financial costs resulting from population displacement and anticipating the risks associated with the displacement, including impoverishment and outbreaks of conflicts

- the adoption of agro-forestry⁵ to help these populations maintain sources of income with oversight from the government and a clear recognition of tree and land ownership
- implement a multisectoral approach coordinated at the highest level of government and develop public policies for: i) forestry (including the strict application of regulations on logging and the creation of competitive sectors for the production of timber and fuelwood) ii) agriculture (improving agricultural productivity) iii) energy (developing more efficient solutions or alternatives to fuelwood accessible to the poor) iv) urban development (protecting forest areas against expansion and logging) v) for tourism (preserving biodiversity and planning and managing the carrying capacity of national parks and protected areas).
- reform of the legal framework to better distribute responsibilities between the state and its technical services and agencies
- establish a participatory and transparent approach to forest resource management, including monitoring of programmes
- establish a national forestry fund and a mechanism for managing and allocating the benefits of carbon credits
- and improve the governance of institutional bodies, such as SODEFOR (which was noted in the literature as having limited capacity to regulate private companies and enforce Côte d'Ivoire's forestry law), and clarifying the role of the supervisory authority, the Ministry of Water and Forests.

The renewable energy sector

In the renewable energy sector more broadly, mitigation measures for corruption risks include appraising the interactions between stakeholders and conducting corruption risk mapping from the outset of the project (Rahman 2020:10).

Furthermore, the governance of renewable energy projects can be improved at each stage by:

- dividing project preparation into four different steps:
 - i) project development and initial screening;
 - ii) formal project appraisal; iii) independent appraisal review;
 - and iv) project selection and budgeting.
 - a country specific political economy analysis could also help identify whether the project is purposefully serving insider interests, as well as the most suitable entry points and measures to counter this issue

⁵ Agro-forestry refers to the practice of integrating trees and agricultural crops to support environmental protection and climate resilience.

- building capacity inside the appropriate ministries, provincial or local governments for project appraisal, budgeting and design. It is important to ensure that each of these project phases takes place in an entity with the necessary capacity
- improving the transparency of the decision-making procedures surrounding the project preparation; for instance, through the full disclosure of the feasibility studies
- using various innovative tools developed by development financial institutions and NGOs that assist in evaluating and benchmarking project development in line with international practices. The most renowned ones are the [Project Readiness Assessment Tool](#) from the Global Infrastructure Facility and the International Infrastructure Support System by the Sustainable Infrastructure Foundation (Sobják 2018 cited in Rahman 2020)
- implement complaints and investigation mechanisms, ensuring that these are available in local languages and are clearly available to local communities and project employees (Maslen 2023). World Vision has developed a useful resource on [complaint and response mechanisms](#).

Beyond the project itself, ensuring the recognition of land tenure rights is also integral to protecting local communities (Land Portal n.d.). For this, the [Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure \(VGGT\)](#) are considered to be useful guidelines.

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