

Ivory Coast

Country Focus Report

2026

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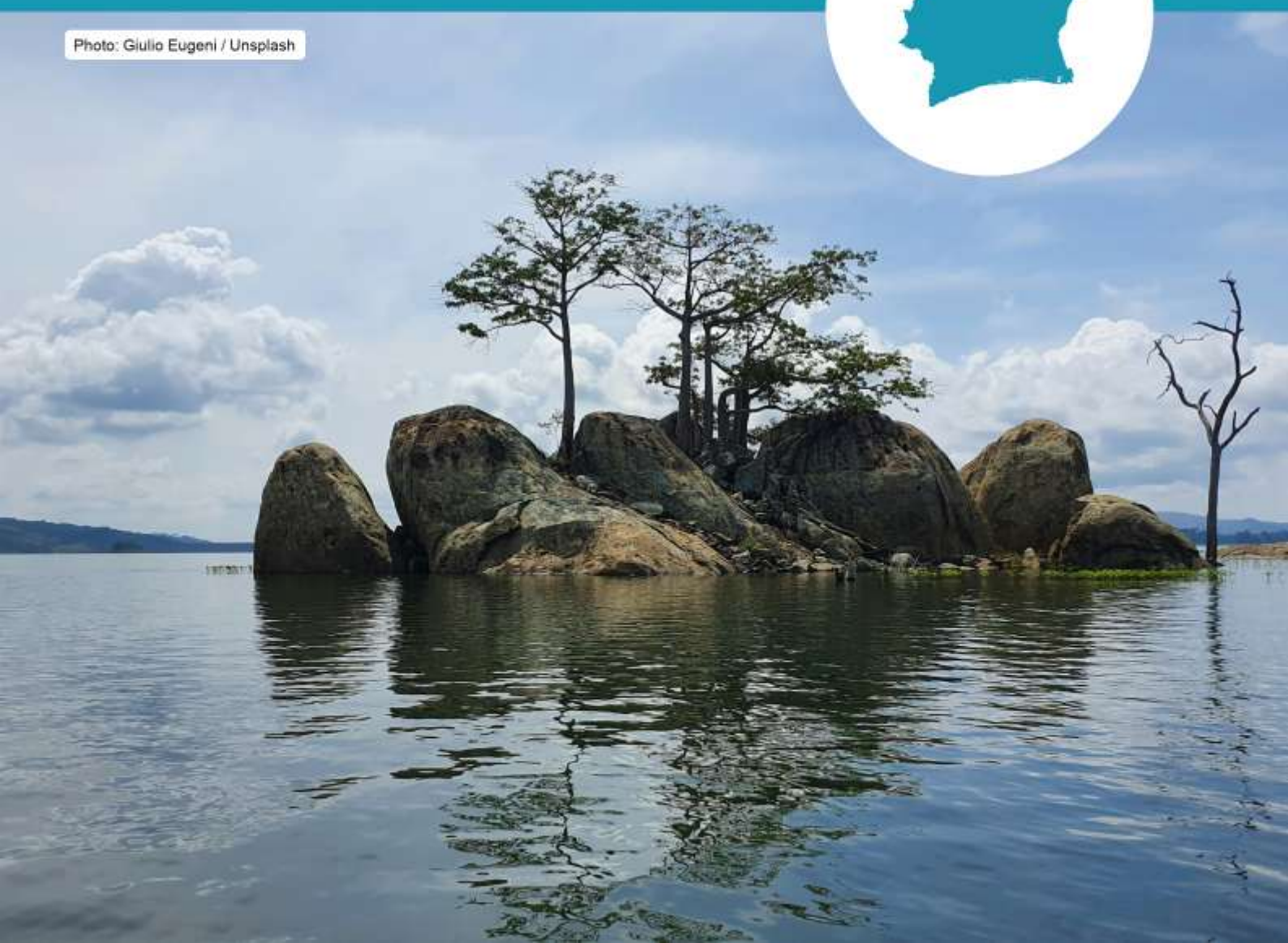


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A) An Introduction to the Enabling Environment

What we understand by an Enabling Environment is the combination of laws, rules and social attitudes that support and promote the work of civil society. Within such an environment, civil society can engage in political and public life without fear of reprisals, openly express its views, and actively participate in shaping its context. This includes a supportive legal and regulatory framework for civil society, ensuring access to information and resources that are sustainable and flexible to pursue their goals unhindered, in safe physical and digital spaces. In an enabling environment, the state demonstrates openness and responsiveness in governance, promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making. Positive values, norms, attitudes, and practices towards civil society from state and non-state actors further underscore the supportive environment.

To capture the state of the Enabling Environment, we use the following six principles:

SIX ENABLING PRINCIPLES



Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms



Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework



Accessible and Sustainable Resources



Open and Responsive State



Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society



Access to a Secure Digital Environment

In this Country Focus Report, each enabling principle is assessed with a quantitative score and complemented by an analysis and recommendations written by our Network Members. Rather than offering a singular index to rank countries, the report aims to measure the enabling environment for civil society across the six principles, discerning dimensions of strength and those requiring attention.

The findings presented in this report are grounded in the insights and diverse perspectives of civil society actors who came together in a dedicated panel with representatives from civil society to discuss and evaluate the state of the Enabling Environment. Their collective input enriches the report with a grounded, participatory assessment. This primary input is further supported by secondary sources of information, which provide additional context and strengthen the analysis.

Brief overview of the country context

Period covered by report: June 2025 to June 2026

Côte d'Ivoire operates under a republican constitutional system characterised by a high concentration of powers within the executive branch. Whilst the Constitution guarantees the freedoms of association, expression and assembly, in practice these rights are subject to increasing restrictions, particularly in the run-up to elections. In late 2025, President Alassane Ouattara was re-elected with 89 per cent of the vote for a fourth term.

The adoption of [Order No. 2024-368 of 12 June 2024](#), which became Act No. 2025-386, has profoundly reshaped the legal framework governing civil society organisations (CSOs). Whilst this legislation reaffirms freedom of association, it introduces a disguised prior authorisation regime, imposes heavier reporting obligations and grants the executive discretionary powers to dissolve organisations – powers which have already been used in a landmark case against the Student and School Federation of Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI) in October 2024.

The Ivorian civic space is characterised by profound contradictions: formal recognition of civil society as a 'development partner' coexists with systematic restrictions on the freedom to demonstrate, criminal prosecutions against activists and journalists, and a security-focused narrative that links CSO funding to risks of money laundering or terrorist financing. Furthermore, the withdrawal of the declaration recognising the jurisdiction of the African Court on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) in 2021 deprives Ivorian CSOs of a direct regional remedy.

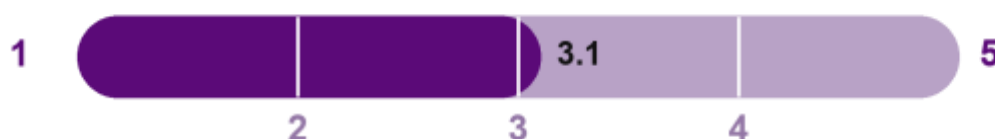
Despite this restrictive environment, Ivorian civil society continues to demonstrate resilience, drawing on regional networks, international mechanisms and strong local roots, particularly in the fields of health, education, the protection of women's rights and local governance.

B) Assessment of the Enabling Environment

PRINCIPLE SCORE

1. Respect and Protection of Fundamental Freedoms

Score : ¹



1.1 | Freedom of association

Freedom of association is formally guaranteed by the [Ivorian Constitution](#), but its effective exercise is hampered by a legal framework which, whilst stipulating a system of prior notification, subjects CSOs to complex administrative requirements and discretionary state control.

[Ordinance No. 2024-368](#) (now Law No. 2025-386) maintains the principle of prior notification but introduces new obligations: enhanced governance requirements, detailed annual reports, and measures to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism ([AML/CFT](#)). Whilst these provisions aim to strengthen the sector's credibility, they place a heavy burden on CSOs with limited resources, particularly community-based, rural, women's and youth organisations.

The duality between the registration receipt (accessible to the majority of CSOs) and recognition as a public-benefit organisation (by decree of the Council of Ministers) creates persistent administrative uncertainty. Without this status, CSOs struggle to access institutional funding, sign agreements with the State or benefit from tax and customs advantages.

Marginalised groups, particularly LGBTQIA+ organisations, face additional obstacles. Although no legal provision explicitly prohibits their registration, social stigma, administrative interference in the formulation of their objectives, and the vague interpretation of the concept of 'public morality' constitute major barriers. Some founders amend their constitutions to

[1] This is a re-scaled score derived from the [CIVICUS Monitor rating](#) published in December 2025.

circumvent these obstacles, whilst others give up in the face of the complexity of the procedures and operate without any legal recognition.

With regard to trade unions, Côte d'Ivoire also demonstrates a formal commitment to trade union freedoms. Enacted under Article 19 of the 2016 Constitution, the Labour Code ([Law No. 2015-532 of 20 July 2015](#)) sets out the procedures for exercising these rights and is reinforced by the ratification of the ILO's fundamental conventions ([Nos. 87 and 98](#)).

However, this protective legal framework is sometimes contradicted in practice by repressive measures that use the argument of 'public order' to justify the banning of gatherings and the arrest of strikers. This discrepancy between the law as stated and its application creates a climate of legal uncertainty, in which the right to strike becomes a mere revocable privilege rather than a fully guaranteed freedom. Repression is not limited to isolated cases, but reflects a significant judicial trend, illustrated by recent convictions. In June 2026, [31 maritime affairs officers](#) were sentenced to one year's imprisonment without parole for exercising their right to strike, following in the footsteps of trade unionist [Ghislain Duggary Assy](#), who was sentenced to two years in 2025. The officers were convicted of 'disturbing public order', 'unauthorised assembly' and 'assault'. These court rulings, condemned by Amnesty International and the FIDH, have a deterrent effect.

1.2 | Freedom of peaceful assembly

The right to peaceful assembly, although guaranteed by the [Constitution](#) and Law No. 2014-388 of 20 June 2014 on the promotion and protection of human rights defenders, is subject to increasing restrictions.

In the run-up to the October 2025 presidential election, the government [issued an interministerial decree banning](#) political rallies and demonstrations [for two months](#), and an opposition demonstration was dispersed by the police, with [32 demonstrators sentenced to three years' imprisonment without parole](#) for taking part in a demonstration that had, in fact, been banned by the government. They are accused of 'disturbing public order' and 'gathering on a public highway'. NGOs, notably [the organisation Tournons la Page](#), have denounced flagrant violations of the right to peaceful assembly, [whilst Amnesty International](#) has called on the government to stop repressing demonstrators.

Since 2022, the CIVICUS Monitor has been documenting repeated arrests and convictions of protesters, and in 2025, more than a [hundred people](#) were arrested, mainly during unauthorised demonstrations. These restrictions are not merely temporary; they form part of a broader trend towards the restriction of civic space, which is particularly evident during election periods.

1.3 | Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the [Constitution](#), [Law No. 2014-388 of 20 June 2014](#) on the promotion and protection of human rights defenders, and [Law No. 2022-978 of 20 December 2022](#) on the legal framework for the press. However, the exercise of this right is hampered by the use of general criminal provisions (defamation, insult, threats, fake news, disinformation) against critical journalists, bloggers and activists.

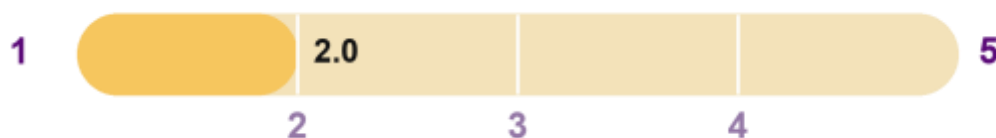
High-profile cases illustrate this repression: in [September 2025, the online activist Ibrahim Zigui](#) was arrested and held incommunicado after posting a video on TikTok calling for a

peaceful gathering. In June 2025, [Dr Boga Sako](#), president and founder of FIDHOP, was forced into exile after criticising the president's fourth term and reporting electoral irregularities. These cases act as a deterrent to critical expression, particularly online, and encourage self-censorship amongst journalists and activists.

The 2025 Reporters Without Borders ranking places Côte d'Ivoire 64th out of 180, down 11 places from 2024. [RSF](#) condemns a politicised and polarised media landscape, with journalists facing court summonses and attacks, newspaper suspensions, and a concentration of media ownership in the hands of figures close to the government. RTI remains a state-run broadcaster serving the government's image.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

2. Supportive Legal and Regulatory Framework



2.1 | Registration

The registration process for CSOs remains characterised by structural complexity. [Order No. 2024-368](#) maintains the prior declaration system, but effective legal capacity depends on compliance with all prescribed procedures. To be recognised, a [CSO](#) must submit a complete application to the prefecture, sub-prefecture or the relevant department of the Ministry of Territorial Administration. The mandatory documents include the articles of association, the rules of procedure, the minutes of the constituent meeting, the list of founding members and officers, and proof of payment of the filing fee.

The examination of the application involves a character check, carried out by the gendarmerie or the police, to verify the authenticity of the documents and the good character of the officers. If the check is favourable, the CSO receives a receipt of registration, issued within 23 days, followed by a mandatory publication in the Official Journal. The CSO then acquires legal capacity. However, the authorities may refuse to issue the receipt if the application is incomplete, if the CSO's purpose contravenes the law or public order, or if the character check reveals grounds for disqualification.

However, without this receipt, no CSO can freely carry out its activities or claim institutional funding. This critical dependence makes registration particularly strategic and fraught with risk. There are numerous obstacles to obtaining this 'passport':

- Financial obstacles: without a consolidated legal status, CSOs struggle to access institutional funding and tax benefits.
- Statutory and social obstacles: without a certificate of registration, legal status remains precarious, which undermines the fulfilment of social security obligations ([CNPS](#)) for employees and limits the job security of members.

- Administrative obstacles: the registration process is described as an [‘obstacle course’](#), with uncertain timeframes, lengthy and opaque background checks, and delays that can last several months.

In Côte d’Ivoire, the refusal to issue a receipt for the registration of CSOs is not explicitly regulated by law, but administrative and judicial remedies may be considered. In fact, a CSO may challenge a refusal to issue a receipt by lodging an informal appeal with the administration and, if this is rejected, by bringing a legal action before the administrative court. However, these legal remedies, which are lengthy and costly, do not resolve the immediate operational need.

Act No. 2025-386, which [modernises the legal framework](#), introduces new requirements regarding governance, administrative compliance and transparency. Whilst these measures aim to strengthen the sector’s credibility, they make the process [more cumbersome](#) and place a particular burden on CSOs with limited resources.

2.2 | Operational environment

The current legal framework ostensibly affirms the freedom to establish CSOs, but this formal freedom is undermined by administrative and reporting requirements that place a heavy burden on their day-to-day operations.

The law imposes strict accounting obligations on all CSOs, requiring them to submit activity and financial reports, as well as to implement measures to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT). In practice, the law now requires CSOs, following the implementation of a project, to produce a narrative and financial report which they must submit to the relevant local authorities. Previously, they were only required to submit a general narrative report, for information purposes, to the relevant ministry. These requirements, which are considered burdensome, create significant administrative and financial obstacles. Organisations have criticised the administration’s growing interference in their management, including through additional bank checks.

This [tightening of regulations](#) comes against the backdrop of Côte d’Ivoire’s inclusion on [the FATF’s grey list](#) and the National Risk Assessment (NRA), which regards donations to CSOs as a potential source of illicit financing. This approach justifies tighter controls on financial flows, in accordance with the [2024](#) directive of the West African Economic and Monetary Union ([UEMOA](#)), but in practice penalises CSOs, which often rely on foreign funding.

2.3 | Protection against interference

The legal framework offers precarious protection against interference and arbitrary intervention by the state. [Order No. 2024-368](#) grants the executive extensive powers that considerably undermine civic space.

Vague grounds for dissolution and a discretionary procedure

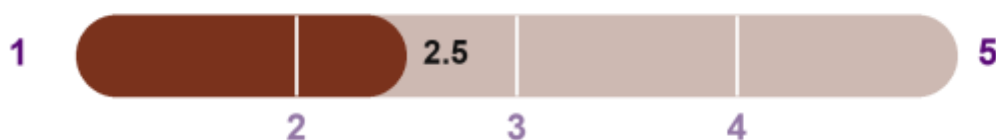
Article 22 of the aforementioned [Order](#) provides for the dissolution of CSOs whose activities constitute a threat to public order and security, territorial integrity or social cohesion, or which are likely to provoke political unrest or harm the public interest. These vague concepts pave the way for discretionary and politically motivated application. Dissolution is ordered by decree of the Council of Ministers, without prior review by an independent court.

A landmark precedent: the dissolution of the FESCI

Decree No. 2024-953 of 30 October 2024 ordered the [dissolution](#) of the Student and School Federation of Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI) and fourteen other student organisations, without any adversarial proceedings or prior judicial review. This case is regularly cited as proof that the government can dissolve any CSO deemed 'inconvenient'. However, alongside this heavy-handed approach, the [Ministry](#) is attempting to maintain a peaceful atmosphere on campuses by engaging in regular dialogue with the teachers' and technical staff (PAT) unions via a dedicated committee, whilst also consulting non-unionised student associations, such as lecture theatre representatives.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

3. Accessible and Sustainable Resources



3.1 | Access to resources

Access to resources remains precarious and highly uneven. International funding is available, but access to it is subject to technical and institutional requirements that the vast majority of Ivorian CSOs cannot meet.

The complexity of eligibility criteria and project set-up requirements excludes many organisations, as do the administrative burdens that favour large organisations at the expense of [local community](#) associations.

Banking barriers constitute a major obstacle: banks, subject to heightened vigilance under the Financial Action Task Force ([FATF](#)), no longer agree to open accounts on the basis of a simple deposit receipt; a declaration receipt is now required. Tax reforms also require [NGOs and associations](#) to submit their financial statements, in accordance with Article 20 (Tax Annex 2026).

Access to funding has also been permanently undermined by [USAID's](#) massive withdrawal and the reinstatement of the 'global gag rule', which deprives CSOs working on sexual and reproductive rights of US funding unless they renounce all advocacy in favour of abortion.

For CSOs working on LGBTQIA+ issues, the situation is even more critical: domestic resources are virtually non-existent, and they are often de facto excluded from international funding calls.

3.2 | Effectiveness of resources

The relationship between Ivorian CSOs and their donors is largely dominated by a top-down approach that severely limits the organisations' autonomy. The funding available is

overwhelmingly directed towards themes defined by the donors, to the detriment of the priorities that the CSOs themselves would identify.

Funding is almost exclusively channelled into fixed-term projects, without any long-term institutional support. For large sums, some donors only grant funding to national CSOs on condition that they partner with international CSOs, thereby reinforcing a relationship of dependency.

There have been some positive developments: an increasing number of donors are engaging in dialogue with CSOs to take their needs into account, and they respond promptly in high-risk situations. However, reporting requirements, combined with those imposed by the state, absorb a significant proportion of available human resources, to the detriment of programme implementation.

3.3 | Sustainability of resources

The vast majority of Ivorian CSOs operate exclusively on a short-cycle project-based funding model (12, 24 or even 36 months), which is structurally incompatible with institutional sustainability. This model allows for no medium-term strategic planning or the building up of reserves.

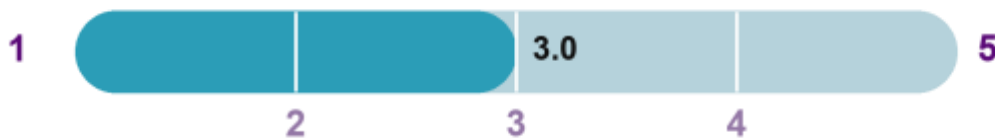
No Ivorian mechanism, whether public or private, provides CSOs with stable operating funding that is independent of projects. There are no sector-specific endowment funds, no core funding from the state, nor any budget line dedicated to the institutional strengthening of CSOs.

The discontinuity between funding cycles leads to high staff turnover, erasing acquired skills and undermining institutional memory. Globally, [official development assistance fell by 9 per cent in 2024](#), and the closure of [USAID's](#) operations highlights the fragility of a model dependent on a single source.

For CSOs working on LGBTQIA+ issues, the situation is even more critical: their mandate restricts them to organising large-scale public fundraising events, at the risk of exposing themselves to insecurity.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

4. Open and Responsive State



4.1 | Transparency

Côte d'Ivoire has a formal legal framework recognising the right of access to public information, set out in [Law No. 2013-867 of 23 December 2013](#). The Commission for Access to Information of Public Interest and Public Documents (CAIDP) was established to oversee the implementation of this law, with the option to submit requests free of charge online.

In July 2025, the [CAIDP](#) launched the strategic ACCESS CAIDP programme, centred around ten technological and educational solutions. Complementary bodies such as the High Authority for Good Governance ([HABG](#)) also contribute to promoting transparency.

In practice, however, the implementation of this framework remains patchy. Application procedures are little known, statutory time limits are rarely met, and responses are often incomplete or non-existent. The proactive publication of [public information](#) is not systematic, and [press freedom is in decline](#), which reduces the capacity to scrutinise public information.

4.2 | Participation

Côte d'Ivoire has formal mechanisms for consulting civil society, notably through its membership of the Open Government Partnership ([OGP](#)) since 2015. Since 2019, a participatory budget has been drawn up with the involvement of civil society representatives, and since 2021, CSOs have been involved in the pre-validation of budgetary guidelines.

[In 2024](#), the Minister of the Interior announced the creation of a permanent framework for dialogue with civil society (CPEQS). Consultation frameworks [exist](#) between CSOs and certain ministries and institutions.

In practice, however, participation remains selective and tends towards formal consultation rather than genuine influence over decisions. The lack of consultation during the drafting of

Order 2024-368 is a prime example of this. Indeed, prior to the adoption of the order, CSOs were not consulted, despite having participated in the process of reforming the 1960 Act. CSOs reported that, whilst they were consulted during a workshop on the order in October 2024, their views were ultimately not taken into account.

For marginalised groups, the situation is even more difficult: [LGBTQIA+ CSOs](#) are rarely invited to public consultations, or are invited only to be presented with results without their comments being taken into account.

4.3 | Accountability

Côte d'Ivoire has a formal accountability framework through its membership of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), with an independent monitoring mechanism. [The OGP 2022–2024 report](#), published in 2025, indicates that out of eleven commitments, only three have produced tangible results.

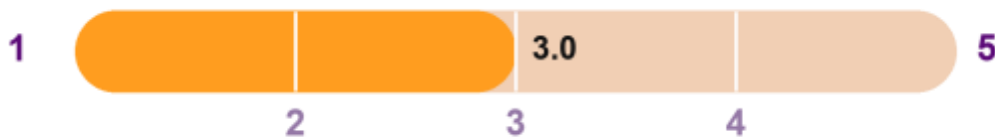
In practice, the government's detailed feedback to CSOs remains inconsistent. Civil society actors generally receive no feedback on their contributions, and there is no systematic documentation of the results of consultations.

The emblematic case of the aforementioned Order No. 2024-368 illustrates this lack of accountability.

There is no clear procedure enabling CSOs to challenge a decision or to compel the government to explain its choices. Faced with this vacuum, CSOs have turned to United Nations mechanisms ([special rapporteurs](#), UPR).

PRINCIPLE SCORE

5. Supportive Public Culture and Discourses on Civil Society



5.1 | Public discourse and constructive dialogue on civil society

In Article 26 of the Ivorian Constitution, the Government formally recognises civil society as a key player in development and an important partner in the implementation of public policies. CSOs play a crucial role in economic development, the protection of human rights and the consolidation of democracy.

However, this recognition is contradicted by actions and rhetoric that vary according to context and the issues at stake. The most glaring contradiction lies in the treatment of [demonstrations](#): eight days before the October 2025 presidential election, the government banned political rallies and demonstrations for two months, and an opposition demonstration was dispersed, followed by 32 demonstrators being [sentenced](#) to three years' imprisonment without parole.

The national risk assessment publicly links donations to CSOs to a potential source of illicit funding, and in 2025, the Minister for the Interior and Security referred to a [vulnerability](#) among CSOs that could lead to their exploitation by terrorist groups. This security-driven rhetoric delegitimises critical CSOs in the public sphere.

For LGBTQIA+ CSOs, public dialogue is particularly difficult: strong social and religious conservatism limits their scope for expression, and they are regularly targeted by cyberbullying campaigns and hate speech on social media, with no safe space provided by the government.

5.2 | Perceptions of civil society and civic engagement

[Afrobarometer](#) data reveal a structural paradox: eight out of ten Ivorians state that democracy is preferable to any other system of government, yet nearly six out of ten are dissatisfied with the current level of democracy.

Political participation is largely limited to voting in national elections. [The 2024 Ibrahim Index of African Governance](#) ranks Côte d'Ivoire among the countries where citizens' perceptions of political participation deteriorated between 2014 and 2023. The majority of citizens believe that the media are not free to report the news without censorship.

As for perceptions of civil society, these are mixed. Many citizens recognise that CSOs carry out important work on behalf of vulnerable people. Civil society is seen by some as the main driving force behind social justice and the fight against corruption. However, the Ivorian context is highly politicised. Furthermore, certain civil society organisations and actors are perceived as being closely aligned with (or mere appendages of) political parties.

Civic education remains limited: there is no structured and coherent national programme accessible to all regions. The subject of human rights and civic education (HRCE) often fails to cover the practical mechanisms of citizen participation in sufficient detail.

5.3 | Civic equality and inclusion

Côte d'Ivoire has a formal legal framework enshrining the equality of citizens, but the gap between these principles and their implementation remains considerable.

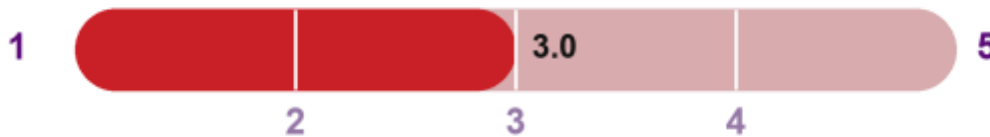
[Law No. 98-594](#) of 10 November 1998 on Policies for People with Disabilities remains a dead letter due to a lack of enforcement, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified only in 2023, has not been accompanied by concrete measures. Women's political representation remains woefully inadequate: only 34 women were elected out of 255 seats in the December 2025 [general election](#), representing approximately 13.4 per cent of national representation. This figure falls far short of the targets set by [Law No. 2019-870 on Gender Parity](#), which imposes a minimum quota of 30 per cent women on electoral lists.

Gender-based violence remains high ([10,547 cases](#) recorded in 2025) and access to justice is hampered by unlawful requirements for medical certificates that must be paid for. The electoral code remains largely non-inclusive, and people with disabilities lack effective measures to ensure their independent participation.

With regard to sexual minorities, Article 3 of [Ordinance 2024-368](#) stipulates that CSOs seen as contrary to public morality are null and void, which has consistently hindered the legal establishment of LGBTQIA+ CSOs, whilst there is no anti-discrimination law in place.

PRINCIPLE SCORE

6. Access to a Secure Digital Environment



6.1 | Digital rights and freedoms

Côte d'Ivoire enjoys a generally open digital environment. Unlike several countries in the sub-region, the country did not impose any internet or social media blackouts during the 2025 elections. Internet access is unrestricted and systematic blackouts are very rare.

[Law No. 2017-803](#) on the information society sets out the State's commitment to ensuring that every individual can exercise their rights and freedoms by providing a legal framework to facilitate internet access. Côte d'Ivoire has a comprehensive legal framework for cybersecurity, comprising [Law No. 2013-450](#) on the protection of personal data and [Law No. 2013-451](#) on combating cybercrime.

Whilst these laws serve a legitimate purpose in protecting citizens, their scope is broad enough to be exploited against activists. [The Director of the Technology and Operations Division at the National Agency for the Security of Information Systems \(ANSSI\) reiterated in July 2025](#) that "social media is not a lawless zone". In 2024, 338 arrests were made and 187 people were brought before the courts for acts related to online activity.

[The Amnesty International 2025/2026 report](#) documents the arrest of cyber-activist Ibrahim Zigui in September 2025. He was arrested at his home by unidentified individuals, before being imprisoned at the MACA ([Abidjan Remand and Correctional Centre, now the Abidjan Penitentiary Centre \(PPA\)](#)). Officially, he was charged with 'incitement to insurrection' and 'disturbing public order' over a video calling for a rally. Sentenced in May 2026 to five years' imprisonment, he was finally released in July 2026.

This case fails to meet the standards of the rule of law for several reasons: the arrest was carried out without a clear warrant, his [home](#) was ransacked and his television taken away. Furthermore, neither his family nor his lawyers were able to contact him for several days whilst he was held in solitary confinement, and the prosecutor himself claimed not to have been informed of his detention. Finally, his whereabouts at the [Penitentiary Centre](#) were only

revealed following media pressure, as no official document had been made public. Fundamentally, this imprisonment is seen as a criminalisation of political freedom of expression, aimed at intimidating the opposition in a tense electoral climate. Moreover, during the same period, [the Ivorian judiciary](#) had taken a tougher stance against internet users who use social media to defame and insult the authorities, creating a deterrent effect on critical expression online, particularly during election periods.

6.2 | Digital security and privacy

Côte d'Ivoire has a comprehensive legal framework for cybersecurity, comprising two laws passed in 2013: [Law No. 2013-450](#) on the protection of personal data, and [Law No. 2013-451](#) on combating cybercrime, supplemented by strict monitoring mechanisms such as the [Platform](#) for Combating Cybercrime, established through collaboration between the National Police and [the ARTCI](#) (Ivory Coast Telecommunications and ICT Regulatory Authority), which tracks down financial scams, hate speech, defamation and illegal content. These laws serve a legitimate purpose in protecting citizens.

In practice, however, this framework remains inadequate for CSOs and human rights defenders. The ARTCI is simultaneously responsible for regulating telecommunications operators, creating a structural conflict of interest in cases of state surveillance of communications. According to [Jeune Afrique](#), the surveillance of communications is a long-standing practice of espionage in Côte d'Ivoire, without a transparent framework or accessible redress mechanisms.

The offices of human rights defenders have been regularly burgled. Notably, in December 2025, the office of Alternative CI (an LGBTQI+ organisation) was burgled, and this practice extends to digital surveillance. In 2024, [12,100 complaints](#) relating to cybercrime were recorded. [Feminist activists](#) and human rights defenders are particularly vulnerable to cyberharassment, with no mechanism for a rapid response.

In early 2026, a wave of WhatsApp account hacking targeting activists was reported. Digital risks stem more from general vulnerabilities than from a targeted strategy against civil society, but existing redress mechanisms remain little known and underused by CSOs.

6.3 | Digital accessibility

Côte d'Ivoire shows generally positive indicators for network coverage. In 2024, the mobile phone penetration rate exceeded [181 per cent, and more than 94.86 per cent](#) of localities are covered by mobile networks. The National Rural Connectivity Programme (PNCR) aimed to [connect 575 rural localities by the end of 2025](#).

However, network coverage does not equate to actual access. In [January 2024](#), the internet penetration rate stood at just 38.4 per cent of the total population. The geographical divide is particularly pronounced: 52.7 per cent in urban areas compared with just 24.6 per cent in rural areas.

The [cost](#) of mobile data remains a barrier for CSOs with limited budgets. Basic digital skills are relatively widespread, but advanced skills (data management, cybersecurity, information analysis) remain insufficient and unevenly distributed. Existing training initiatives continue to be geared towards institutions and businesses rather than rights-defending CSOs.

C) Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT

1. Reform the legal and institutional framework for CSOs

- Revise Order No. 2024-368 (Law No. 2025-386) to reformulate provisions that restrict the fundamental freedoms of CSOs; remove vague grounds for dissolution (public order, social cohesion, public interest) and introduce judicial review prior to any dissolution.
- Replace the disguised prior authorisation regime with a purely declaratory system, in accordance with Côte d'Ivoire's constitutional and international commitments.
- Simplify the procedures for registration and recognition as a public-interest organisation by setting clear and precise time limits and establishing an effective appeals mechanism in the event of tacit refusal or undue delay on the part of the administration.

2. Ensuring participation and transparency

- Introduce a legal obligation to consult CSOs in advance and systematically on any draft legislation or regulations affecting them, allowing sufficient time for them to make substantive contributions.
- Make the minutes of consultations and the justifications for government decisions publicly available, in order to ensure traceability and accountability.
- Establish decentralised consultation mechanisms in all regions to ensure the inclusion of rural CSOs and marginalised groups.

3. Improve the financial environment for CSOs

- Reinstate tax and customs exemptions for CSOs, and create an incentive framework for domestic private donations (tax deductions, corporate philanthropy).
- Simplify banking procedures for CSOs opening accounts, by recognising all documents issued by the administration to any CSO in the process of obtaining a registration certificate as valid documentation for anti-money laundering purposes.
- Establish a national fund to support the operations of CSOs, with budget lines dedicated to institutional strengthening, training, digital security and all other relevant activities.

4. Protect civic space, including digital space

- Put an end to criminal prosecutions for peaceful expression, whether in the physical or digital sphere, and revise cybercrime laws to bring them into line with international standards.
- Continue to guarantee free and uninterrupted access to the internet, particularly during election periods, and prohibit the arbitrary blocking of platforms.
- Adopt an anti-discrimination law protecting marginalised groups, including LGBTQIA+ people, and combat online hate speech.

5. Promote civic equality and inclusion

- Effectively enforce the 30 per cent quota for women's representation in elected bodies by establishing a monitoring and implementation mechanism.
- Strengthen measures to combat gender-based violence.
- Implement the commitments made under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by establishing the inter-ministerial committee provided for in the 1998 Act.
- Launch public campaigns affirming the role of civil society in democratic consolidation and social cohesion, whilst countering narratives that portray it as a threat to security.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

1. Strengthen coordination and collective protection

- Build inter-regional and cross-sectoral alliances between CSOs from the north, south, west and east, in order to document violations jointly and share legal and digital resources.
- Develop rapid solidarity mechanisms in the event of arrests (immediate legal assistance, coordinated public communication, support for families).
- Establish specialised umbrella organisations to secure long-term funding and pool administrative and reporting expertise.

2. Professionalise digital security and archiving

- Integrate digital security protocols into day-to-day operations: encryption, secure data management, diversification of communication channels.
- Train several staff members in cybersecurity and risk management to reduce vulnerability in the event of arrest or the confiscation of equipment.
- Develop response strategies to smear campaigns and surveillance, particularly those targeting women defenders and LGBTQIA+ CSOs.

3. Champion inclusion as a fundamental principle

- Systematically document the barriers faced by women, young people, people with disabilities and rural organisations, and incorporate these findings into advocacy work.
- Highlight the role of apolitical and community-based organisations to

demonstrate that restrictions on civic space affect all autonomous organisations.

- Work with universities, independent media and professional trade unions to promote an alternative narrative: civil society as a legitimate actor in the promotion of transparency and social cohesion.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND DONORS

1. Support independence, not just service delivery

- Fund independent organisations, including small local associations and rights groups, even if they do not have permanent accreditation, recognising that administrative barriers are often politically motivated.
- Make financial and technical support conditional on verifiable commitments by the Ivorian authorities to respect freedom of association and to end prosecutions for peaceful expression.
- Make bilateral budget support conditional upon compliance with Open Government Partnership (OGP) commitments and the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), as well as any other regional and international commitments made by the state regarding civic space.
- Take into account the social and physical security of CSO staff in project budgets.

2. Reduce financial and bureaucratic barriers

- Simplify administrative and accounting requirements for small CSOs, to avoid excluding vulnerable groups (rural women, youth groups, LGBTQIA+ CSOs).
- Establish rapid-response microfinance mechanisms for organisations facing repression, internet disconnections or targeted arrests.
- Increase the proportion of funding allocated to fixed costs and institutional strengthening for local CSOs, rather than funding exclusively short-term projects.

3. Strengthen digital capacity and security

- Fund advanced digital skills training for CSOs, particularly in cybersecurity, data protection and online risk management, prioritising organisations based outside Abidjan.
- Provide independent technical support to combat surveillance, account hacking and online stigmatisation campaigns.
- Invest in digital infrastructure in rural and southern areas, complementing the PNCR's efforts, in order to reduce the digital divide that disadvantages local CSOs.

4. Include marginalised voices

- Ensure that consultation processes (EU, UN, AU, bilateral donors) include representatives from different regions, rural women, people with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ groups, as well as grassroots community organisations, and not just organisations based in Abidjan.

- Support internal mobility (transport, accommodation, connectivity) to enable these groups to participate in national and regional advocacy forums.
- Publicly call out the Ivorian government on cases of arbitrary dissolution of organisations, the arrest of activists and restrictions on civic space, using UN and AU mechanisms.

D) Research Process

Each principle encompasses various dimensions which are assessed and aggregated to produce quantitative scores for each principle. These scores reflect the extent to which the domestic environment facilitates or hinders the work of civil society. Scores are assigned on a five-category scale defined as follows: totally unfavourable (1), unfavourable (2), partially favourable (3), favourable (4) and totally favourable (5). To complement the scores, this report provides a narrative analysis of the environment's favourability or unfavourability towards civil society, identifying strengths and weaknesses and offering recommendations. The process of drafting the analysis is led by members of the network; the consortium carries out quality control and editorial supervision prior to publication.

For Principle 1, which assesses respect for and protection of freedom of association and peaceful assembly, the rating incorporates data from [the CIVICUS Monitor](#). However, for Principles 2 to 6, the availability of external quantitative indicators updated annually for the 86 countries participating in the EUSEE programme is either limited or non-existent. To address this, network members convene a panel of civil society representatives and experts once a year. The committee responsible for this report met in June 2026. This panel uses a series of guiding questions to assess the status of each principle and its dimensions within the country. The discussions draw on secondary sources, such as [V-Dem](#), [the Bertelsmann Foundation's Governance Index](#), the [RTI rating from the Centre for Law and Democracy](#), and other reliable resources. These sources provide benchmarks for measuring similar dimensions and are supplemented by the collection of primary data and other secondary sources of information available for the country. Guided by these deliberations, the panel assigns scores to each dimension, which network members submit to the consortium, accompanied by detailed justifications that reflect the country's specific context. In order to determine a single score per principle, the scores assigned to each dimension are aggregated using a weighted average, reflecting the relative importance of each dimension within the principle. This approach helps to balance the different perspectives whilst maintaining a structured and objective assessment framework.

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