

TRANSFORMING LIVES

Strengthening the Ivorian Judicial System through the expansion of courthouses

Inauguration opens the door to better judicial service delivery.



US Ambassador and Minister of Justice revealing the plaque of the new building.

Photo by Dao Daouda

April 2014 - The war that ravaged Côte d'Ivoire from 2002-11 took a devastating toll on the country's infrastructure; the judicial system was no exception. This decade of conflict left the judicial system in ruins, resulting in woefully inadequate courthouse space for magistrates and judicial staff. Since the end of the post-electoral crisis, USAID through its Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) has been committed to supporting the Ministry of Justice in its efforts to establish better rule of law in Côte d'Ivoire. This endeavor requires deep reforms in the administration of justice and the training of judicial officials, as well as the rehabilitation, expansion and re-equipment of damaged and looted buildings.

In collaboration with the Ivorian authorities, USAID has supported efforts to improve working conditions in the courts thereby increasing citizen access, especially in areas like Bouaké. The USAID-supported expansion of the Bouaké Court of First Instance is one of six similar projects across the country. It includes two new fully equipped annex buildings offering 650 square meters of additional space comprised of 31 offices, two interview rooms, and six specialized office spaces. As a result of this expansion, all judiciary staff at the Bouaké court will have adequate office space. Previously, the building had only 27 offices for 76 staff. On March 28, the US Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire and the Minister of Justice, among other authorities and community members inaugurated the new annexes. At the inauguration ceremony, the Minister of Justice exclaimed to the judicial staff that *"with this donation, your working conditions will significantly improve. Gone are the days when we had two, even three magistrates in one office, no more heat or outdated equipment...Welcome to quality work"*. The Minister further stated that *"this donation is to be understood as a call for an extra effort to make our justice system more credible and favor the reconciliation between the justice system and the population."*

After their speeches, The U.S. Ambassador and the Minister of Justice proceeded with a ribbon cutting ceremony and unveiling of the plaque marking the official opening. The two officials and their delegations toured the new buildings and closed the ceremony with a joint press conference.