

## Ivory Coast Electrical Assessment Mission



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I was on an electrical assessment mission in the beautiful Ivory Coast. If you have been to Ivory Coast, you will know what I mean. The city of Abidjan is a huge city with every thing you need or want. It can be a bit quiet at night due to security reasons, but the people in Abidjan and throughout the country are amazing (even if your French is a little off as mine is) and WFP staff is more than helpful. Once you get out of the city, most of the roads are perfect and the scenery is great.

The security situation in Ivory Coast has not been very good, since the military coup in 1999. There was another coup in 2002 that failed, but left the country divided between the rebels in the north and the government that control the south and the capital. There are still tensions between the two, even after the peace accord in 2003. Saying this when I was there, everything seemed relatively calm on the surface. Apart from the advice from the security officer and the presence of French and African forces to keep the peace, there were no real signs of conflict.

We were driving on one of the not so good roads between Korhogo and Odiene and this was around the time that there had been big flooding in neighboring countries like Ghana and Mali. There was no real flooding in Ivory Coast, but it still made the mud roads more than a little messy in some spots. I like to four wheel drive, however without being a driver there is no chance getting behind the wheel, so all you can do is sit back and let the driver do his fun filled job. So we were driving along this road in a phase 3 - area with only one car and got to a point that looked impassable. Before I even had a chance to get out and have a look, we started slowly going through this swimming pool of water. The speed at which we were going was not fast enough to get us through the deep tire tracks under the water that had been grooved in before by the fully over loaded trucks that have to brave these roads. So right in the middle we were stuck. Water and mud up to the windows and the only way out was through the window with out filling the car completely with muddy water.

In a few minutes a UNDP car that we passed not so far back had caught up to us. He stopped and we asked him for tow out. We threw him a rope, however as the roads were very slippery and the light Land Cruiser was not able to pull us out of the soft mud. So we were thinking 'what now'. I knew we were not in any real trouble of getting stuck as there is a winch at the front of the car, so it was all a bit of fun but we still had to get out! The driver in the UNDP car had said he had passed a truck not so far back, so within twenty minutes or so the truck would drive that 1 long kilometer to get to us. So the truck came and it was full of workers in the back with big smiles on there faces and they were more than happy to lend us a hand to get the car out. So after about twenty guys tried to push it out we had a rope on to the truck and were being pulled out with ease. We continued our journey on the road with a bit more care and not hitting deep holes so slowly.

This is all just part of the fun that I'm sure we in FITTEST and other ICT Agencies all go through when on mission and personally I love it and I know many others do too.

**Ryan**