



Urban household economy survey of Quartiers précaires of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire



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Executive Summary

The current economic context in Abidjan follows 12 years of political instability as well as an acute political crisis from **December 2010 to March 2011** that turned extremely violent in many parts of the city including Abidjan's poorest neighborhoods. During the post-electoral crisis, the residents of Abidjan's most vulnerable neighborhoods adapted to the economic realities of increased prices of food and sharply decreased labor opportunities, particularly for factory work. This study provides insight into the livelihoods of those living in these areas—the *quartiers précaires*-- where just making ends meet is a daily struggle. The study examines the livelihoods of those living in Abidjan's poorest neighborhoods in this new, post-crisis phase. The focus is on the ensemble of activities that make up livelihoods, to better understand the vulnerability of households at different wealth levels to potential shocks. The livelihoods of these households also reveal that Abidjan today is a city still in recovery.

The analytical framework used to carry out the study is the Household Economy Approach or HEA. This framework provides the structure for understanding livelihoods patterns with a focus on access to food and other life essentials, and on this basis also providing insight into the factors that make households vulnerable to particular shocks and their capacity to cope with these shocks. A total of 17 neighborhoods in 7 different communes were visited, including both legal/planned (*loti*) and illegal (*non-loti*) neighborhoods. Neighborhoods located nearer to industrial areas were studied and compared with those located further away from factories where the role of petty trade was said to be more important. It was determined that there were no obvious livelihood differences between neighborhoods and that the ensemble of households within the *quartiers précaires* were generally engaged in the same activities and share generally the same vulnerability to the same shocks. Therefore there was no need to split the *quartiers* into different 'livelihood zones'.

People live in Abidjan's *quartiers précaires* for the most part because they cannot afford to live elsewhere. The trade-off for the affordability comes most often at the expense of access to many basic services, such as running water and sanitation. Communities primarily classified households into wealth groups by their ability to feed their families and educate their children, and the categorization followed similar patterns according to the type of paid work activities pursued by household members. One of the principle distinguishing factors of household wealth is the regularity of income and the security that comes from having a steady stream of cash: that is almost as important as the amount of actual daily wages. The irregularity of day labor opportunities is more acute among the poorest households.

The typical households in all the wealth groups are able to purchase enough food to meet basic energy needs, as defined by the average of 2100 kcal/per person per day. Generally speaking, diets are varied and the types of food purchased are similar across wealth groups—the main differences are in the amounts of non-staple foods purchased (especially fish and vegetables) and the degree to which street food is consumed (which is less for better-off households as compared middle-level and poorer households). Street food accounts for the largest single category of food spending for households—exceeding spending on rice, the principle staple. Eating lunch out, far from being a luxury, is a necessity: for people working far from their houses, the time and cost necessary to travel home to eat are prohibitive. Expenses on the basics essentials, including food, water, energy for cooking, electricity, and condiments, and household

equipment (plates, cutlery, buckets) amount more than 85% of household spending for poorer households. This leaves very little for the poorest households to put into capital or equipment to enhance their economic activities or even for accessing basic social services such as schooling for all children – investments that might break the cycle of poverty.

It is too soon to say definitively that people's livelihoods have been permanently changed, but it is probable that the livelihoods of households are adapting to a new 'normal'. The current economic conditions are likely to continue, as the outlook for increase factory work is likely to remain limited and food prices are likely to remain high. Looking ahead, the most probable shock is not renewed conflict, but rather increases in the price of staple foods. Poorer households in Abidjan's *quartiers précaires* are highly vulnerable to price increases, because of their near-absolute dependence on the market. Price increases on not only food but other essential costs such as rent, water, transport and education may have a significant impact on households' food security: with already very tight budgets, households have to make hard choices about expenditure, and reduction of food quality, and in a crisis food quantity, is one option.

1 METHODOLOGY

HEA Framework

HEA or Household Economy Approach is an analytical framework that captures information on people's patterns of livelihoods, inter alia in order to predict how they will be affected by a particular shock. Baseline information is collected by livelihood zone and by wealth group and lays out how people access the food and cash they need not only to survive but to maintain their livelihoods. The approach is based on a summary of the livelihood in a typical or 'reference' year, which also provides information on the timing of key activities or price trends allowing one to better understand impacts of seasonality on the household economy. HEA involves an accounting of the consumption by households of food and non-food items, and of how households obtain cash used to purchase the things they do not produce themselves - which within the urban context means virtually everything. The analysis is used to examine food security and livelihood security. Poor households in rural, not just urban, settings are today heavily engaged in cash-based livelihoods and access a significant amount of food through purchase. Altogether in town and country livelihood security and food security are so intimately bound together as to be often hardly distinguishable.

In an HEA analysis, 'vulnerable populations' must be defined through an assessment of the households' vulnerability to something specific. The baselines provide a systems-based understanding of livelihoods and through HEA one is able to make predictions of outcomes based on how vulnerable a household is to particular hazards. This is described by the following equation:

***R=f(V,H)**, where risk is **R**, vulnerability **V**) and hazard **H**. **Risk** = likelihood of a negative outcome (e.g. food deficit); **Hazard** = likelihood of exposure to a hazard (e.g. drought); **Vulnerability** = likelihood that people will not be able to cope with a defined hazard¹.*

The distinction must be made between a populations' vulnerability and their poverty, even if it is usually the case that poorer households are most vulnerable most hazards in terms of impact on their livelihoods and food security status. Understanding how and why these households are affected by shocks is key to developing appropriate responses in both the short term and medium long term, through addressing ways in which vulnerability to particular hazards might be mitigated over time. Monitoring data can be used in conjunction with the baseline information to produce an ongoing analysis of the current situation and intervention needs.

An additional strength of an HEA analysis is that livelihoods information is gathered by wealth group. The determination of wealth groups (very poor, poor, middle and better-off) is made relative to each neighborhood and defined by the residents themselves (via groups of key informants). The break out of information by wealth group is important because it allows one to better understand the differences between households living

¹ Boudreau, Tanya "Putting the Ability back in Vulnerability", Food Security Early Warning Systems and the Livelihoods Integration Unit in Ethiopia, November 2007.

within the same *quartiers précaires*², and therefore to profile the differences in each wealth groups' vulnerability to and ability to cope with shocks.

Zoning

The first step in an HEA based inquiry is normally to define the area to be studied in terms of distinct *livelihood zones*. In a rural setting, livelihood zoning takes into account differences in agro-ecology, special geographic features and market access, among others. Households within a zone are generally engaged in similar activities and share generally the same shocks. Zoning within an urban setting is based on the same principles as rural zoning, even though work other than agricultural production is the principal way in which households access and cash and therefore food. Elements that would justify distinct zoning within Abidjan's *quartiers précaires* were investigated to see if there were major differences in the following elements:

- Primarily sources of cash earnings (e.g. factory work vs. petty trade)
- Overall income levels
- Regularity of income

The question regarding the number of livelihood zones was purposefully left open for the first week of the fieldwork. Neighborhoods located nearer to industrial areas (Koumassi, Yopougon) were interviewed and compared with those located further away from factories where the role of petty trade was said to be more important (Abobo, Attécoubé). At the conclusion of the first week, after reviewing the key informant responses to community level interviews and comparing detailed results from wealth group interviews, it was determined that there were no obvious differences between neighborhoods that would justify the establishment of more than one zone. The fact that only one zone was identified allowed for the fieldwork to be carried out in additional neighborhoods (12 sites studied rather than the minimum 8 generally required by the HEA approach), strengthening the confidence in the overall results.

Selection of neighborhoods for the survey

HEA commonly defines geographical areas for survey (the zoning) and then employs a purposive rather than a random sampling technique within each geographical area. An effort was made to visit a number of different communes so as to spread the geographical coverage of the inquiry across *quartiers précaires* throughout the city. Neighborhoods with marked unusual features were purposefully excluded, although it was not always possible to know the extent to which neighborhoods possessed particularities before administering the community level interview. In all, only three neighborhoods [Boukini (Abobo), Carrière (Yopougon), and Zimbabwe (Port-Bouët)³] were excluded on the basis that they were not typical of the majority of *quartiers précaires*.

One of the challenges to carrying out HEA fieldwork in an urban area is that it is not always easy to identify and/or connect with the appropriate neighborhood officials. ACF

² The term *quartier précaire* will be used in this study to refer to Abidjan's most economically depressed neighborhoods generally lacking in access to basic water and sanitation schemes whether or not the settlement is legal/planned (loti) or illegal (non-loti).

³ Based on description of most important economic activities for people in these neighborhoods. In Boukini and Carrière key informants noted a high degree of dependence on agricultural activities. Key informants in Zimbabwe noted that approximately 25% of the population there was dependent on fishing.

through its projects had a number of established contacts in certain areas, however in neighborhoods new to ACF, the study team had to employ additional leg-work and time to identify the appropriate contacts.



Figure 1: survey sites visited.

The study includes both legal, officially plotted (*lotis*) neighborhoods and illegal (*non-lotis*) neighborhoods. Even within legal neighborhoods there is often the illegal construction of homes or of entire sub-quarters. The actual status of people's habitat is therefore much more mixed than official definitions of legal status imply. The fear of households of being cleared out (*déguerpissement*) is widespread throughout many of the neighborhoods visited—both legal and illegal neighborhoods. In at least two neighborhoods, rumors that the HEA survey team was somehow there to facilitate an eviction of households from the neighborhood disrupted the team's work.

Reference period

In HEA studies in rural agricultural areas, the field information is taken for a 'consumption year', which is the twelve-month period commencing with the main harvest and concluding just prior to the next harvest. In Abidjan's *quartiers précaires*, where agricultural production is virtually non-existent and the effects of seasonality are very limited, the argument for using a reference 'year' was less apparent. Since most food,

income and expenditure patterns are regular, a reference month was used in lieu of a reference year to facilitate the interview process. January 2012 was used as the reference month for two reasons: a) since it was the most recent period and therefore the easiest to recall and b) because this study is focused on achieving an understanding of the current situation of households. For expenditure made irregularly or on a yearly basis (such as on education, festivals and holidays, health care) the reference year of January 2011 to December 2011 was used as it was the most recent year and therefore the easiest to recall. As this was a year in which a major crisis occurred, it might be thought that the expenditures on items purchased on a yearly basis were reduced from 'normal'. This is not likely to be the case for major festivals (i.e Christmas December 2011). As for payment of education fees (September/October 2011), there was not overwhelming evidence of children being taken out of school during the reference period that would have affected overall education spending.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork was carried out by a survey team of seven individuals over a three week period. For the first week of fieldwork two teamleaders provided essential support to the survey team as team members honed interview skills and built familiarity with the HEA method and questionnaire format. One teamleader continued to provide support and ensure the quality of interviews and other data collected for the remaining two weeks on the terrain. Prior to commencing the fieldwork, interviewers received a five-day classroom training including an introduction to the household economy approach, rapid appraisal and focus group interviewing techniques, sessions on how to calculate minimum energy requirements, review of formats and tools used for data collection, and a practice session for each type of interview (community key-informant and wealth group interviews).

The fieldwork included neighborhood-level interviews with key informants, usually including the Chef de Quartier, to gather information on neighborhood history, daily rates for a range of typical work activities, access to essential services (water, sanitation, education, etc) and finally characteristics that define relative wealth in the neighborhood - in this case income earning activities carried out by households that could be associated with different wealth groups. Once the characteristics of each group were defined, the interviewers employed a proportional piling technique in which the key informants used beans to show the percentage of the neighborhood's population that belonged to each group. Four wealth groups were sought to better understand the differences not only between relatively wealthier and relatively poorer households. It should be emphasized that what was sought was relative wealth *within the quartier*, and not by comparison with the overall city of Abidjan. Someone considered 'better-off' in the context of a poor neighborhood might not even compare with the 'middle' level in the city at large, let alone with the rich. But despite the fact that the great majority of households in these neighborhoods are considered relatively poor by city standards, it was important to understand the differences within the neighborhoods so as to be able to establish the profile of households most vulnerable to shocks. A total of 17 neighborhoods in 7 different communes were visited and interviewed at the community level.

Following the community level interview, focus group interviews were conducted with each of the four wealth groups defined during the community level interviews, numbering 40 in all (see table below). Community leaders were asked to identify people from representative households from each of the four wealth groups and to form four focus groups of eight people, four men and four women. The wealth group interviews collected

information on sources of food, sources of income, information on expenditures as well as coping strategies for typical households in each wealth group. The wealth group interviews also gathered information on the number of children in school and number of individuals (relatives or others) typically taken in and hosted by the family for long periods of time--in contrast to short term visitors. These individuals taken in by households are referred to in this report as *personnes prises en charge* (people for whom the household takes responsibility).

Wealth group interviews were conducted in teams of one to two interviewers. These in-depth interviews took a substantial time to complete (as is typical to this type of interviewing) lasting on average 2-3 hours. The focus group interview format has a series of built-in cross checks made during the interview itself. It is designed to help the interviewers build with the focus group participants a logical and complete picture of a typical household during the reference year. The cross checks include identifying and quantifying all sources of food so that they can be compared to 100% of total food energy requirements for the household for the year (based on the average of 2100 kcal per person per day). Data on income is compared with that of expenditures, so that the two are seen to be reasonably associated in amount, if not precisely matching. Above all, the interviews are aimed at gather information that makes sense, is complete and literally 'adds up' for a typical household in each wealth group in each neighborhood.

Commune	Quartier	Entretiens Communautaires	Entretiens 'focus group' par group socio-économique			
			Très Pauvre	Pauvre	Moyen	Nanti
Abobo	Avocatier (M'poumou)	x	x			
	Agoweito PK 18	x	x	x	x	
	Plaque 1	x	x	x	x	x
	Samake	x	x	x	x	x
	Boukini	x				
Adjame	Kennedy	x				
Attécoubé	Boribana	x	x	x	x	x
	Attécoubé III	x		x	x	x
Cocody	Gobelet	x	x	x	x	x
Koumassi	Cité Houphouët-Boigny (Campement)	x	x	x	x	
	Divo	x				
Port-Bouët	Zimbabwé	x				
Youpougon	Yaoséhi	x	x	x	x	x
	Ayakro (Gesco)	x		x	x	
	Niangon continue	x	x	x	x	x
	Gbamanom (Offomou Yapo)	x	x	x	x	x
	Bago Carrière	x				
Total		17	10	11	11	8

Figure 2: Neighborhoods visited

Focus group interviews with wealth groups were conducted in 12 quartiers. The realities of the busy and scattered daily life of city-dwellers were such that it was not always easy or sometimes even possible at first attempt to find enough focus group participants--particularly for better-off and very poor wealth groups. However, the minimum number of 8 interviews was achieved for all wealth groups. The first series of wealth group interviews in Avocatier (M'Poumou) was considered a final practice session, but in the event the results of the interview with very poor household representatives was found to be of good enough quality to be added to the dataset of subsequent interviews.

Weights and Measures

Three separate market visits were carried out in Abidjan (Koumassi, Abobo, and Yopougon) to gather information weights of most commonly purchased items and corresponding prices. This was to allow interpretation of information given in the community and focus group interviews. Rice and sugar are purchased by kilogram or by sacks of 50kg, but nearly all other foodstuffs are purchased by some other unit e.g. *boite* (most often a large tomato-paste tin), *tas* (pile), or *sachet* (plastic bag). For example different *tas* of plantains were purchased at various markets, peeled and weighed, in order to establish a basis upon which to calculate the energy provided by a *tas*. The price per kilogram between differently priced units of the same item tended to be quite similar- that is to say a 100 CFA *tas* of tomatoes cost about the same per kilogram as a 50 CFA *tas* of tomatoes. It was therefore often possible to calculate the kilograms per item based on price per unit.

Street Food

Meals purchased outside of the home are one of a principle way in which households in Abidjan's *quartiers précaires* take food. In order to establish the calorific values of street food, the most common types of dishes and snacks were purchased and weighed. *Attieké* (a slightly fermented, manioc couscous), the most ubiquitous lunchtime meal, is purchased by the ball (*boule*) and by the plate. Both *boules* and platefuls were weighed at different prices, along with rice-based meals and snacks such as *beignets* (donuts). The calorific value for prepared *attieké* was determined though cross-referencing recipes to determine the amount of water required to cook dried *attieké*. West African food tables were used to establish calorific values for sauces, porridge, *beignets* and sugary beverages (*bissap*, *gingimbre* etc)⁴.

Data entry and analysis

The data collected were entered into a pre-designed (excel) HEA baseline data storage spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was adapted to the particularities of Abidjanaise livelihood patterns though the addition of a sheet to allow for entry of additional food purchases. Data entry was completed in the evenings following the interviews to allow for immediate analysis to provide additional explanations and support to team members to avoid future calculation errors. An interim analysis session was held with the team as a whole to review emerging patterns and to review areas that need additional questioning, which particularly involved strengthening the questioning on street food. Following the completion of the fieldwork, an analysis of the baseline data was carried out with the team, taking a total of 2.5 days. The results were analysed for each wealth group to obtain a snapshot of the typical sources of food, cash and expenditures to develop a consistent and logical picture that can be considered to represent faithfully the realities of people's livelihoods in Abidjan's *quartiers précaires*.

⁴ *Table de composition d'aliments du Mali Food Composition Table for Mali*. Barikmo I, Ouattara F, Oshaug A. Research series No. 9. Akershus University College, Norway, 2004.

3 RESULTS

Wealth Breakdown

People live in Abidjan's *quartiers précaires* for the most part because they cannot afford to live elsewhere: *it is cheaper to live in these neighborhoods than elsewhere in the city*. The trade-off for affordability comes at the expense of cramped and basic dwellings, as well as lack of access to many basic services, such as running water and sanitation. As explained above, the wealth of the groups of households discussed here is expressed relative to the *quartiers précaires*, rather than to Abidjan as a whole.



Figure 3: Wealth group characteristics

We see here readily apparent differences between poorer and wealthier households, notably the types of activities pursued as well as overall income levels. But in fact the first observation that might be made between poor and very poor households is that there are *no dramatic differences* between these wealth groups: overall household size is similar, income levels are not so wide ranging, the types of activities in which both groups are generally engaged tend to be similar, as shown in the table below. Both poor and very households were described by key informants as only just getting by, but with the very poor only *barely* just getting by, and with great difficulty. The irregularity of day labor opportunities is most acute among very poor households, and it is this factor above all that marks the difference between poor and very poor households. The poor are able to do just a little bit more, *more regularly*, and earn slightly more per day. Poor households are better able to send their children to school than the very poor, but still struggle to make ends meet. Very poor households tend to be slightly larger, with more people to feed and take care of (generally three additional relatives beyond the nuclear family). Very poor households also tend to have minimal amounts of capital to invest in petty trade, resulting in smaller daily returns. Women are overwhelmingly the breadwinners in the poorest households—most men are under-employed and seek out daily work opportunities (these tend to be unskilled, manual labor activities). Even with more people working, very poor households earn less than poor households.

The difference between poor and middle households is that middle households are more often skilled laborers or trades people, taxi drivers or salaried workers. For many middle households, it is again the regularity of income that lifts their wealth status, through regular work as taxi drivers or salaried factory workers. This income is more guaranteed and buffers these households from the hardships of a day-to-day mode of survival. Although work may be irregular (as it can be for many trades people) it is better

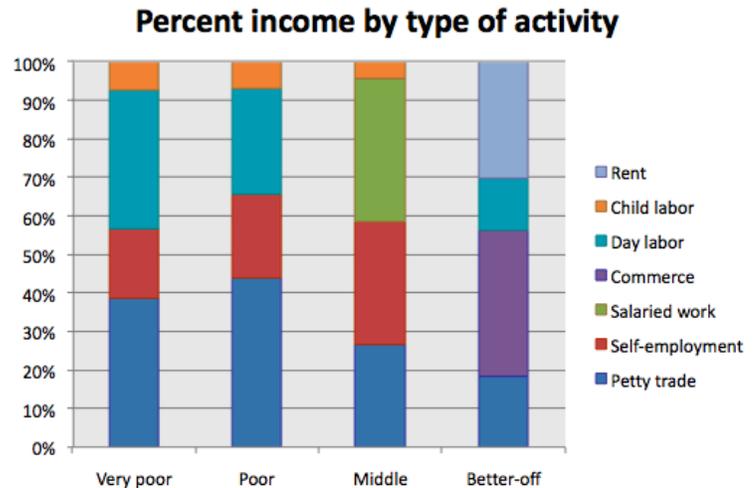
remunerated than the unskilled day labor more often pursued by poorer households. Overall income levels are relatively distinct between poor and middle wealth groups. Key informants tended to described middle households as 'able to feed their families'. But even middle families generally do not have the means to educate all of their children: much of the primary education and most of the secondary education available is run by private enterprise, and even where schools are provided by government, parents must provide uniforms and buy books and materials, and cash for lunch in the street.

Better-off households, described as 'being able to feed their families and educate their children', clearly have an increased quality of life comparative to other households in the neighborhood, and this includes the means to purchase a more varied diet. Better-off households tend to have more secured access to water (though official metered hooks ups) and the capacity to help out their extended families by providing food and housing to relatives. Their housing is almost always of permanent construction and generally on legal plots. Most importantly perhaps, is that these better-off households have a really steady stream of income through rents collected and are able to invest more in businesses with higher returns. But the profile of better-off households still reveals certain elements of poverty. For instance, their housing is typically 3 rooms, and the picture of 9 people 'better-off' people sharing just three rooms would be one of poverty in wider Abidjan.

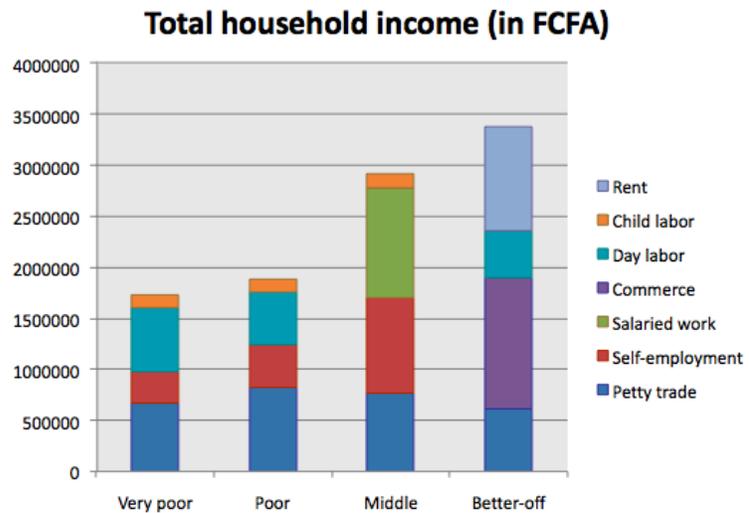
Household type	Types of activities	Daily earnings (FCFA)
<i>Very poor</i>	Petty trade : foodstuffs, prepared foods, miscellaneous small articles, bread.	1000-1500
	Day laborer : mason's assistant, factory work, tailor's assistant, porter/loader.	1500-2000
	Roaming salesmen/women : juice, water, fruits, pagnes.	500-1500
	Self-employed : Telephone booth operator, wroto, shoe repair.	1500-2000
	Child labor : water, juice, restaurant assistant, oranges.	500-1000
<i>Poor</i>	Petty trade : foodstuffs, prepared foods, miscellaneous small articles, bread.	1500-2000
	Day laborer : mason's assistant, factory work, tailor's assistant, porter/loader.	1500-2000
	Roaming salesmen/women : juice, water, fruits, pagnes.	1000-1500
	Self-employed : Telephone booth operator, wroto, shoe repair.	1500-2500
	Child labor : water, juice, restaurant assistant, oranges.	500-1000
<i>Middle</i>	Petty trade : foodstuffs, fish, prepared foods, miscellaneous articles, pagnes, rice.	2000-3000
	Salaried : Taxi driver, industrial work, security guard	2000-5000
	Self-employed : hairstylist, mechanic, mason, telephone booth operator.	2500-3500
	Child labor : water, juice, restaurant assistant, oranges.	500-1000
<i>Better-off</i>	Commerce : boutique/restaurant owner, wholesale commerce, transportation.	3000-4000
	Day laborer : mason's assistant, tailor's assistant, mechanic's assistant.	1500-2000
	Petty trade : foodstuffs, prepared foods, miscellaneous small articles, bread.	1500-2000
	Rent	3000-4000

Sources of income

Poor, middle and better-off household tend to have very distinct profiles of income sources, with petty trade being the major exception. Most typical households, even better-off, carry out some form of petty trade. The assessment data reflect a tendency for such daily-gained incomes to increase with each wealth group, a reflection of the capacity for increased investment in petty trade and increase in payment for skilled labor over unskilled labor. It should be noted however that daily rates for salaried work are sometimes similar to those of unskilled day labor; but here it is the regularity of payment and the security that comes from having a steady stream of income that becomes as important as the actual daily wage.



It is difficult to draw major distinctions between the activities and incomes of very poor and poor households: these households are engaged in the same types of activities earning similar proportions of income from each activity type. Very poor household earnings from petty trade are slightly less; the number of days men are able to find work as day laborers are fewer, and daily rates from self-employment activities are lower as these tend to be on the whole more unskilled activities. Overall annual incomes are not substantially different at some 1,729,000 CFA for very poor households versus 1,883,000 CFA for poor households. Given the different household sizes, this means about 203,000 CFA per capita for the very poor and 251,000 CFA per capita for the poor. But if the differences seem small, they are nevertheless significant at this level of living: they mean just that bit better quality of food, a few more articles of clothing, maybe even the rent for two rooms instead of one, or the money to send one more child to school.



Petty trade is a major source of cash for all wealth groups and it is without question the bedrock of the household economy for poorer households. It is also largely the domain of women. The vast majority of women in the *quartiers précaires* who are not

tradespersons (e.g. hairstylist, seamstress) are engaged in some type of petty trade, regardless of the wealth group they may belong to. The level of a woman's earnings from petty trade is generally a function of the capital she is able to invest in her business. For instance, very poor households are only able to finance items of very low cost per unit and in small amounts, and very low margins of profit are obtained from retail. Petty traders from poor households have just a bit more capital, enough to make a palpable difference, however modest it may seem: an average profit of 1000-1500 CFA per day for very poor households versus an average 1500-2000 CFA for poor households. People from middle households tend to earn the most per day from petty trade. They can afford other business related costs such as transport to and from Abidjan's principle supply market in Adjamé, an expense that is generally prohibitive for poor and very poor households. Middle households are also able to purchase wholesale items of a higher value (fish, rice, *pagnes*, pharmaceutical/personal care items) and with greater regularity. While women from better-off households also participate in petty trade, it is not always with the same intensity as middle households. They may have a small stall set up just outside the home for example, but tend not to invest as heavily as middle households despite a greater ability to access capital through the overall household income. With better-off households, a different profile of the woman's role emerges: where women in the other wealth groups spend most of their day in economic activities, and tend to provide only the evening meal for the household to share, better-off women tend to have a primary responsibility to maintain the household and prepare meals, usually twice per day (mid-day and evening). Household duties compete with the time available to dedicate to petty trade.

Profiles of petty traders from different wealth groups:

From a middle household: Eugenie sells fresh and smoked fish from a stall in her Abobo neighborhood (Plaque I). Each day, she purchases 50-60,000 CFA worth of fish. She smokes fish herself, which she sells along with several varieties of fresh fish. She must pay for transport of the fish (1000 CFA per day) as well as wood used to smoke the fish (1500 CFA per day). She works 6-days per week and each day, she is able to take home 4000-5000 CFA. Her husband is a teacher in a private school with a salary. Together, they support a family of 8 people.

From a poorer household: Celine sells prepared food—*placali*, fermented ground manioc, rice, sauce, and fried fish. Her stall is directly across from a school, so there is a steady stream of young customers. Each day, Celine invests 6000-7000 CFA in materials and ingredients; she also pays 700 CFA for transport each week. She earns a net benefit from her business of 1000-1500 CFA per day. She supports a family of 5. According to her, her husband does nothing.

Better-off households are distinct from households in other wealth groups in many other ways. Monthly income from rental properties provides a steady base of income for many households in this wealth group. Income from businesses also represents an important share of revenues. The main types of businesses noted were boutiques (small grocery stores, auto-parts, etc), restaurants, and wholesale enterprises (e.g. charcoal, rice, beverages). Better-off households also tended to have at least one person earning a daily wage - the profile is generally of a younger man learning a trade, e.g. working as an assistant to a mechanic, mason or tailor. This type of work is seen as an investment in his future employability, quite different to the unskilled day labor more typical to households in poorer wealth groups.

Typical households in all wealth groups with the exception of better-off group have children under 18 engaged in some type of work. Restaurant work (serving plates and washing dishes), selling water, juice, or oranges were activities most cited for girls. For boys, pushing wheelbarrows, carrying bags for market shoppers and shining shoes were noted as common activities. Ages are in a wide range, but the main trend observed is

that children of secondary school age who are not enrolled in school will do some type of work; and even secondary school children often do such work in the holidays. Even if the daily earnings are not considered of importance to the overall household budget (500 to 1000 CFA per day), children who work are able to earn enough to purchase their own lunch (generally around 200 CFA) and have something left over. This is an important contribution given the difficulty poorer households have in making ends meet at all. Although it contributes less than 10% of total income, the work of children is essential for poorer household to meet basic levels of survival. Better-off households, who generally have the means to send all children to school, rarely have children working. Some focus group participants noted that while they do not like the fact that their children work, it is simply not possible for the household to survive without the contribution this work brings.

Sources of food

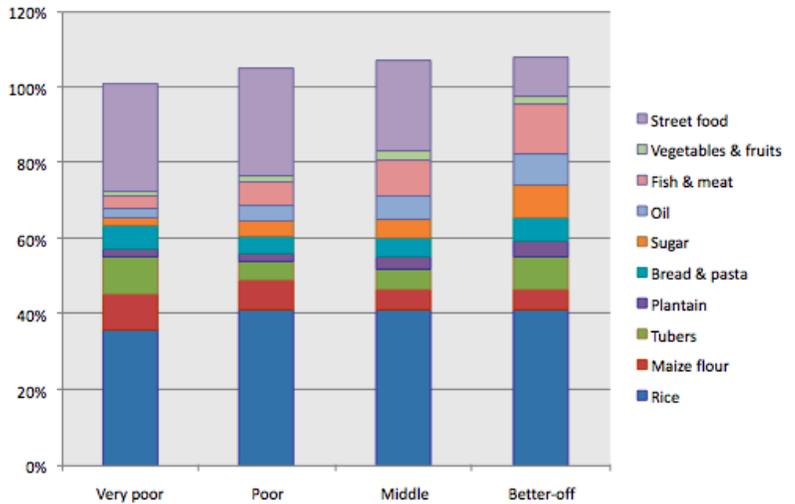
Households in Abidjan's *quartiers précaires* purchase virtually all food consumed. Typically households in all the wealth groups are able purchase enough food to meet basic energy needs, as defined by an average of 2100 kcals per person per day. Generally speaking diets are reasonably varied. The kinds of food purchased are similar across wealth groups; the main differences are in the amounts of non-staple foods purchased and the degree to which street food is consumed (which is far less for better-off households as compared to other wealth groups).

Though there exist some differences in cultural preferences for foods, for example some ethnic groups preferring tubers while others prefer cereals, the similarities between ethnic groups are more important than the differences. What is presented here is the most typical diet for each wealth group, not a reflection of all that is consumed by households in these neighborhoods.

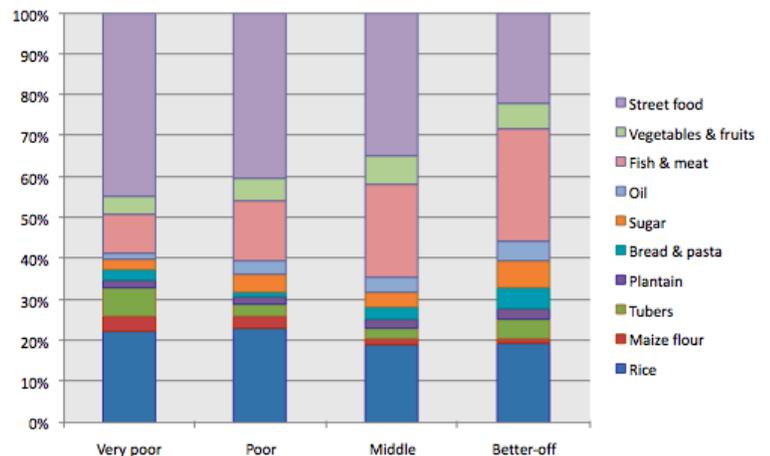
The principal staple for all households is rice, which is mostly imported. Rice is purchased in roughly similar proportions by households in all wealth groups, contributing approximately 35-40% of total energy consumption. For the poorer households at least, it is also the principle source of protein, which they cannot get from tubers. But fish and to a far lesser extent meat also provide essential protein, since beans are rarely consumed and milk is hardly consumed in any form. Rice is eaten at least once every day, even in meals when other staple foods are prepared. There are several different qualities of rice, including long grain, broken, twice broken, and *deni-katcha* (a rice of inferior quality that absorbs more water than better quality rice). Poorer households tend to purchase *deni-katcha* (400 FCFA/kg at the time of survey) while middle and better-off households tend to purchase the slightly more expensive twice broken rice (450 FCFA/kg).

After rice, maize meal and *foutou* (most often a combination of pounded plantain and cassava-*manioc*) are the primary staples eaten at home. Bread too is a regular, although relatively modest, part of the diet for all households, eaten mainly for breakfast (along with the other main breakfast

Coverage of energy needs by food type



Percent of household food expenditures by food type

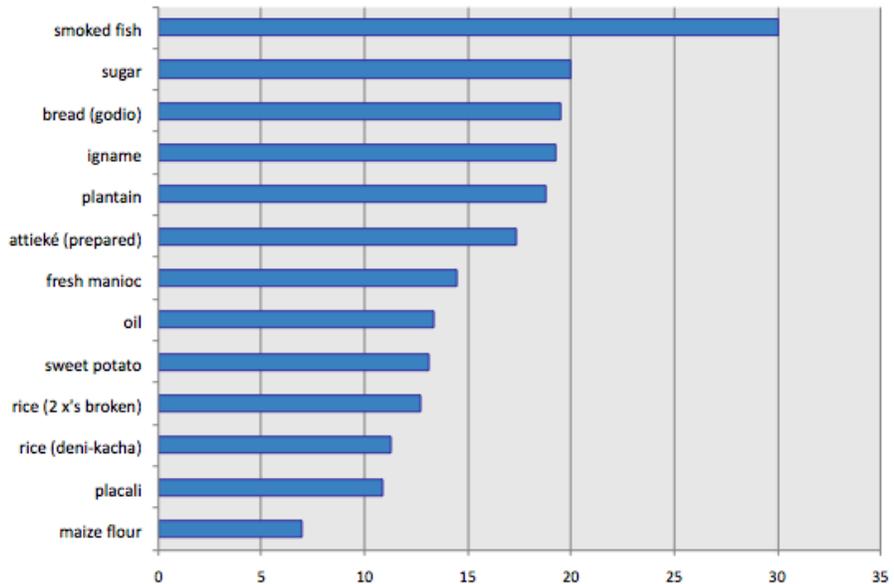


food, notably left-over rice (*riz couché*). Poorer households tend to purchase day-old (*godio*) bread, which is half the price of fresh baked bread (75 FCFA/baguette compared to 150 FCFA for fresh).

Very poor households tend to consume more placali, fermented ground manioc, and sweet potato than other wealth groups, as these are cheaper sources of food. The better-off are able to purchase yams, which are more expensive and widely viewed by households as a luxury item. Placali is often cited as the cheapest food, although it is only slightly cheaper than *deni-katcha* rice. Maize flour appears to

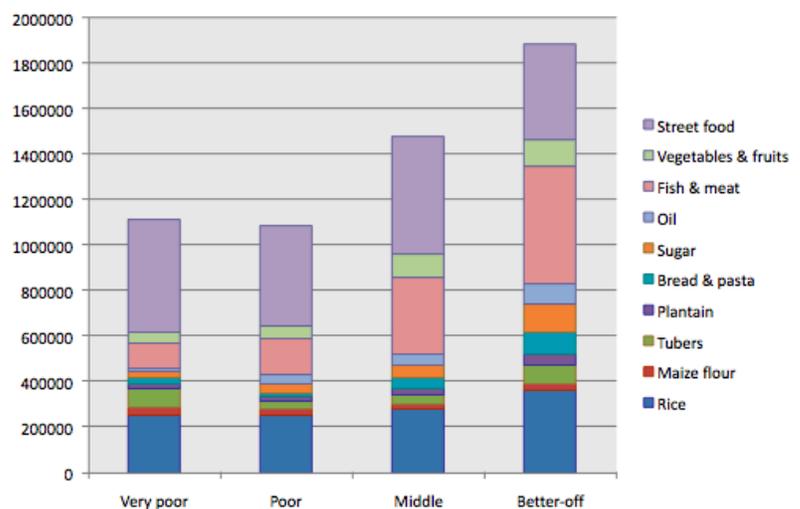
be the cheapest staple, but households say that rice is 'better value'. The percentage of maize flour decreases as wealth status increases, where as other 'luxury' items, such as oil, sugar, fish and meat increase with wealth status.

price per 100 calories (in FCFA)



The graph of total annual spending on food by typical households in each wealth group shows that despite roughly similar household sizes (very poor tend to have slightly larger family sizes than poor and middle households), there is a marked gap between the poorer and wealthier households. It is spending on fish and meat that particularly accounts for this difference. The ability purchase additional fish and vegetables reflects a better quality diet among middle and better-off households, one that is both more palatable and higher in protein and some micronutrients. A difference between better-off and other households is the number of meals prepared at home and the number of times per week a sauce is prepared. Poorer households and many middle households prepare one sauce for two days (*la sauce de deux-jours*), whereas better-off households tend to prepare a sauce each day. This practice is a way of

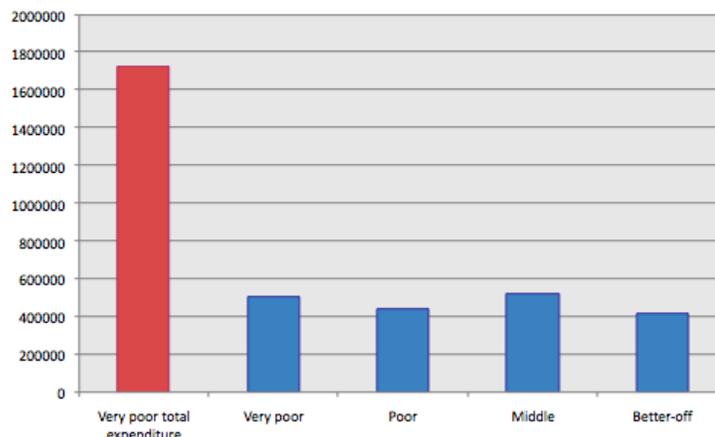
Total annual food expenditure (in FCFA)



minimizing costs – as sort of economy of scale in terms of sauce ingredients as well as the charcoal needed for cooking; and it also a timesaving measure for women who return home only in the evening from economic activities.

Only better-off households reported preparing a meal at home more than once a day: other households typically prepare at home only once per day (and a sauce every two days). It is striking how important street food is: it is the largest single share of food spending for all households (surpassing spending on rice, the principle staple). Rather than eating at home, people in very poor, poor and middle households purchase their mid-day meal on the street. Some

Annual street food expenditure (in FCFA)



members better-off household do also eat outside the home as well, particularly school children and people working in premises far from home. Eating lunch out, far from being a luxury, is a necessity. For people working far from home, the time and cost necessary to travel home to eat are prohibitive. Moreover, the person generally responsible for preparing meals is also working. Even if she is working near home, the opportunity cost of being away from her activity is further reason that purchasing street food is the only choice for her and the rest of the household.

There are a range of options for street food, though most common meals are *attieké*, *placali*, rice and *foutou*. *Attieké* and *placali* are cheaper options (200 FCFA/plate), while rice and *foutou* are the more expensive choices. An analysis of the costs associated with preparing a meal at home for eight people, reveals that the price of a meal prepared at home is roughly equal to one of the cheaper meal purchased out, exclusive of the cost of time to prepare the meal.

The quality of the meal prepared at home is likely to be of a somewhat higher quality, being normally rice-based with a more complex sauce and small amount of smoked fish. On the street people from middle and better-off households tend to spend more per plate than poorer people (300-400 FCFA/plate), perhaps purchasing rice over *attieké* or purchasing a separate piece of meat or fried fish to go along with the sauce. School children are frequently

	Unit	Price CFA / unit	Total (CFA)
Charcoal	2	100	200
water	0.25	120	30
rice	1.5	400	600
oil	1	50	50
onion	1	50	50
tomato	1	50	50
smoked fish	1	250	250
maggi cubes	2	25	50
tomato paste	1	25	25
hot peppers	1	50	50
eggplant	1	200	200
dried fish	1	100	100
Total			1655
Total per person			206.875

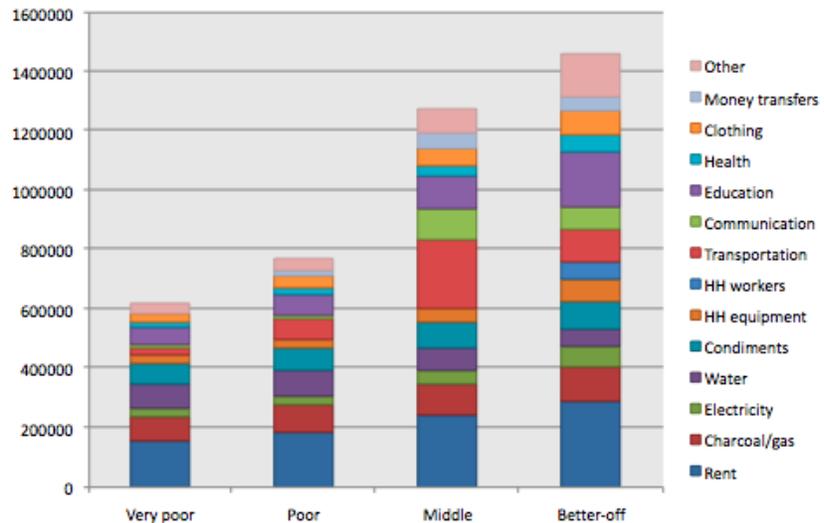
Sample cost of a meal for eight people prepared at home.

minimized as much as possible, as most people from poorer households work in the same area in which they live. Costs associated with communication (mobile airtime) are kept low through the use of telephone *cabines*, where the use of landlines through *cabines* is up to 20 times cheaper than mobile lines.

While poorer households employ these and other strategies to minimize the cost of daily life, there are many aspects of poverty that in fact demand greater expense the poorer one is. Concerning food, it is a near-universal fact that purchasing in bulk is cheaper than purchasing small quantities. But another near-universal fact is that the poorer you are, the less likely you are to have the cash at any moment to make bulk purchases. To be poor is to be condemned to buy

endlessly in small retail amounts, often from day to day. It is about 10% cheaper to purchase a 50kg sack of rice than it is to purchase by the kilogram, and rice is one of the biggest single item of food expenditure: for people on extremely low budgets, that 10% hurts. We might say that it is expensive to be poor.

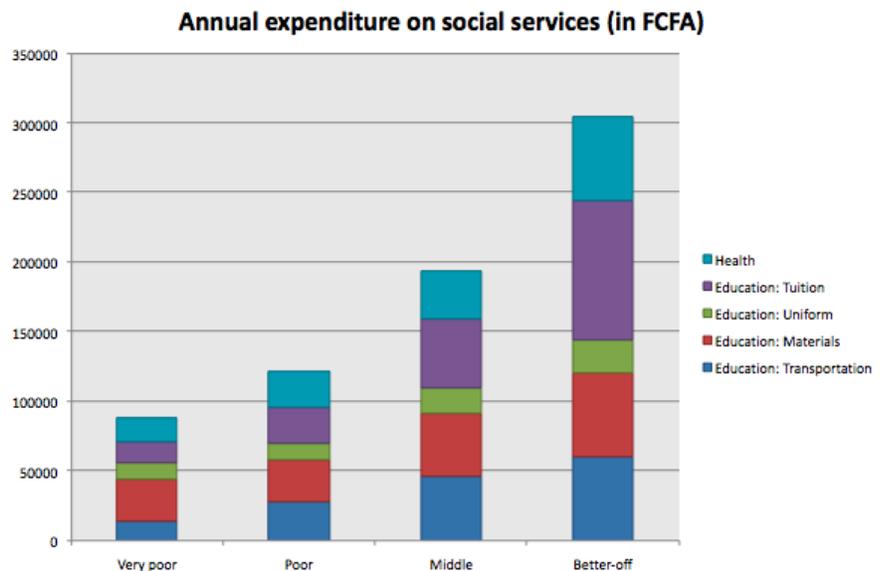
Total annual expenditure- exclusive of food (in FCFA)



In Abidjan's *quartiers précaires*, access to water gives another example of poorer people paying more: most poorer households must purchase water from re-sellers, either by the barrel or by basin, whereas middle and better-off households tend to have access to water through parallel piping (unofficial) or through an official metered water hook-up from SODECI. Poorer households generally purchase one barrel each day at a cost of 225 FCFA/ barrel. This covers the water needed by the household for drinking and food preparation as well as other general household uses (cleaning, bathing, toilets, etc). Over the course of a month, the cost of water amounts to more than 6500 FCFA when purchased from resellers, compared to an average cost of 3000 FCFA for a household with a parallel system, and 2700 FCFA for a household with metered water. Costs of installing a SODECI meter are prohibitive for poorer households (40,000 FCFA) and there is also an added complicating factor that meters may only be installed on legal housing plots (many poorer households occupy illegal plots). The type of fuel used for cooking is yet another example where it is more expensive to be poor. Most poorer households use charcoal stoves to prepare meals while middle and better-off households purchase gas, which is cheaper. The initial cost of the refillable gas canister (25,000 FCFA) prevents poorer households from accessing cheaper gas energy. It should be noted however that all households purchase some amount of charcoal, citing a preference for cooking sauces over charcoal rather than over gas flames.

Middle households generally spend more on transportation and communications. Transportation spending refers both to the cost of getting to work as well as transportation costs associated with purchasing goods for resale (merchandise purchased in Adjamé and resold locally within the neighborhood). As mentioned in the section on income, the ability to pay for transport to Abidjan's central market place is an investment that is paid back through greater daily returns for petty trade activities. Middle and better-off households also see communication - mobile air time - as a cost of doing business. Better-off households reported that mobile phones have minimized the need travel within town, and that they can get most of what they need done by phone. Middle households, with the greatest concentration of trades-people, also rely on mobile phones for maintaining contact with clients and suppliers. The importance of maintaining a link with clients is similarly true for taxi drivers.

Spending on essential social services (health and education) increases with wealth status. Although they spend less on health, poorer households are just as likely to fall ill as their neighbors. Poorer and middle households however tend to use traditional medicines, whereas better-off households are more likely to see a doctor and purchase medication from a pharmacy. Typical



healthcare costs are difficult to estimate because illness is impossible to predict. What is certain is that poorer wealth groups are likely to seek medical care (doctor, pharmacist) only in extreme circumstances. Otherwise all but those who belong to the better-off wealth group tend to self-medicate or to see a traditional healer before looking to modern medicine.

The absolute increase in spending on education as one goes up the wealth groups reflects a greater ability to educate one's children as wealth increases: government school provision is patchy, especially at the secondary level, and inability to pay private school fees can often mean inability to educate one's children beyond primary levels. Very poor households are typically able to educate one out of four children, while better-off households are able to educate all four. Tuition is one of four major expense categories associated with education. The cost of materials (books and supplies) is considerable, eclipsing tuition fees in some cases. Uniform cost per unit is the same for all households, each school child usually having two uniforms per year. Transportation must be paid when there are not schools within walking distance. Abobo neighborhoods tend to have more primary schools within walking distance than neighborhoods in Yopougon, but transportation is generally required for secondary school students. Apart from transportation and occasional activity related expenses, spending on education is concentrated in one single period (September/October) making education one of the

single greatest expenses that households must pay at one time, requiring a considerable amount of cash on hand. For poorer households, it is a yearly struggle to come up with the amount of cash required to pay fees, uniforms and materials.

Primary school tends to be public while secondary school is majority private. Some better-off households are able to afford private education at the primary levels. Private education is more desirable because classroom sizes are smaller and children are able to receive an increased level of attention from their teachers, and therefore a better quality of education. Education is one way for households to escape the cycle of poverty, as better educated children will be qualified for better paying jobs. Focus groups were keenly aware of this fact and expressed strong appreciation of the benefits that come from having educated children. But despite the universal value of education, about 90% of households in Abidjan's *quartiers précaires* are not able to educate one or more of their children for purely economic reasons.

It should be noted that the better-off wealth group presented the most difficulties in terms of understanding overall livelihoods. One of the principle contradictions is that these households are receiving rental income as well as paying rent. What is most likely is that these households are more heterogeneous than implied by the wealth breakdown and income and expenditure information gathered. The profile of many better-off households may well be that of landlords, but there may also be sizable number of better-off households that remain renters despite significant income from trade and commerce. Resolving this point would require further field inquiry; but better-off households can be considered the least vulnerable to probable hazards, and on that basis require less rigorous analysis of their patterns of income and expenditure than the poorer households who are our chief focus of concern.

For most households in all wealth groups, income roughly equals expenditure, with no savings reported. During focus group interviews questions were asked regarding credit, and while occasionally mentioned, it was not widespread enough to be considered typical for any wealth group.

Seasonality

Seasonality, while minimal in the city context, does have some influence on the livelihoods of those living within the *quartiers précaires*. There are some seasonal fluctuations in the prices of foods, particularly for plantains, yams (which are not general purchased by the poor), and fresh fish. The principle staples of rice and cassava are more insulated from seasonal price changes. Vegetables, including tomatoes, peppers and eggplant are extremely costly from January through May. Food prices overall are highest between May and July. While this does not necessarily translate into a hunger season per se, it could be viewed as a period where there is some pressure on at least the quality of food consumed. The most challenging periods for household budgets are September/October, when many education related expenses must be paid, and December, when for many, holiday spending is at a peak.

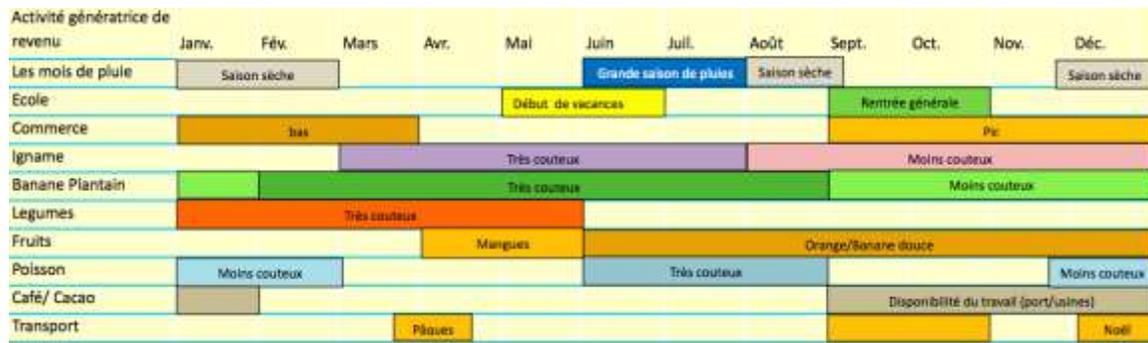


Figure 4: Abidjan season calendar

In terms of income, there may be a greater number of factory and port jobs available from September through January, associated with the handling and export of cocoa and coffee, which are harvested around this time. Petty trade and commerce in general is at its peak from September through December. This increase in trade activity is very much prompted by the need for back-to-school spending as well as by the Christmas holiday. Holidays are times both of increased earnings from trade and increased spending by households. Easter and Tabaski, though they may occur at different points in the year, are times for purchasing new clothing and food for holiday feasts, as well as spending on transport to visit relatives outside of Abidjan. Ramadan, similarly marks a period of increased spending mainly on sugar and fruits. Commercial activities, including petty trade, are at lowest levels following the holidays, and remain at a low ebb through March.

Coping strategies

Abidjan's economic climate continues to be colored by the impact of the post-electoral crisis of 2011 and the accompanying violence, market disruptions, reduction in industrial activities and downturn of the Ivorian economy overall. Throughout the neighborhoods visited during the study, people noted the lack of employment opportunities as compared to before the crisis, and it would not be too much of a stretch to say that households in January 2012 were still coping with the impact of the crisis a year before. It is too soon to conclude definitely that people's livelihoods have been permanently changed, but it is at least likely that the livelihoods of households are adapting to a new 'normal'. We may suspect that the current economic conditions are likely to continue, as the outlook for increase factory work is likely limited and food prices likely to remain high. Looking ahead, the most probable shock is not renewed conflict, but rather increases in the price of staple foods. Poorer households in Abidjan's *quartiers précaires* are highly vulnerable to food-price increases, given their absolute dependence on the market and the lack of any savings cushion in their budgets. It follows that price increases in other essential expenses such as rent, water, transport and education may have a significant impact on households' food security: food quality, at least, may well be sacrificed in order to free money for other necessities.

Given that many households at the time of survey were arguably coping with the continued effects of a shock the year before, the range of options available to households were limited. This was especially so for very poor and poor households who were already working to their limit to make ends meet. Household respondents noted the following, limited options:

Households may **change their patterns of expenditure and reduce overall expenditure**, for example by reducing the money spent on clothing, ceremonies and on 'luxury' items food such as sugar, fish or yams in order to increase expenditure on cheaper food. Expenditure on rice may be reduced in favor of the cheaper *placali*. During the crisis, residents of one neighborhood in Attécoubé said that in the crisis they managed to survive on a diet of *placali* and coconuts. At the time of survey most households, and particularly the poor and very poor, had already reduced expenses on those elements considered essential and therefore had very little ability to make further, meaningful reductions in spending.

Increasing the number of days worked: This strategy is clearly dependent on the availability of labor opportunities, which are unlikely to increase in hard times. Furthermore, most of the poorest households already worked a maximum number of days per month.

Middle and better-off households cited **credit** as a possible coping strategy, but for poorer wealth groups, the extension of substantial credit is less likely, since the creditor must judge the likelihood of repayment. But during the 2011 crisis, many food vendors sold meals on credit to households regardless of wealth status, and landlords reportedly suspended collection of rents for a brief period. Overall, there is a palpable **solidarity in terms of gifts** between neighbors, particularly in times of intense stress, households who have a little more sharing with those that have less.

The first response provided by households when asked about coping strategies was that they **reduce the number of meals per day**. At the height of the crisis in 2011 this was undoubtedly a coping strategy for many households and helped families make it through the most difficult weeks of the crisis. But it is not a feasible adaptation beyond that: people who continue to consume one-third less calories than their energy requirement will soon weaken and be unable to work, and signs of frank starvation will ensue. Such a phenomenon was not reported in Abidjan.

Thresholds

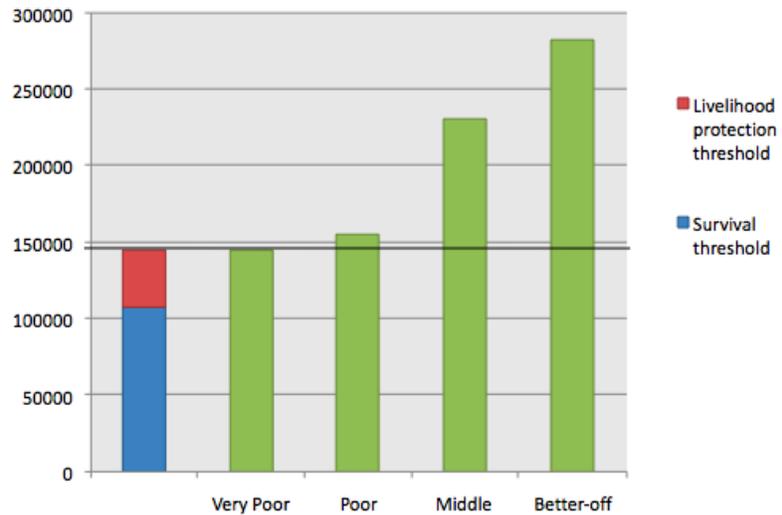
HEA uses thresholds to help determine if households require essential interventions on two different levels: a survival threshold representing the minimum a household needs to ensure survival in the short term and a livelihood protection threshold, which is a quantification of the total income required to sustain local livelihoods in the medium to long term. In an urban context, the survival threshold includes the total food and cash income required to cover 100% of minimum food needs (survival food basket) as well as the costs associated with food preparation (salt to make food palatable, charcoal, matches), expenditure on rent, water and soap for basic hygiene and sanitation (survival non-food basket) and a minimal amount of electricity need to see at night to prepare the household meal. The survival non-food basket includes only those items that are required to ensure basic survival in the short term. Together the food and non-food baskets make up the survival threshold. **Households that fall below the survival threshold require interventions to save lives.**

The Livelihood protection threshold represents the amount of money that must be spent to maintain access to basic services (e.g. education and health) and to maintain livelihoods in the longer term (e.g. transport for work, communication). The livelihood protection threshold also includes spending necessary to maintain a minimum

acceptable standard of living (e.g. expenditure on basic clothing and a small amount of non-staple foods). Spending on street food is considered part of the livelihood protection basket as it is an inevitable part of the livelihoods of petty traders and others working far from home. **A livelihood protection deficit means that interventions to protect the existing livelihoods are required.**

The information on expenditure by poor households was used to prepare the survival baskets as these households are arguably spending the minimal amount to maintain a locally acceptable lifestyle. The composition of these baskets is indicative only and subject to further discussion. For example, it could be argued that the survival threshold should simply offer the minimum of amount of salt necessary to make food palatable, while the

Average monthly income in FCFA



proposed survival threshold below includes condiments (maggi cubes, tomatoes, onions, peppers, dried fish) required to prepare a meal considered locally acceptable. On the other hand, the livelihood protection threshold includes spending on education at current poor household levels, but these households are typically unable to send all children to school: is this acceptable or should the survival threshold make provision for all children to be at school? Only very poor households have income levels that fall below the livelihood protection threshold, as it is currently defined.

		Kgs per month	% total energy needs	Cost per month (FCFA)
Staple food				
	Rice	113	79.1%	45200
	Maize flour	10	7.1%	2500
	Placali	10	3.0%	1670
	Bread	4.2	2.3%	3750
	Oil	2.1	3.8%	3010
Non-staple food				
	Smoked fish	5.7	4.2%	6450
	Onions	3.6	0.3%	1505
	Tomatoes	3.4	0.1%	1505
	Peppers			2000
	Dried fish			2350
	Salt			200
	Cubes			1750
Subtotal: food survival basket			100.0%	71890
Non-food survival				
	Rent			15000
	Electricity			2200
	Water			6772.5
	Charcoal			9030
	matches			150
	Soap			2330
Subtotal: non-food survival basket				35483
Total survival basket				107373
Livelihood protection				
	Survival food and non-food basket			107373
	Telephone units			1250
	Transportation to work			5500
	Education			5583
	Health			2192
	Household equipment			250
	Clothing			1667
	Street food			20400
Total livelihood protection basket				144214

Proposed survival and livelihood protection baskets. Based on household size of 8.

Implications for programming

Livelihoods of households in Abidjan's *quartiers précaires* have been under unusual stress as a result of the 2011 political crisis and its impact on the Ivorian economy. One of the longer term impacts of the events of 2011 and the accompanying economic downturn has been fewer formal employment opportunities, resulting in unusually high levels of unemployment, particularly among men. The root causes of unemployment are beyond the scope and capacity of ACF to address. But there are ways in which poor and very poor households can be supported through project interventions aimed at the informal sector and through the provision of safety net programs. Above all, and whatever action ACF might be able to achieve, advocacy for those living in Abidjan's *quartiers précaires* is needed, and will hopefully be informed by the current survey, perhaps particularly to draw attention to the lack of access among many poorer households to adequate education, appropriate health care and affordable water.

Petty trade, the foundation of the economy for poorer households, is one possible area for intervention. Poorer households tend to earn smaller daily returns on trading activities due in part to the limited amount of capital these households have to invest in merchandise. Even the cost of regular transport to the principle markets to purchase stock is prohibitive for poorer households. Support with small business capital could be provided in a number of ways, including micro-finance programs, one-off grants designed to kick start investment or via support for existing revolving credit schemes (*tontines*).

Poorer households have been seriously affected by loss of income due to reduced labor opportunities for men. Women are able to turn to petty trade, but petty trading opportunities for men are more limited. Unskilled labor is the main option available for men that have lost their job or are unable to practice their trade. The supply of unskilled workers is greater than the demand for their labor. Income generation projects targeting unemployed men could include cash-for-work programs to carry out small public works such as street cleaning or clearing gutters of trash (projects aimed at improving sanitation and environment in the *quartiers précaires*). Men and women who have skills in the trades - carpenters, hairdressers, tailors/seamstresses, mechanics - but who have lost equipment or other capital during the crisis, could be supported through the provision of professional kits (e.g. sewing machines, carpentry equipment, mechanics tools) or through cash transfers that could be used to purchase equipment or to make other needed investments to get a business off the ground. Women in poorer households currently work 6-7 days per week in addition to performing household duties, notably preparing the evening meal. Program interventions should be examined to ensure that they do not place additional demands on women's time.

The results of the current study suggest low levels of school attendance by children among poorer households. One of the main costs associated with school attendance besides school fees is the cost of schoolbooks and materials as well as transportation to school. For poor people on extremely marginal budgets, each expenditure is a serious decision. One possible way of providing an incentive for poorer parents to send their children to school would be through programs that off-set the cost of school materials. Other ways of making schooling as affordable as possible for all households could include a voucher for school lunches. Such a program could help ensure that schoolchildren are able to consume a full meal (as compared to donuts or porridge) while supporting the informal sector that provides these meals. Safety net programs,

whether through the provision of food coupons or direct cash transfers, could be effective in freeing up money that could be invested in income generating activities or used to pay school fees (especially if timed before school fees must be paid in September). However, the contribution of income from working children cannot be ignored: it constitutes up to 10% of income for very poor households. If these children were to attend school, there would be an income gap of some significance. Even though education is clearly a felt priority amongst all wealth groups, for all children to attend school will require both greater government provision and an upturn in the incomes of the poorest households.