



Research in conflict zones: case of CSRS in West Africa

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Outline



1. Research context in West Africa
2. Ivorian socio-political crisis
3. CSRS resilience
4. Lessons learnt
5. Way forwards
6. Conclusions

*Recognition to all the former
CSRS Directors, Scnat,
SwissTPH, funding agencies
and institutional partners...*

CSRS, 1951–2015

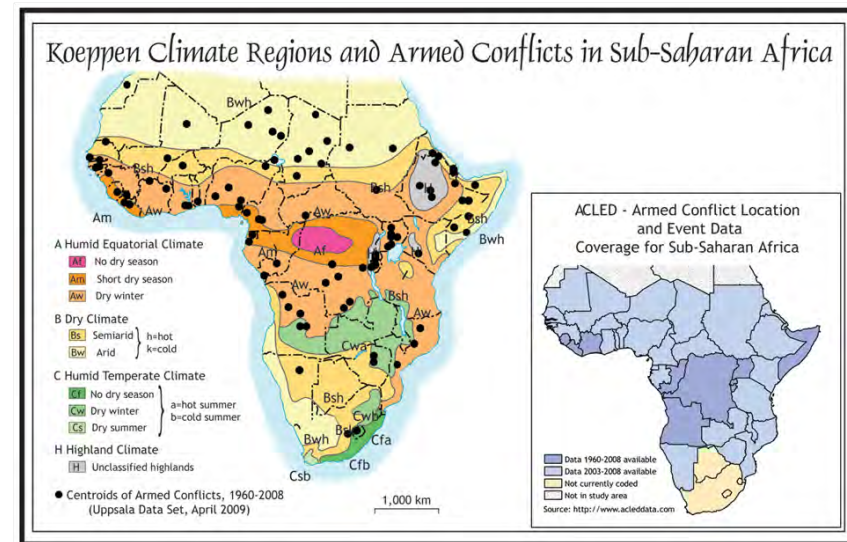
- **64** years, diplomatic status (MESRS–SEFRI)
- **170** researchers (Msc, PhD, Postdoc, Seniors...)
- **7** field stations, specialised labs, HDSS (**45'000** peoples)
- **> 80** projects and partnerships (70% self funds mobilisation)
- **> 100** publications per year
- **10** PhD thesis & **10–15** Masters per year (in collaboration with Swiss, African, Ivorian Universities)
- **6** ongoing interventions (health, sanitation, agriculture, conservation, biodiversity, research governance...)
- **4 major** programs (PASRES, Afrique One, AVECNET, YAMSYS...)



Research context in west Africa



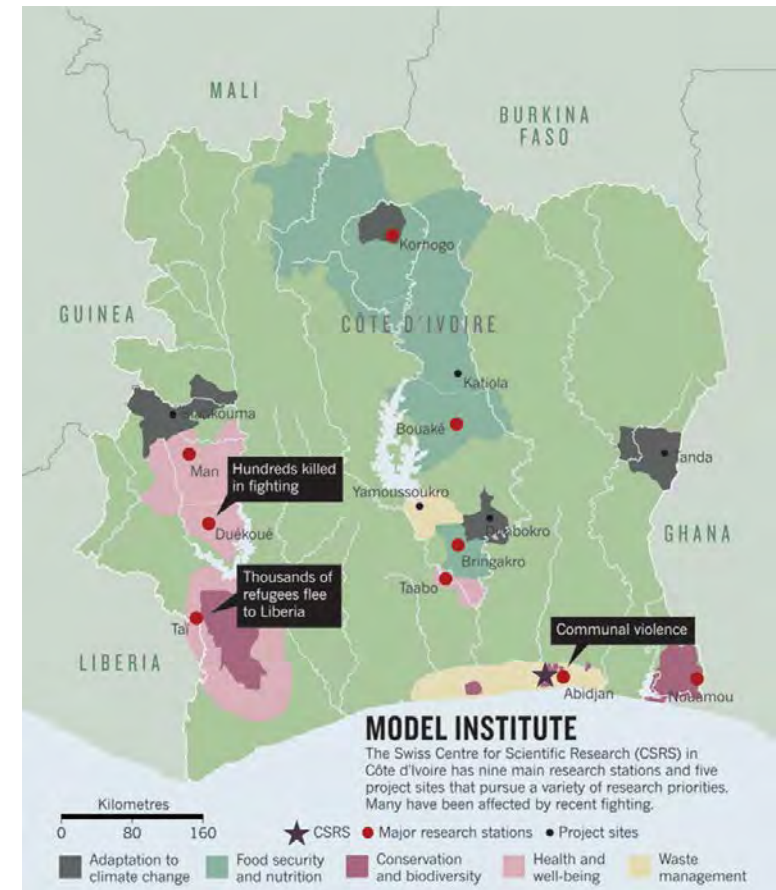
- Armed conflict and war zones → **rebellions**,
- Socio-political unrest/ **election cycles** / **Coup d'Etat**
- Hardship conditions (climate, temperature) Ex. Sahel/ **Boko Haram**
- Cultural determinants and poor health system → endemic diseases, **Malaria/ Ebola**



CSRS in the context



- No interruption activities
- Intensification of activities when many institutions left
- Coverage of the whole country beside the country separation
- Reduced north researchers and increase southern researchers
- Shifting research to intervention (AVS/ SDC)
- Increased admin cost to secure researchers and institutional capital (**Security/ Violence**)



CSRS strategies/ guidelines



- General security guidelines
 - Registration/ contacts hotline (location)
 - Combined information sources/ crosscheck
 - **ONU CI/ Government/ Communication**
 - Embassy of origin of researchers
 - Newspaper/ **internet/ media?**
 - Local network (population)
- Specific security guidelines (written)
 - During election
 - Ongoing Ebola crisis
 - Use of vehicles and behaviour
- Survival behaviour
 - Stock of food and water/ fuel
 - Cash/ Account in Ghana
 - Pharmacy
 - Nice to neighbours (no political position)
- Distance data base security (Swiss TPH)



Institutional, research impacts



- Reduced projects and northern partners
- Maintaining the staff and the administration (**cost**)
- Increased admin cost (**core funding**)
 - Hijacking (3 vehicles, 2 recovered), Investment in vehicle security system
 - Increased **insurance**
 - Security management platform (time)

University Abobo-Adjamé



Enabling conditions



- Continuous **presence** / sensitive to the population conditions
- Funders **flexibility**
- Vision of the CSRS management board
 - SEFRI/ MESRS (**core funding**)
 - NCCR North–South (institutional support, research capacity building)
 - Leading House/ SwissTPH
 - CSRS Foundation/ Scnat
 - Consortium Afrique One/ Wellcome Trust (offer temporary relocation of CSRS in Ghana)
 - Etc...

Sensitivity/ MoU/ Legitimacy



- Research authorisation (without?)
- Export of biological material (document?)
- Supporting universities
- Ethical clearance (Notification?)
- Feedback to the communities (seminars) + **interventions**
 - Ex. Acquiring a drone for mapping « Ministry of defence »
 - Ex. Film in Tai forest Walt Disney
 - Ex. Publications (ownership, authorship....)
 - Ex. No local **institutional root** of researcher

Responsibility



- Get the balance right
 - Research **freedom** and human **security**
 - Shared responsibility: consequences
- Centre of gravity?
 - Researcher (preparation)/ **emotion**, bad filling to leave
 - Researcher parents
 - North supervisors
 - South supervisors
 - Head of local institution → to make decision

Research environment risk analysis



- Part of the institutional management
 - Assessment: hazards identification, exposure/ impacts
 - Risk management (procedures, policy)
 - Risk communication (internal and external)
- Space of communication/ sensitisation
 - Formal meeting
 - Crisis committees
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Estimating the **cost of risk management/communication**



E.g. Ivorian election period



- « I fully understand that cars from the CSRS should not travel in the evening and you like a registration at CSRS first. However, do you think we could make an exception this time? We will arrive at 7pm and we have booked seats next to the exit to get out of the airplane fast. So I don't think we would arrive in xxxxx very late. We would also not mind taking a local car. I would of course take the full responsibility for me and my students. »

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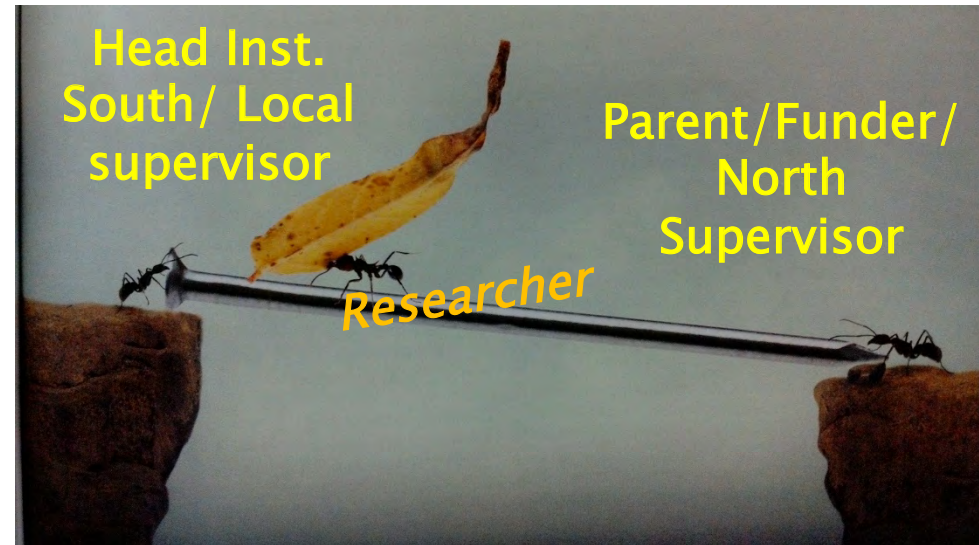
Conclusions



Risk management matters and resources need to be allocated

Cost of security is high and need to support (core funding) institution in conflict zone

Skills are needed for researchers and institution managers





Thanks

Research in a war zone

Bassirou Bonfoh and others offer lessons from a West African institute that has survived ten years of conflict.

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