

2005

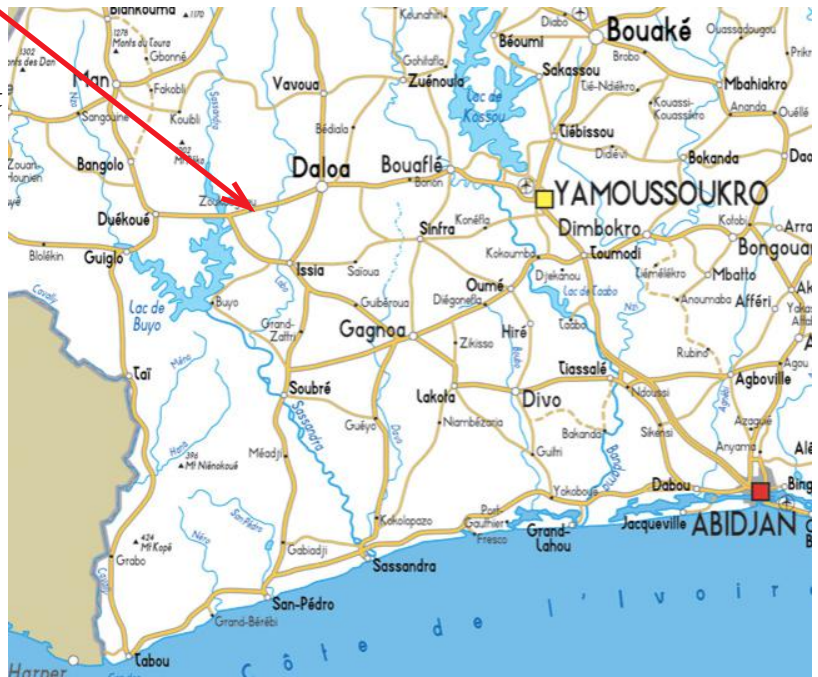
This year, I focused on Côte d'Ivoire. During the preceding year, I earned enough funds through sale of chocolates to be able to make a contribution to the mission of Kavokiva. Evariste joined me--as in 2004.

For the first time, a young man joined us: Justice Whittaker. Justice was in the midst of a trip across Africa, making a series of videos about farming. He had started his trip in South Africa and had visited several countries first before taking the bus from Cape Coast, Ghana to Abidjan. Justice is the son of a friend in California and it just so happened that his trip and mine crossed. He spent a full week with Evariste and me.



Bateguedea

After a trip of about 5 hours, we arrived in Bateguedea, located about 20 km to the West of Daloa on the road to Man. The village is right on the side of the paved road, which means it has electricity. During our time here, we were able to learn more about village life and daily work in the fields.

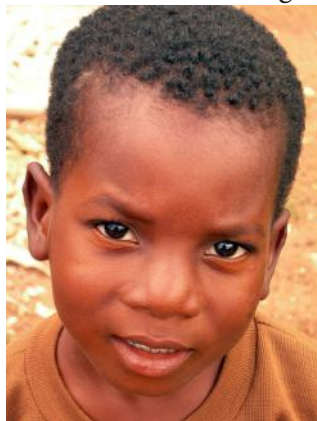




Upper, left. Justice sits in a “maquis” which in this case is a communal dining area. To the right, it’s time bath-time! Plastic articles are common, as they are easily obtained by taking a bus or motorcycle to the nearest small city. The closest is Daloa (see map).



Left: the community shower. The floor is pea gravel with a few stones to stand on. You wet yourself from a bucket of cold water (oooff) and you suds yourself, and then rinse. To the right, the village kitchen. The large black pot is made of aluminum and it is sitting on three stones. Large pots are usually made at the Kaiser foundry near the Akosombo Dam in Ghana. In the background is the chief’s house. The chief’s house is the nicest one in the village.



Children are constantly playing and are almost always in good spirits. They rarely are afraid of strangers. Only rarely has a child cried when he or she saw me; mostly it’s the shock of seeing someone who looks really different. Most of the time children walk right up and want to touch me to see what my skin and hair feel like. It’s very rare for a white person to visit a village. Mostly one sees whites either in the form of missionaries or soldiers.



Above, a young boy does the dishes after the meal. In this photo, you see the importance of metal and plastic. The rocks have been chosen to keep the pots above the flames. Boys and girls have daily responsibilities. To the right, a young mother shows off her baby. Both she and the woman behind her are wearing African wax prints, which used to be made in Africa but more often now come from China.



Left, Karim Bandre, who is a Muslim villager; unlike his Christian friends, he works as a *pisteur*--that is, someone who drives his pick-up truck up the *pistes* or paths to various villages, purchasing cocoa to then sell to the *traitants*, who are often Shia Lebanese who immigrated to Côte d'Ivoire during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990).

We walk to a hamlet nearby. Below, two residents. I love the colors and shapes in these two pictures. And I love the subtle smile on the face of Djabate Chakra, who is standing right in front of a drying area used for rice, cocoa, coconut, squash seeds, and corn.





Left, a garden devoted to African yams (ignames). If you read “The Poisonwood Bible” you’ll remember a scene in which the American missionary ignores the advice of his neighbor who advises him to plant in little hills rather than furrows. He ignores her advice and loses the entire crop when a heavy tropical rain washes all the furrows away. To the right, a common spider, *Gasteracantha*, surveys his world. Found on all the continents except Antarctica, they construct large webs in the brush. They are harmless to humans.



Top, left: on our way, we met Augustin Nekpato Seri. He agreed to respond to several questions about the life of a cocoa farmer. Father on, we ran into Kpokpa Kato Francis in his cocoa grove. M. Kpokpa inherited his land from his parents, who immigrated from Burkina Faso and indentured themselves to a local family in return for being given land at the end of the contract. Below, left, are cocoa beans covered with the white flesh that has an addictive flavor: sweet, sour, and apricot-y. The pod is protected by a thick skin but is easily ruined by fungal spores introduced by the myrids that grow on the foliage of the tree.



Besides cocoa, M. Kpokpa grows Robusta beans, that he sells through a broker to Nestlé in order to make Nescafé. Ivory Coast is fourteenth in coffee production, producing 108 million Kg. Robusta beans have less body, more acid, and higher caffeine content than Arabica beans.



The cocoa farmers of Ivory Coast often also grow rice, *Oryza glaberrima*. This is a more flavorful, and moister rice than the species grown in the West, *Oryza sativa*. The Ivoirians plant it in low spots in the rainforest. Bottom, left: a shelter (ramada) constructed on a dirt mound where children sit and chase away birds with a sling-shot. Right, Marguerite Kipre, who is coming from her rice field. Note her peaceful mien.

Second Visit to Kavokiva (in Gonate)

I visited the Fair Trade cooperative for the second year in a row.



Top-left: I brought two donations (\$700 et \$300), one from the Fair Trade club at my school and the other from my efforts at fundraising. Left-middle: I present the checks to the representatives of Kavokiva Bottom-left: the cooperative tells its farmer-members the current rate for cocoa beans. This comes out to 24 cents per pound, which is double the non-Fair-Trade rate. Top-right: a poster sensitizing members to child labor. Bottom-right: Advertisement for a pesticide posted in the office.

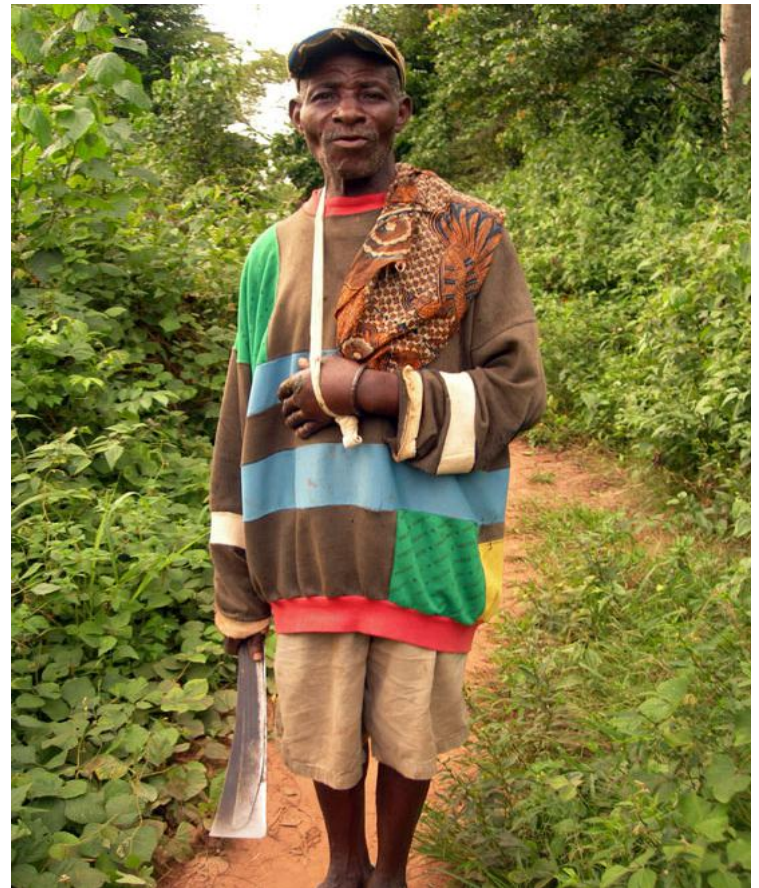


There are more than 1,000 cooperatives in Ivory Coast. Those that are successful are well capitalized. Kavokiva had enough capital at the beginning to provide a service to the farmer--to pay in a timely fashion and to be able to warehouse and ship the beans.

Issia



Issia is a town of about 40,000 inhabitants. The city has two major attractions: one, a granitic dome that rises at least 100 meters (300 feet) above the town and two, Notre Dame de la Délivrance, a beautiful place of pilgrimage that features a grotto that people come to see and meditate in front of. The Issia region is originally Bété, a forest people. But now, the region is mixed--with Burkinabes (from Burkina Faso), Malians, Dioulas (northern Ivoirians), Christians and Muslims. To the left is Tapsoda Koder whom we met on the path. He is originally from Burkina Faso. He came to Ivory Coast to work for his uncle who has a cocoa farm. To the right, a woman carries wood and plantains. The wood might be for grilling plantains or for making a very good foutou (the Ivorian version of fufu that is 100% plantain.)



We began our tour of the Issia area with a visit to the village of Depsa. We came here because Evariste's uncle lives here. Above, left: Jules Dalo. Above, right: Matias Basi Boni. Right, François Drougou Tape.

Below: we continued our tour by walking through a hamlet. Left, a kitchen. Outside the kitchen is rice drying.

Below, right: a little boy playing in the dirt flanked by pigs. This is a sign of a Christian family as Muslims do not eat pork.





Left: Evariste cross the river on a bridge constructed by the French--probably before WWI. Right: this is a structure built by a fisherman who stretches a net across and catches fish. les poissons dans un filet. On the other side, we visited a hamlet of Burkinabes (who immigrated from Burkina Faso) who live right next to the village of Zereguhe. Bottom, left: Seydou Dialo, a Burkinabe married to a Bété (the locals).



We leave the villages and drive toward Issia, a town of 85,000+. Our goal is to visit the “Traitant” (treater) who pays pisteurs to purchase the beans from the farmers, then dries and grades the beans and puts them in new bags before selling them to exporters in San Pedro or Abidjan. Above, right and below: pictures of the courtyard at the Traitant. Bottom, right: the *Traitant*, who is Lebanese (Shia), discusses some matter with his staff.



Galebre



The next day, we left Issia and took the road toward Gagnoa, a distance of about 100 km. Just outside the town, we saw the Cargill treatment center (above right and middle right). Cargill¹⁶ sells to all the very large chocolate manufacturers in the U.S., and over 75% of American chocolate is Ivoirian in origin.

We turned toward Galebre, where we had a meeting with the management of Kedesh, a non-profit from Abidjan which at the time at received a grant from the U.S. to fund its efforts to prevent exploitation of young people, especially of orphans (see top, left). Below, left: young men learning the craft of weaving. Just to the right, Roger Gnepoh Courtois, the director of Kedesh. He is wearing a shirt made in their clothing factory. Immediately below: a "pagne"¹⁷ made of woven material.





Top, left: I am holding a bunch of African rice that is being dried. Middle, left: raising hens. Bottom, left: Kedesch also offers a formal education in this classroom. Top, right: decortication of rice by pounding. Bottom, right: a cocoa nursery.



Left: the students in the Kedesch program learn to make shoes. Right: a lake on the property which formed in the abandoned quarry established by the French colonialistss to mine gravel for paving of roads. During the colonial period, the roads were maintained in good shape. After all, the more product that goes to market, the more money for French banks. The roads are awful now. Why? Côte d'Ivoire has not had the money. Here are four potential explanations: 1) President Houphouët-Boigny borrowed heavily from the World Bank in the early 80s. But when the price of cocoa plummeted by 75%, the WB demanded the institution of a Structured Adjustement Program, which impoverished the country by cutting salaries, sometimes up to 50%; 2), Corruption and theft of the public treasure by the upper class; 3), The civil war which lasted almost 10 years; during which both the North and the South sucked money out of farmers in order to purchase weapons; and 4), The establishment of the universal currency, the CFA which is pegged to the value of the Euro¹⁵. This means that when the Euro loses value to other world currencies, the West Africans can import less but export more.

There are possibly other explanations, but I am not enough of an expert.