

World Bank approves \$100m development programme targeting underserved western Côte d'Ivoire

May 26, 2026



The World Bank has approved a \$100 million financing package aimed at expanding access to basic services, improving local infrastructure and creating economic opportunities across western Côte d'Ivoire.

The Community and Local Development in Western Côte d'Ivoire Project (COSO West), funded through the International Development Association (IDA), is expected to benefit around 1.8 million people across the Montagnes District, one of the country's most underserved regions despite Côte d'Ivoire's wider economic growth.

The programme focuses on reducing long-standing regional inequalities by improving access to water, health, education and local economic infrastructure while strengthening community-led development and governance structures.

Targeting regional inequality through local delivery

While Côte d'Ivoire remains one of Sub-Saharan Africa's fastest-growing economies, the World Bank said significant disparities remain between urban growth centres and rural western regions.

In the Montagnes District, rural poverty stands at 54%, while access to basic services remains significantly below national averages. Only 9.5% of households in the district currently have access to running water, falling to just 0.6% in rural communities.

The COSO West programme will channel investment across 35 sub-prefectures within the Tonkpi, Guémon and Cavally regions.

“By putting communities in the driver’s seat, COSO West will ensure that Côte d’Ivoire’s national growth story translates into real, tangible improvements in people’s daily lives,” said Marie-Chantal Uwanyiligira, World Bank Division Director for Côte d’Ivoire, Benin, Guinea and Togo.

“We are building the critical infrastructure — from health centres and schools to clean water systems — that can withstand shocks and empower local populations to drive their own development.”

Community-led delivery model

The project builds on the earlier COSO North initiative and places local communities at the centre of project decision-making and implementation.

Using a geospatial targeting system, the programme is designed to prioritise investment in the areas facing the greatest development challenges.

The project also includes measures aimed at strengthening local governance and social inclusion, including targets to ensure women hold at least 30% of leadership positions within Village Development Committees.

This reflects a growing trend across international development programmes toward participatory project delivery models that combine infrastructure investment with local governance and capacity-building initiatives.

Focus on jobs and economic resilience

Alongside infrastructure development, the programme includes direct livelihood support aimed at stimulating local economic growth.

Approximately 46,000 beneficiaries — including 27,000 young people and 15,000 women — will receive targeted livelihood grants to support income-generating activities and small business development.

Regional investments will also fund value-chain infrastructure such as:

- storage facilities
- agricultural processing units
- local production support systems

The aim is to strengthen local economic resilience while creating wider employment opportunities across agriculture and associated sectors.

For project professionals working in development and infrastructure delivery, the programme highlights

the increasing integration of economic inclusion, gender participation and social impact metrics within major public investment projects.

Water infrastructure central to programme goals

A major focus of COSO West will be improving water access across vulnerable rural communities.

The programme aims to extend basic water services to at least 360,000 people, addressing one of the region's most significant infrastructure gaps.

Water security projects are becoming increasingly central to development programmes across Africa, particularly as climate pressures, population growth and rural inequality place greater strain on existing infrastructure systems.

Infrastructure as a platform for long-term resilience

Beyond individual projects, the World Bank positioned COSO West as part of a broader strategy to strengthen long-term resilience, local governance and inclusive economic growth.

The initiative reflects how modern development programmes are increasingly structured around interconnected objectives:

- infrastructure delivery
- poverty reduction
- climate resilience
- gender inclusion
- local governance
- economic participation

For project and programme leaders, the initiative demonstrates how large-scale development projects are evolving into multi-dimensional delivery programmes requiring coordination across infrastructure, community engagement, governance and economic development objectives simultaneously.