

# **DRAFT BACK TO OFFICE REPORT**

**MARCH 26-28, 2008**

**CONAKRY, GUINEA**

**A. Background**

**B. Purpose of the mission**

**C. Conclusions**

I. Government ownership

II. Regional Response and Capacity through the Mano River Union

III. Mind shift to education, learning and training: Second Generation of CFS and Talent Academies

IV. Disrupted schooling - Visit to the border

**D. Next Steps**

## A. Background:

Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone share common borders as well as common tragedies with past catastrophes and potentially threatening surge of conflict and violence within their boundaries and across their borders. The post conflict areas and regions, mostly rural, find themselves left with a badly affected education system. At the same time, in the main cities and urban areas, adolescents and young people have few outlets to channel their legitimate hopes and aspirations, and remain exposed to wrong choices and influences. What should be the future economic and social forces of the country are in fact a ticking time bomb of violence, social disruption and fragility.

Guinea has had its fair share of instability with negative impact on the education system. After a military coup in 1985, Guinea's educational indicators were low. According to various estimates, illiteracy rates stood at approximately 72%, and primary gross enrollment rates for girls were among the lowest in the world, estimated at less than 25% of the school population. In the mid-1980s, Guinea's education system embarked on its first set of reforms since the Sekou Touré era. Most importantly, the language of instruction was changed from eight national languages to French, and a new program of teacher training was developed to accommodate this change.

In 1989, a system-wide reform under the Education Sector Adjustment Program (PASE) was initiated. During PASE's first phase (1989-1994), a limited number of bilateral and multilateral financial partners (principally USAID, French Cooperation, and the World Bank) provided conditional non-project budget support for the restructuring of the country's primary education system. Collaborative planning and decision-making among the Government of Guinea and its partners in the education sector was particularly effective. After the start of the second phase of the project (1994-1999), the relatively broad participatory planning process that had existed at the beginning of the decade had deteriorated and, at the same time, the number of international donor agencies had increased substantially. The original three major donors were joined by the African Development Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency, the European Union, Germany's KfW/GTZ, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, and UNICEF, and others, for a total of about 20 external partners.

The main donors in education are World Bank (US\$ 5M including higher education, GTZ, French Cooperation, and USAID for planning and good governance). The catalytic fund of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) has also allocated an important amount to education.

Because of conflicts in the neighboring countries and attempted incursions into Guinean territory in 2001, much of the central government's budget was shifted to the military, and since 2004, few funds have been available for decentralized<sup>1</sup> education structures. Recently, the Ministry of Finance and Planning publicly announced an increase of budget allocated to education.

State budgetary allocation to education is currently 14% (40% for primary education; 20% for post primary; 15% for secondary; 26% for higher education; 0.1% for early childhood and 2% for adult literacy).

---

<sup>1</sup> In French, the terms "structures déconcentrées" and also "services déconcentrés" are used for all administrative services of the Government found at regional, prefectural, and sub-prefectural levels. The term "décentralisé(e)" is reserved for bodies composed of or including elected representatives of sub-national constituencies. We use the term *decentralized* in the English version of this report to refer to both.

## Education for All

Guinea's *Education for All* (EFA) program was officially launched in 2002, covering a planning period of 12 years, with emphasis on three major areas of intervention: **access, quality and management** - as a framework for technical and financial partners' interventions. But families still bear the brunt of the heavy indirect costs of schooling. Gender and rural/urban equity in basic education remain low. Access to primary education is increasing though completion rate remains low; **post-crisis areas** are particularly concerned with a low enrolment rate and gender violence. Instruction is still marked by poor quality levels of teaching, planning and management (at various levels).



Map of Guinea

With World Bank financing, the Ministry of Education has begun to transfer operating expenses to regional and prefectural levels in 2001, continuing through the 2003-04 school year. However, efforts to promote budgetary decentralization of the educational system through technical assistance have been particularly difficult to implement. The UNICEF Country Office is committed to the decentralization of supply and contract allocation processes, both for the sake of efficiency as well as alignment with national policy and local capacity building.

Overall, the education sector benefits from a good coordination which provides the necessary framework to bring partners together. Between 2000 and 2005, progress towards the MDGs has been slow or inexistent. Guinea is one of the countries worldwide with the least progress in child survival. Basic social services are

rudimentary in many areas. Outside of Conakry, only 20% of schools have access to water and there is only 1 latrine for every 120 children.

The Education sector program approved by the Ministry of Education and its partners focuses on three projects: ECD, primary education, non formal education. It builds on opportunities with UNGEI and WFP. A national steering committee monitors the pedagogy.

### UNICEF support

UNICEF supports the Education sector program through core areas such as literacy programs in conjunction with preschools; planning and management of the education system, non formal education centers with special curriculum and prevocational activities (NAFA centers for 10-14 year-olds). The 200 NAFA centers in Guinea leave room for expansion, with the creation of additional NAFA centers. There are also interventions on Koranic schools in two districts (Dinguiraye and Dabola), an assessment of nomadic education, and building of pre-schools, especially in rural areas. Since 2002, UNICEF has been working closely with communities to open preschool centers (CEC). Indeed, ECD is very vibrant in Guinea in terms of community participation and addressing the quality determinants. In 2006, the World Bank supported the ECD project in 6 districts. Educators' salaries, which communities cannot afford, remain a major challenge. Women associations are taking care of the salaries for the preschool-centers attached to the NAFA centers.

The five focus areas are:

SP 1: Policy development, planning and management.

SP 2: Access and equity.

SP 3: Quality.

SP 4: Community participation

SP 5: Post crisis areas

Other areas of intervention include: CFS; the Back to school and Go to school project; civic education; reduction of violence against girls; training of trainers; girl domestic workers; non formal education; working closely on hygiene, water, child survival and protection.



Out of school children in Forécariah standing outside a NAFA center set up by UNICEF

The UNICEF country programme includes **education in post crisis** areas, as a sub-project which needs to be strengthened. Half of the education budget of the UNICEF Country Office program goes to post crisis areas. Main intervention areas are Forécariah (Kindia) where UNICEF has had one of its successful interventions in education during the crisis period; and Faranah and Guinée Forestière, a post conflict border area with 2 Million refugees, a very low GER, and which is under a joint UN program with UNICEF as the lead. The most vulnerable areas are in post crisis areas and along border areas of countries within the Mano River Union (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone). These areas present opportunities for joint UN programming. At the same time, there is urgent need to target communities in the poorest areas and situations with specific approaches, strategies and initiatives.

## **B. Purpose of the Mission:**

- (i) Introduce and explore support for two initiatives *a) Learning along Borders for Living across Boundaries* and *b) Talent Academies* and
- (ii) Advise on concrete steps for taking these initiatives forward
  - in addition to the current country programme
  - in terms of advocacy, planning and logistics
  - in terms of financial resources, technical inputs and partnership support

The *Learning along Borders for Living across Boundaries* initiative and the *Talent Academies initiative* are designed to support education, security and development in Guinea and three other post-conflict countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire).

Following internal discussions by the visiting team with the UNICEF Representative and his staff, extensive discussions were held during meetings with senior staff of the Ministry of Education, as well as UNCT partners, researchers, several other non-UN partners active in education.

## **C. Conclusions:**

The two initiatives presented by Dr. Cream Wright were well received, and expected to be endorsed at the National Education sector review to be held in April 2008.

More specifically,

### ***I. Government ownership***

The meeting with key government officials was held to introduce and explain the two initiatives that aim to provide education, promote recovery and development within a secure environment to post conflict populations (*Learning along Borders for Living across Boundaries*) and to address the needs and aspirations of adolescents and youths who have missed on schooling and development because of conflict (*Talent Academies*). The presentation was very well received and assimilated by all counterparts including the local communities. They welcomed the mind shift in rethinking education and development that the concepts hold, and also the practical feasibility of implementing the initiatives and their social outreach.

Mr. Sékou Kaba, Secretary General, Ministry of Education, enthusiastically welcomed the *Learning along Borders for Living across Boundaries* initiative, which he saw as contributing not only to education but also to national and regional development and security, and as an alternative which would:

- 1) *Reinforce the links and exchanges* between the four countries of the Mano River Union, and bring young people and communities across the borders closer.
- 2) *Develop rural areas* and stop rural migration
- 3) *Provide quality education* to children and young people in their regions

The *Talent Academies* initiative, he said, would:

- 1) *Remove young people from mediocrity* as it would allow young people to be ambitious and aspire to better things.
- 2) *Kinder interest and recognition* whereas vocational training is not well perceived, he said, as it only looks at traditional skills

Mr. Kaba asked whether UNICEF would finance the initiatives, or whether costs would be shared with the government. Dr Wright explained that UNICEF would fund the initial pilot projects but it was expected that the state would eventually take over, and that ownership would be ensured from the start. The Secretary General said that he intends to recommend both initiatives to the Minister, and requested further documentation for presentation to the Education sector review (scheduled for April 2008) to leverage national consensus, partnership and mobilization. Ms Hadja Fatoumata Tété Nabe Diallo, Minister of Gender, also stated that she would raise the two initiatives at the next Cabinet meeting, and would fully support them.

The government counterparts are therefore keen to see the initiatives take off as soon as possible. They are prepared to take the lead and ensure ownership of these initiatives that UNICEF would facilitate. In this regard, the UNICEF Country Office and the Government will discuss where and how many schools should be built along the borders; as well as the subjects to be taught in the *Talent Academies*. Discussions will also look at costing and designs.

## ***II Regional Response and Capacity through the Mano River Union***

Through their scope and span, the two initiatives were welcomed as being potentially key elements for consolidating Mano River Union's response and implementation capacity of its policies; as well as foundational for peace building, security, social and economic development of the region. The Mano River Union encourages joint UN programming across borders. The *Learning along Borders for Living across Boundaries* initiative and the *Talent Academies initiative*, common to the four countries, would indeed mark a very strong contribution from UNICEF in this direction.

## ***III Mind shift to education, learning and training: Second Generation of CFS and Talent Academies***

The importance of education and learning tailored to address specific needs and targeting overall development issues and national capacity building has been recognized. All counterparts agreed on the importance of tackling forgotten neglected areas and using new technology to improve the quality of life of communities through the *Talent Academies*. While being innovative, it can also build on existing or old school disciplines which can be reawakened (volleyball, basketball, football). Competitions could be organized to identify new talents especially among girls. Sport is proving to be an excellent channel for emancipation/promotion of girls' and women's rights in rural areas, and community mobilization for girls' education. Competitions have provided an excellent opportunity to advocate and raise awareness on girls' education. It was particularly interesting to observe that in areas traditionally religiously conservative, girls were allowed to participate in the eleven-day competition, which took place about 200-300 kilometers away from their homes. Sport and education in crisis and post-crisis areas, especially for girls, represent a good opportunity to reduce gaps between girls and boys.

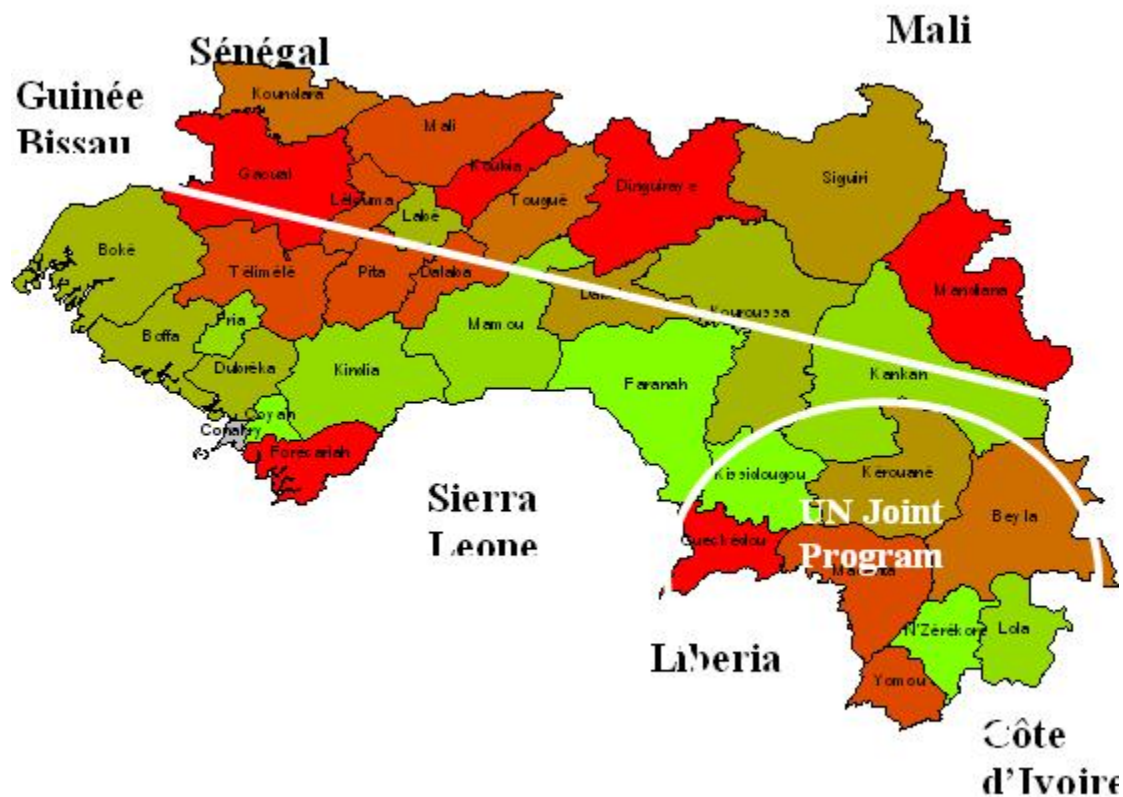
The schools of the *Learning along Borders for Living across Boundaries* are intended to be high quality Child-Friendly Schools, not just another school, but an initiative that would signal to the community that something good is happening in their area. These are schools seen as purposeful and safe learning environment (latrines, solar energy, connectivity, child-centered teaching and learning etc.) that can also create local employment. The purpose is to build schools that are healthy, energy smart, environmentally sensitive, using connectivity – that complement and enhance learning, making use of all available

resources; schools designed with the learners and communities in mind, and which will be centres of focus for the community.

#### *IV Visit to the border - Disrupted schooling*

The field visit's objective was to discuss the initiatives with provincial officials, teachers, parents, youths and other stake holders, as well as to conduct some basic reconnaissance regarding potential sites for the location of border schools, standard of living in these border communities and level of local skills available to participate in these initiatives. The initiative was welcomed by the community, as well as the Préfet, who is herself very active in combating child trafficking. In this regard, she has established an agreement with authorities in Sierra Leone, whereas any citizen of either Guinea or Sierra Leone caught in child trafficking will be prosecuted under the law of the country where they are held.

The field visit to the border, at Forécariah-Pamelap, revealed the dire needs of the children and the community. Lack of water, hygiene and sanitation, poor roads, disrupted schooling, poorly equipped schools, more out of school children than children attending schools, although UNICEF has set up learning centers (both formal and non formal as well as preschool centers), and is supporting efforts to combat child trafficking. Hopefully, the *Learning along Borders for Living across Boundaries* initiative will help establish a "social watch system" in the region and contribute to combating child trafficking.



#### **D. Next steps:**

- ⌚ **Conceptual clarity and implementation steps** - Provide conceptual clarity as well as define implementation steps for both initiatives with the government counterparts
- ⌚ **Advocacy** - Ensure an advocacy strategy to (i) maintain momentum; (ii) secure strong government leadership; (iii) secure support of key external partners; and (iv) promote **community ownership**.
- ⌚ **Decisions in consultation with government** - Discussions between the UNICEF Country Office and the Government to decide on:
  - (i) Border areas to be covered by the *Learning along Borders for Living across Boundaries* initiative and the number of CFS in each of the border areas
  - (ii) Type of Talent Academy for priority action, the number of Talent Academies to be established, and their location.
  - (iii) Roles and responsibilities for Government lead and UNICEF facilitation
- ⌚ **CFS programming & technical tasks** - Address immediate CFS programming & technical tasks:
  - (i) Design of facilities, equipment, teacher training etc. for CFS in border areas
  - (ii) Costing of full implementation per CFS in the border areas
  - (iii) Incorporation of CFS standards in national sector review as a priority
  - (iv) Financial implications for national budget and donor support budgets
- ⌚ **Talent Academies programming & technical tasks** - Address immediate *Talent Academies* programming & technical tasks:
  - (i) Design TA specifications for facilities, equipment, instructor training etc.
  - (ii) Costing of full implementation per TA
  - (iii) Development of criteria for selection by talent (youth focus group discussion)
  - (iv) Links with current Technical and Vocational Education and Training programs
  - (v) Financial implications for national budget and donor support budgets
- ⌚ **Sub regional focus** through:
  - (i) UNCT joint support across the 4 countries
  - (ii) Involvement of MRU/ECOWAS Secretariat
  - (iii) Possible coordination by Regional Office
  - (iv) M & E across the 4 countries, as well as joint progress reviews for each initiative
  - (v) Setting national and regional standards
  - (vi) Facilitating exchange of technical expertise and other resources between countries
  - (vii) Sharing of experiences and learning together (including through meetings of Education Officers of the four countries)