

A YEAR IN GUINEA

SUMMARY REPORT 09



Girls celebrate the end of a training course

3 GOOD REASONS why Plan works in Guinea

- One in five children in Plan's working area dies before their fifth birthday
- 40% of children do not attend school and fewer than one in three adults can read and write
- Only half the population has clean drinking water
- Abuses such as early marriage, female genital cutting, child labour and child trafficking are widespread

Our priorities in Guinea

- Improving children's health and nutrition
- Enabling more children to complete their basic education, especially girls
- Promoting children's rights and getting children involved in development
- Supporting community organisations and local government to improve local services



A legal training workshop for young people



GUINEA FACTS

Capital: Conakry

Population: 9.2 million

Language: French (official). Eight African languages are widely spoken

Climate: Generally hot and humid; monsoonal-type rainy season (June to November) with southwesterly winds; dry season (December to May) with northeasterly Harmattan winds.

Economy: Guinea has considerable potential for growth in the agricultural and fishing sectors. Soil, water, and climatic conditions provide opportunities for large-scale irrigated farming and agro industry. Possibilities for investment and commercial activities exist in all these areas, but Guinea's poorly developed infrastructure and political challenges continue to present obstacles to large-scale investment projects.

"Guinea's situation is a paradox. It is blessed with natural resources and potential but its population is among the world's most deprived. The challenges are high, but there is hope with the goodwill and co-operation of our partners in development."

— Ibrahima Touré, Plan's Country Director

A YEAR IN GUINEA

SUMMARY REPORT 09



A discussion on women's health practises.

The Bigger Picture

Plan is working with children, families and whole communities to address the problems that Guinea faces. This report can only tell a small part of that story. As a further insight, last year we also:

- Helped 250 working children to go back to school, and provided another 150 with vocational training
- Supported the building of 111 classrooms, including four education centres for children who have dropped out of school
- 87% of households in Plan's project area now have access to clean drinking water, compared to a national average of between 46% and 51%

Your support as a sponsor is crucial to achieving these positive results. So on behalf of the communities, partner organisations, and most of all the children we work with – thank you!

“Now teenage girls can delay motherhood until they've finished their education and are better able to take care of their children.”

To learn more about Plan's work in Guinea visit www.plan.org.au/ourwork/westafrika/guinea



FOCUS ON: IMPROVING CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND NUTRITION

A healthy mother is crucial for a child's wellbeing, yet one in every 20 Guinean women dies from causes directly related to pregnancy or childbirth, and poor maternal health is also a major cause of newborn deaths. Only 38% of women give birth with a skilled health worker present, and fewer than one in ten women use contraception.

Plan is helping to make motherhood safer. We provide family planning services, and train and equip midwives and traditional birth attendants, so that women can have ante-natal care and give birth supported by a skilled health worker.

SAVING LIVES

Every year, thousands of Guinean women die or become seriously ill as a direct result of pregnancy or childbirth, and thousands of babies die before their first birthday.

One reason for this is that the country has one of the lowest rates of contraceptive use in the world. Family planning, after all, is one of the most effective ways to improve mother and child health. It means women can space their pregnancies, which increases breastfeeding, protecting babies against diarrhoea and other infections. It also helps women to limit pregnancy to their healthiest childbearing years. Women under 20 or over 40 have increased risks of having babies with health problems including low birth weight, birth defects and malnutrition.

Yet in Plan's working area, only a very small minority of women use contraception and women give birth to an average of six children each. Efforts to increase contraceptive use are held back by poverty and illiteracy, as well as lack of information, cultural barriers and shortages of contraceptives.

But now a new Plan project is enabling women to choose when to have children.

The project is based in Tèmèssadou in southern Guinea. When the project began two years ago, only 11% of women in Tèmèssadou were using contraception. Most people didn't know about it, and those who did thought it was for older women who had lots of children. Many thought young girls using contraception risked mental health problems and infertility.

Now, with Plan's support, local community workers get involved in family planning, health posts are staffed by experienced health workers, and contraceptives are readily available. Women receive counselling to help them make an informed choice about which contraceptive method is best for them.

“Family planning, after all, is one of the most effective ways to improve mother and child health.”

Impressive results

The rate of contraceptive use in Tèmèssadou has now increased from 11% in 2006 to 30% in 2008, with women like 40-year-old Koumba keen to take control of their fertility. She has been pregnant seven times and has six surviving children, the youngest aged three.

“When I first heard about family planning services, I went to the health centre the next day,” she says. “After a counselling session, I chose contraceptive injections. I opted for modern family planning, because I cannot continue with abstinence and I cannot deny my husband. After seven pregnancies, I need to rest, but my husband doesn't agree.”

It's not just older women who are benefiting. In Tèmèssadou 43% of teenage girls are mothers, and many girls leave school early because of pregnancy. Now teenagers like 15-year-old Tewa can delay motherhood until they've finished their education and are better able to take care of their children.

“I found out about family planning from school friends, who went to awareness sessions organised by our district health post. I told my mother what I'd learned, explaining it could help me avoid unwanted pregnancies and be able to continue my studies. She insisted I sign up. A health worker showed me several family planning methods and I chose contraceptive injections.”

Tewa is a pioneer. She's enthusiastically telling her friends about family planning, and providing an example for other young women. Thanks to Plan, and girls like Tewa, family planning is becoming less of a taboo, giving more women more control over their own lives, and protecting their children's health.

Some names have been changed for child protection and privacy purposes.



A note on family planning

Plan aims to increase access to family planning information and services, but not actively to promote or discourage particular methods of birth control. Rather, we aim to raise awareness of the issues and allow women to make the choice for themselves.

plan.org.au