VOICES FROM RURAL GUINEA ON THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS AND BOYS

Client:
UNICEF

Princeton Team:
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Toni J. Sethi

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Questions or comments regarding this report may be sent to Nii Addy at naddy@princeton.edu.
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<td>AME</td>
<td>Mothers’ Associations</td>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
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<td>APEAE</td>
<td>Parents and Friends of the School Association</td>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>Literacy Vocational centers</td>
<td>MEPU-EC</td>
<td>Ministry of Pre-University Education and Civic Education</td>
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<td>Early Childhood Development Centre/CEC</td>
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<td>NFQFE</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
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<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
<td>PASE</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Program</td>
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<td>DNEE</td>
<td>National Elementary Education Directorate</td>
<td>PRSP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>DNEPPE</td>
<td>National Directorate for Pre-school Education and the Child Welfare</td>
<td>PUP</td>
<td>Parti de l’unit et du progress (Unity and Progress Party)</td>
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<td>SIPS</td>
<td>Sector Investment Programs</td>
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<td>Prefectural Directorate of Education/Directrice préfectorale de l’Education</td>
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<td>SWAPS</td>
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<td>Technical Assistance Team</td>
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<td>WCARO</td>
<td>West and Central Africa Regional Office</td>
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<td>Human Rights-based Approach to Programming</td>
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<td>Water, Environment, Sanitation</td>
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<td>National Institute of Research and Teaching</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Princeton University team conducted a nine-day visit to Guinea, hosted by UNICEF/Guinea. Its project objectives were to understand the issues currently facing girls’ education and to provide recommendations based on the field visits.

In Conakry, the capital city, the team interviewed members of the international community, the national government and local organizations involved in Guinea’s education policies. The team then visited UNICEF-sponsored formal (AGEI) and non-formal schools (Nafa centers) in selected rural regions (Dubréka, Kindia, Kolenté and Dabola) and conducted semi-structured interviews with local government officials, parents, teachers and students.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Guinea’s sustained primary school enrollment increases over an entire decade make it an international success story, especially in girls’ education. By one measure, the net enrollment ratio for females has risen from 18 in 1985 to nearly 30 by 1998.2 Gross enrollment for girls rose from 22 to 40 over the same period.2 This ratio was 49 by 2000-1, according to World Bank (EFA) data.3 According to 2003 figures, approximately 65% of Guinea’s school age children now begin first grade, and approximately 44% of school-age girls enroll.4 Since the literature on girls’ education abounds with strategies for enabling girls’ education, we were interested in exploring what specifically contributed to this success and more importantly, to what extent the community had accepted the goal of increasing girls’ participation in education.

We recognized three key planes that determine the success of the education of girls, and the education system in general. These planes are: i) within the school; ii) in the community; and iii) at the policy and strategy planning level (which usually concerns the national and international players, who have an important influence on the school and the community).

The principal actors who can effect change and influence the progress of girls’ education are: the teachers, whose interactions within and outside the classroom have a bearing on whether girls stay and learn in school; community members, in particular the parents, who make the decision about sending and keeping girls in school; and community power-holders, such as religious leaders, who exert significant influence in the society and can publicly endorse girls’ education. Equally important are local government partners who have direct interactions with community members and can facilitate and monitor concrete implementation efforts on the ground. National partners and the international donors have crucial roles to play in jointly devising strategic national policies and prioritizing scarce funding. Some international donors also promote behavior change at the community level through direct work with NGOs.

There are many continuing challenges and obstacles that need to be overcome on the road to universal girls’ education and education for all in Guinea. Our discussions with community

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1 UNESCO Statistical Yearbooks; UNESCO EFA CD-Rom 2000 and Website.
2 Ibid.
4 IES, December 2003.
members revealed concerns about the school system which we have categorized under the following four themes: infrastructure and funding; relevance and quality of education; retention, completion and performance of girls in primary school; and community ownership, and partnerships in the education system. A summary of the impressions, findings and recommendations from the study are presented below.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUNDING

Infrastructure and funding were two issues repeatedly described as critical challenges to educational initiatives in Guinea. There is a need for:

• Sustained and efficient construction of schools;
• Providing supplies, equipment and other teaching materials;
• Further incorporating the transportation needs of students and teachers into current initiatives; and
• Addressing the issues of teacher salaries and their housing needs.

Construction of Infrastructure and Provision of Materials

Many of the interviewees expressed infrastructural needs, such as the need for adequate buildings, materials and other supplies. Administrators, local leaders, parents and learners alike noted that one of the main draws of Nafa centers is their promise to provide practical skills to the students that they might use for future employment. We found, however, that Nafa centers are lacking either sufficient supplies or diversity of trades taught. Without the materials necessary to teach a trade, or with too many students all learning the same trade (which could over-saturate the employment market, thereby depressing wages and limiting job opportunities), one of the Nafa centers’ main draws of providing wage-earning skills is threatened. Future enrollment in Nafa centers could suffer if this problem is not sufficiently addressed; in fact, it was cited by girls attending Nafa centers as a reason why some of their classmates abandoned school.

Infrastructural shortcomings also directly affect the problem of retention. Many people with whom we spoke echoed the widely-held view that the reason many girls do not go on to secondary formal schooling is that the schools are too far away. The Guinean government has made some investments in village infrastructure that expand access to education, such as the installation of water taps and coal stoves. These facilities remove the necessity of going to a well for water or to fetch wood, tasks that might normally require daughters to stay at home rather than going to school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In formal schools, prioritize funding for activities that will help retain girls in school (transportation facilities, etc.). Assistance, especially in the provision of infrastructure should continue, with the local communities being integrated in the management of such assistance through measures such as their involvement in construction, training and
employment of teachers locally, distribution of teaching materials and equipment, and linking education access with improving the community’s access to transportation.

The main recommendation to date has been to build more schools locally so that girls might continue their education in the formal system, or secondarily to build more Nafa centers to address the gap in educational pursuit for girl students of secondary-school age. An alternative policy to pursue—that may be cheaper and more quickly attained—is to minimize the distance problem by providing transport to schools in far-away places. While it may seem better in the long run to establish schools closer to these girls’ homes, one viable temporary measure may be to simply improve safety and costs (in both money and time) by providing free, safe and reliable transportation to the secondary schools.

Also, bearing in mind the need to prioritize scarce funding, it is advisable to ensure that each Nafa center is fully equipped and has at least the bare minimum capacity to provide skills promised, and then increase the number of skills provided in each before continuing expansion to other regions. The products of the training centers, such as clothes, can be bought by donors and communities for their own use.

**Attendance and Tardiness of Students and Teachers**

Students, teachers and parents cited that attendance of teachers and students—but especially that of teachers—was considered problematic in all of the sites visited. Inconsistent attendance represents a confluence of factors, ranging from untimely compensation of teachers to lack of individual accountability. A useful response especially favorable in ensuring student attendance was pioneered by the Nafa centers: to design its school timetable based on community input. The result for Nafa centers has been a flexible schedule that takes into consideration girls’ household responsibilities.

In addition, the need for more teachers—and better teacher support—was evidenced in discussions with teachers and parents. The lack of teachers relates to the unattractive teacher salaries and conditions of living. There are problems with teachers not getting salaries on a regular basis.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS**
  - Formal schools may want to borrow from the positive feedback on the Nafa centers’ flexible timetables. Improved support of teachers—most notably in the form of timely remuneration, and better communication between national and local governments with schools that can facilitate the monitoring and enforcement of teacher attendance—may ameliorate prevalent teacher absenteeism.

**II. RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

Our discussions with the community reaffirmed quality as being “relevant to context, to needs (both ‘needs now and needs later’) and to humanity”.

Skills-based Practical Education

Those interviewed during the study agreed that the formal school system is handicapped by its inability to provide practical skills to the students and its weak link to providing livelihoods. Also, despite the benefits of having some practical skills being taught at the Nafa centers, those interviewed suggested that there is a need to diversify the skills that are being taught.

Language of Instruction

In most places we visited it was apparent that the local languages are used in the classroom to teach, in addition to French. However, there were no text books available in the local languages because instruction in local languages was officially “discontinued” in the mid 1980s. To the extent that the local languages are being used, it is important that the necessary support be provided to facilitate learning.

Women as Caregivers and Providers

One of the techniques to sensitize the community toward the usefulness of girls’ education is the “selling point” that an educated woman becomes a better caregiver and, more significantly, another bread-winner in the family. Nafa centers promise to teach girls practical skills that give them an advantage in the local marketplace, and thus position them as income-earners. A man looking for a wife may consider this a good quality, and thus will be more likely to choose an “educated” woman as a wife. This is another refrain that we heard often from teachers and parents as well as government officials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is the need to increase the relevance of education through measures that improve the social and economic status of a community, while affirming the self-identity of its members. Because of the low relevance of the education provided in formal schools to children—and also due to other socioeconomic factors—we see problems of enrollment and retention, especially for girls. By linking all aspects of education to the overall being of the individual and the community, through measures such as the learning of practical skills and the oral and written use of the languages that one employs in daily communication, education becomes less abstract.

Experiences in several countries indicate that children who started education in their mother-tongue performed, on average, significantly better than the graduates of standard primary schools, as comprehension of a second or foreign language is facilitated by the foundation which the first language provides. Given that local languages in oral and written form are being successfully used to sensitize community members and parents, there is evidence that local languages provide an important communicational bridge. Parents that have learned to read and write, even in just their local languages are more likely to be engaged and provide assistance in their children’s quest to read and write in local languages and French.

However, in sensitizing communities to educate girls, there is the need to emphasize the benefits of education beyond improving ones earning ability - education develops the

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individual and society as a whole. Community sensitization programs could emphasize role of education as an end in itself and for the development of the girl individually. This may eventually promote higher education enrollment, attendance and graduation for girls—and it may also reinforce the notion of education as a right. As in all issues concerning education, the role of the government and international community, including donors, is to sensitize the community to new ideas, and allow the community to then decide for itself what the role of education will be.

III. RETENTION, COMPLETION AND PERFORMANCE OF GIRLS IN SCHOOL

Despite the strides made in increasing girls’ enrollment, keeping girls in primary school and enabling them to graduate remain critical challenges facing the Guinean school system. In other words, enrollment is only one component of promoting positive educational outcomes for girls; supporting high scholastic performance and attendance throughout primary school are two other key, but less successful, components. Girls in Guinea still drop out at a greater rate than boys, and fewer girls do well in school. In 1997, only 57% of Guinean girls reached the final year of primary school compared to 73% of boys, and only 33% of girls took the seventh grade exam compared to 44% of boys. Increasing girls’ educational performance and improving their rates of retention throughout primary school comprise Guinea’s next frontier of challenges in girls’ education; because even while enrollment rates are increasing, low female completion rates are alarming.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Sensitization programs should evolve with their successes in promoting enrollment of all children, including girls. For example, sensitization programs can begin to develop existing messages to emphasize the importance of high performance, punctuality and graduating from school. The current dissemination network, notably rural radio, promises to be an effective venue for building onto existing messages that sensitize communities about education.

**Teachers’ Role**

Another issue that is evident is the role of the teacher as disciplinarian. Many students and teachers mentioned this point, and students noted that one advantage of the Nafa center teachers is that they only cane those children who are “at fault.” Parents stated that they thought a good teacher was one who could discipline children, among other factors. Also mentioned was the important role the APEAE plays in resolving conflicts among students, or handling situations in which students feel that they have been punished too severely by a teacher.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the preference for the methods that are used by Nafa center teachers, ideas should be shared between the training centers for Nafa trainers and the regular teacher training schools. Overall, teachers should be trained in disciplinarian methods other than corporal punishment. There should be a continued effort to place conflict management in the domain of the community via the APEAE. Additionally, the benefits of female teachers should be further studied, and communities that choose to make it a goal should receive the necessary support from the donor agencies and the government.

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8 Ibid. and also Promoting Primary Education for Girls in Guinea. CDIE Impact Evaluation, 1999.
IV. COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS

Community Role and View

Parents, local government and the community at large realize the importance of education, and they also recognize their central role in providing education. They noted that cultural perceptions have changed remarkably, and they genuinely believe that girls can benefit from education. Formal education is perceived to lead to better employment opportunities, and yet few highly significant retention gains have been observed. Non-formal education is seen mostly as a “[a] second chance” at schooling for deprived girls, although some stakeholders see potential for its skill-based, practical teaching to be incorporated into education in general.

From discussions with people within the school system and in the communities, it appears that great strides have been made in getting the community to “own” the idea of girls’ education. UNICEF’s Social Contracts9 with communities engage them in the ownership and sustainability of efforts to improve the quality of education in Guinea. Sensitization programs appear to have been successful in increasing awareness. Rural radio initiatives also appear to be very popular and effective. However, challenges remain in addressing the relevance of retaining girls in school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Active community involvement should continue to be encouraged. Community involvement with donor-financed projects ensures better identification of needs and locally appropriate project implementation – key components of sustainability. The donor community should continue to strengthen its partnerships with Sub-Equity committees, CPC’s, DPE’s and other community institutions. While community financing is considered a positive development for spreading costs, it may all too often become regressive with communities shouldering a disproportionate share of the burden. Therefore, one needs to be cautious of the costs that are being taken over by communities.

Community participation can be increased by giving community members a bigger planning and implementation role in school construction and teacher selection, and by involving non-parents. This will help them gain financial and non-financial ownership of the process and allow them to add local relevance to the school system. Recommendation of such an expansion has to be judicially balanced with understanding how to minimize under representation of various minority groups—especially women. One suggested approach is to create “Educated Communities” in which adult literacy programs and related social campaigns target women, who then overcome their fear of community participation, and become empowered and engaged in the education of their children, especially girls.

Sharing community information laterally via media such as radio and hand-written newsletters may yield positive competition among communities as they may strive to highlight their successes. Additionally, there should be more information sharing among the organizations that are working on sensitization, to exchange ideas about how to

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9 These agreements are designed to ensure community participation in UNICEF-supported projects, such as building schools.
increase community ownership of the initiatives. Community theater and short films, such as those based on the Sara Communication Initiative (described later), could also be broadcast in popular theatres where movies are screened.

**Local Training of Teachers**

A related issue is that teachers are currently trained in the capital city and other more-populated areas and then sent out to rural areas to teach. This adds the sometimes prohibitive cost of independent housing to the teachers’ list of out-of-pocket expenses. It also requires teachers to move away from their families and support systems.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS**
  
  This problem may be overcome by training local community members to work as teachers in their hometowns. This may also bolster the communities’ sense of ownership over their schools, if children from within grow up to become teachers in that same area. Additional training for these teachers in the capital city or another place could be included as part of the training to become a teacher.

**Reporting Structure and Communication**

There is a strong need to improve communication among schools and to strengthen the reporting structure from local schools to the national level education directorates. This could help to articulate school needs for new materials, supplies, and to report problems such as delayed teachers’ salaries. In our conversations with teachers, it was not apparent that such a system exists. A bottom-up reporting system could leverage the existing system used for top-down communication, and would thus only require putting in place a formal reporting structure.

**CONCLUSION**

Over the last decade, significant progress has been made in girls’ education in Guinea. The potential for further progress depends on continued efforts by the national government and the international community to support and encourage implementation at the local level. The commitment to girls’ education by parents, teachers, community members and local government is critical; however, the government of Guinea and international donors are essential partners in continuing to sensitize parents and communities, and prioritizing legislation and funding that support girls’ enrollment and retention in the school system. For example, donors are instrumental in building secondary school infrastructure, and based on expressed community interest for practical training, expanding vocational education curricula to simultaneously support and stimulate local economies.

Our overall recommendation is to direct funding towards those measures that impact girls directly (and automatically benefit everyone else). This is distinct from the more commonly used approach of promoting activities that benefit students overall and have an impact on girls only by extension. For reasons that have been repeatedly cited in many other studies—and reasons that will be echoed in this report—girls have special and differentiated educational needs. Prioritizing those interventions that facilitate girls’ attendance, participation and success is the most effective way to improve a country’s education indicators—for females and for the population as a whole.
INTRODUCTION

A Princeton University team conducted a nine-day visit to Guinea, hosted by UNICEF/Guinea. The objectives of the visit were to: 1) understand the progress made regarding girls’ education; 2) hear the stories and voices behind the issues currently facing education, specifically girls’ education; and 3) to provide recommendations based on the field visits.

Our report was commissioned by the Education Office of UNICEF/New York and its Guinea field office, which is specifically interested in better leveraging its relationships with its partners. These partners include the Government of Guinea, local non-government agencies, local governments, and international aid agencies. UNICEF is seeking more qualitative data and analysis in order to make decisions regarding the sustainability of its initiatives.

The UNICEF/Guinea office is particularly concerned about the sustainability of its education project endeavors. For this, they requested policy recommendations on two levels: (1) strengthening partnerships with the donor community as well as with the Guinean government; (2) improving strategies based on analysis of quantitative and qualitative data gathered at the local level. Furthermore, they wanted a report that would not replicate earlier studies on girls’ education in Guinea, and one that would be both innovative and independent.

The Princeton team approached the problem of education for girls in Guinea from the perspective of the primary stakeholders who are at the receiving end of these initiatives: parents, teachers, administrators, and students (both female and male). These stakeholders are connected to formal schools operated under the African Girls’ Education Initiative (known as AGEI schools) and to non-formal schools (known as Nafa centers). Thus, this report provides such qualitative data from formal and non-formal schools, and of males and females, in two ways:

- A compilation of interviews with i) parents; ii) students; iii) teachers; iv) local government representatives; and iv) a grassroots organization.

- Research findings and recommendations categorized under the following four themes: i) infrastructure and funding; ii) relevance and quality of education; iii) retention, completion and performance of girls in primary school; and iv) community ownership, and partnerships in the education system.

The objective of the visit was to identify pathways and barriers to education from the perspective of these stakeholders, and to examine the existing partnerships between the government, local non-government and other community organizations and international agencies providing education in Guinea. We analyzed the effectiveness of UNICEF/Guinea’s strategies in improving the performance, access and quality of both formal (AGEI) schools and non-formal schools (Nafa centers) in rural and urban Guinea. We spoke with relevant stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and students, as well as local and national government officials and groups, and non-government entities. Our conversations with these stakeholders formed the basis of our policy recommendations.10

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10 In the interactive paradigm, educational policy is viewed as an interactive process, knowledge being socially constructed. It is not only a rational and technical approach. Educational policy is thus viewed as continuous processes of negotiations among stakeholders. See Reimers and McGinn., (1997); Hartwell (1994).
There is a dearth of qualitative data regarding girls’ education overall. With regard to Guinea, aside from one known case study on Nafa centers commissioned by UNICEF, limited qualitative research has been undertaken, especially in rural Guinea. Conversations with USAID referenced a 1998 study\textsuperscript{11} that assessed students’ perceptions of their own abilities and that of their peers, examining differences by gender. In 1999 USAID conducted interviews and focus group discussions with parents, teachers and local administrators of four primary schools in Lelouma prefecture in Middle Guinea.\textsuperscript{12} UNICEF is keen on filling this gap in qualitative data. The participatory rural appraisal techniques that we adapted are not frequently used as a research tool in rural Guinea, and thus the information we gleaned from our visits to communities allowed us unique insight into the key issues identified by local stakeholders.

**GUINEA: HISTORICAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROFILE**

Guinea is located in West Africa and has a population of over 8 million, more than half of whom are girls and women. Over 72% of the population lives in rural areas, and over half of the population is under 18 years old.\textsuperscript{13} The main religion is Islam with over 85% of the population being Muslim.\textsuperscript{14}

After gaining independence from France in 1958, Guinea was led by President Ahmed Sekou Toure until his death in 1984. His quarter-century of influence was marked by policies that stifled expenditure and expansion in public sectors such as health and education, especially in rural regions.\textsuperscript{15} During Toure’s time there was minimal emphasis on education, which was provided only in indigenous languages\textsuperscript{16} (namely Peuhl, Malinke and Soussou).

In 1984, upon Toure’s death, a military coup brought Lansana Conte to power. Conte won Guinea’s first multiparty presidential election in 1993 as well as the latest election in 2003, each time under boycott by opposition groups. Under

| Table 1. Population and Education Statistics\textsuperscript{1} |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| **General Statistics**      |                  |
| Population                  | 8,200,000        |
| Male                        | 48.70%           |
| Female                      | 51.30%           |
| Rural population (%)        | 72.50%           |
| Urban population (%)        | 27.50%           |
| Population under 18 years old | 52%             |
| **Health Care**             |                  |
| % without access to healthcare | 40%           |
| under five mortality rate   | 20%              |
| **Economy**                 |                  |
| GDP/Capita (PPP)            | $1,982           |

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<td>% of 7-12 year olds in school</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of 7-12 year old girls in school</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of 7-12 year old boys in school</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of girls in primary school</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of girls in secondary school</td>
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<tr>
<td>% girls in university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nonformal Schools</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Nafa centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% girls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{2} Sutton et. al., 1999, CDIE Impact Evaluation.

\textsuperscript{12} ‘UNICEF in Guinea 2002-2006’


\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
Conte, the centrist roots of the Toure regime persist, but notable changes have occurred, particularly in the strong, informal commercial sector that has cropped up particularly in urban settings, and seems to be driving the local economy.\(^{17}\)

**National Education—Education For All and Girls’ Education**

In 2003, approximately 17\% of the national budget was earmarked for education, with approximately 65\% of that allocation going towards teachers’ salaries.\(^{18}\) With the efforts of the Guinean government, on national, prefectural and local levels, and many international donors and NGOs, inroads have been made to emphasize the importance of education. Today, the emphasis is growing toward the “life-cycle” approach, with the goal being a “human-rights-based approach to programming” (HRBAP) for the education sector.\(^{19}\)

The focus on education through sector wide planning and programming began with the Structural Adjustment Programmes in Education (PASE I and II) and continues today with the Education for All (EFA) Programme 2001-2013. Much still needs to be done to encourage girls to enter and finish school, as well as to ameliorate the gender gap in enrollment, retention and parity in education; however, many inroads have been made towards emphasizing the importance of girls’ education. By one measure, the net enrollment ratio for females has risen from 18 in 1985 to nearly 30 by 1998.\(^{20}\) Gross enrollment for girls rose from 22 to 40 over the same period.\(^{21}\) This ratio was 49 by 2000-1, according to World Bank (EFA) data.\(^{22}\)

Gender (along with HIV/AIDS) is also one of the cross-cutting themes of the Guinean government’s strategic approach to education, the Education for All program. Regional data consistently point to a wide gender gap, as shown in Table 2. This program seeks to provide access to schools, increase enrollment, improve the quality of education and decentralize school management. The implications of gender in each of these areas need to be considered, and a special focus must be placed on promoting the education of girls. Guinea, moreover, was fortunate in that from 1994 to 1997, the minister of secondary education was a progressive woman, Aicha Bâh Diallo, who was very effective at raising the public’s awareness of the importance of girls’ education, and served as a powerful role model for what educated girls could achieve.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guinea</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conakry</strong></td>
<td>93</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kindia</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boke</strong></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labe</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mamou</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faranah</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N’zerekore</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kankan</strong></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{17}\) Ibid.
\(^{18}\) Ibid.
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
\(^{21}\) Ibid.
Creation of Nafa centers

One approach the government has used to provide Education for All is the creation of Nafa centers to provide a three-year program providing basic education and job skills for older students. The practical skills taught today in the Nafa centers fit well into the commercial centers that dominate the local economy, as described above. At the Nafa centers, girls learn skills that they can then bring to the marketplace, such as reading, math, writing, and trades such as weaving and jam-making. Girls are prioritized in admission to Nafa centers, and the overwhelming majority of students enrolled are female.

National Equity Committee

Another powerful force for girls’ education within the government has been the National Equity Committee. Created in 1994, this committee brings together people from different ministries (including the three ministries responsible for education) to address issues of gender equity and equity between rural and urban areas. They have been involved in revising the curriculum to remove gender stereotypes, adding issues of gender to teacher training, raising community awareness about the importance of girls’ education, providing make-up classes and tutoring for girls, and supporting infrastructure projects that are key to girls’ school enrollment.

Structure: Prefectural education and coordination system

For each prefecture, there is a Prefectoral Education Directorate / Direction Préfectorale de l’Education (DPE), which oversees and coordinates the education-related activities. The DPE is primarily responsible for the formal schools and the Nafa centers in the prefecture.

Another key actor in education at the prefectural level is the Prefecture Coordinating Cell / Cellule Préfectorale de Coordination (CPC), which serves as the arm of the government at the local level. The CPC coordinates the activities of all partners working in the prefecture, including those that work on education; it is unique in that it is financed and supported by both the Prefecture and UNICEF.

A key organ of each CPC is the Rural Development Committee / Comité Rurale de Developpement (CRD), which is charged with assessing and prioritizing the needs of the community. A Technical Service Team / Service Technique provides technical support for the prefecture. Based on the needs that are prioritized by the community, a three-year plan of action is drawn up for the Prefecture; and the CPC coordinates the various functions of the partners by holding monthly meetings. These structures have been developed with the aim of decentralizing authority in the communities and engaging greater community participation for development.

Each sub-prefecture has an elected CRD, similar to that at the prefecture-level. There is also a local development plan, which is drawn up after “town hall” type meetings.

The members of the CPC typically collaborate with other programs and organizations in the prefecture to address various issues, such as orientation and sensitization on AIDS, communicating with all leadership, etc. CPCs focus on the following five programs:
1) Health of women and children;
2) Child development and education;
3) Social protection;
4) Communication (includes rural radio and community advocacy in order to enable changes in behavior); and
5) Community Development (includes micro-finance, cooperatives, monitoring and evaluation).

**International Involvement in Educational Policy**

As a result of its participation in the African Girls’ Education Initiative (AGEI) since 1994, Guinea was placed on the “Fast Track Initiative” by the World Bank in 2002. The Fast Track Initiative (FTI) is a partnership of developing countries and donors created to help low-income countries achieve the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Completion of Primary Education by 2015. Girls’ education has become a priority for many developing countries in the last decade, especially in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa where millions of girls do not go to school. Indeed, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan reiterated the importance of this issue when he noted that “educating girls is not an option, it is a necessity.” In Guinea, 48% of girls aged seven to 12 are not in school, and adult women’s literacy rate is 20% whereas it is 50% for men.23

**The Road Ahead**

The continuing challenge lies not only in increasing enrollment and closing the gender gap, but also in emphasizing retention and equity/parity of education for girls. To this end, the government and the international donor community have undertaken a program aimed at sensitizing communities towards these needs, and breaking down the economic, social/cultural, and religious barriers to sending girls to school. The national sensitization campaign that is led by the government (at all levels), the community members, and the international donor community and NGOs has come a long way in changing people’s minds about girls’ education, but there is still much to be done.

**Education: Finding the right policy mix**

The experience over the last two decades reveals the challenge of striking the appropriate policy mix between providing access, promoting enrollment, and ensuring quality education and completion of school. USAID’s 1999 Impact Evaluation points out that between 1989-1997 the percentage of girls enrolled in primary school rose from less than 18% to 37%. During that time the percentage of children passing the seventh grade exam fell from 57% in 1989 to 41% in 1997. The seventh grade entry exam pass rate for girls has also fallen since 1989. Only 33% of girls who sit for the exam succeed, while 44% of boys pass. The same study also notes that girls struggle from an early age: the 1998 results of the new second grade criterion-referenced exam show that girls do not perform at the same level as boys, even at that early stage. This shows that girls as young as age eight are already lagging behind boys in learning achievement. World Bank calculations confirm this fact and show that one out of 10 boys is able to complete the journey through secondary schooling, whereas only two out of 100 girls are able to do the same. Girls also lag behind on various other performance indicators such as retention and repetition, as shown in Table 3.

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26 Ibid.
Table 3. Dropout, Retention and Completion Rates for Boys and Girls, 2000-01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary Education</th>
<th>Lower Secondary</th>
<th>Upper Secondary</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop out rate (%)</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition rate (%)</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>years to complete</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% complete</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prior to the country visit, the team prepared itself through desk research and meetings with colleagues who had taught in the region. Research methods used in the field sites were an adaptation of participatory research methodologies—semi-structured interviews, focus group sessions, transects and visual aids. Two translators provided French-to-English translation for two team members; they also provided local language translation. Transcriptions of the interviews were done by the team members. Data for the study also came from the UNICEF/Guinea office as well as local government offices. While a deliberate attempt was made to keep the interviewees and groups away from “authority figures” (government officials, senior teachers who could influence responses) the team was not always able to isolate the discussions in this manner.

The team interviewed members of the international community, national government and other organizations involved in Guinea’s education policies in Conakry, the capital city. We then visited UNICEF-sponsored formal (AGEI) and non-formal schools (Nafa centers) in selected rural regions (Dubréka, Kindia, Kolenté, and Dabola) and conducted semi-structured interviews with local government officials, parents, teachers and students.

**FIGURE 1. GUINEA, POLITICAL MAP**

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27 A focus group consists of a small group of participants selected from a target group. Topics discussed are predetermined; researchers also develop guidelines for the session. (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).
SELECTION AND DESCRIPTION OF FIELD SITES

CONAKRY

Conakry, the capital of Guinea, is the country’s administrative, economic and communications hub. In Conakry the team held discussions with members from the UNICEF/Guinea office, the Acceleration Steering Committee, FEG (Forum of Guinean Women Educators)/FAWE (Forum of African Women Educators), the World Bank, USAID, and the Education for All (EFA) project. These discussions provided the team with an opportunity to get a first-hand account of the role the different organizations see themselves as playing in the field of education.

Members of the Guinean government delegation highlighted the following initiatives for girls’ education:

- **Evaluation**: Look over school documents for stereotypes
- **Teacher training**: Teaching to avoid stereotypes
- **Review of girls’ education studies** (focusing on the obstacles identified)
- **Campaigns, mobilization, sensitivity training** – targeting communities, teachers, students – “so everyone changes their ideas, addressing images in people’s heads of girls versus boys (radio, TV, newspapers, posters), change behavior” (member of the delegation)
- **“Positive discrimination”** prizes (books, etc.) for students, parents
- **Helping girls learn** – make up classes, tutoring (teachers, also mothers)
- **Infrastructure** (latrines, water), new constructions (rural and urban)
- **Sport** (with UNICEF) – establishing girls sports teams.

The field sites were selected in order to cover a geographically and culturally diverse area in a short period of time. Dabola, Dubréka and Kindia are among the prefectures that were targeted for intensified action in Phase II of the AGEI project (2002 onwards), as these were regions that were lagging behind in advances towards girls’ education.28 These areas were also easy to access by road.

The visit ensured an appropriate mix of formal schools, Nafa centers, Community Care centers, and meetings with the Coordinating Prefecture Cell and the Prefectoral Director of education in each location. Besides this, the team also visited the Headquarters of World Education in Mamou (en route from Kindia to Dabola), an NGO sub-contracted by USAID, that works to ensure community participation and bottom-up discussion pathways in the arena of education.

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28 At the same time, the gross enrollment rate for girls rapidly increased from 25% in 1993 to 77% in 2002 in Kindia, and from 18% (1993) to 49% (2002) in Dabola. Hence, despite being designated as priority regions, these areas have been able to make significant increases in enrollment rates.
**Dubréka**

Dubréka is a prefecture in the region of Kindia. Among its main attributes is the fact that it is the birthplace of the current President of Guinea, Lansana Conte. Out of all sites visited Dubréka is located closest to the capital, (50 km). It has an expanding population, and the main professions are agriculture, crafts and fishing.

The team observed a short classroom session at the Dubréka Nafa center before they interviewed students, teachers and members of the management committee. The center was fairly well equipped with chairs and tables, and had a room full of sewing machines. A team member also informally visited a nearby formal primary school.

**Kindia**

Kindia is the urban prefecture of the Kindia region in western Guinea. It lies on the Conakry–Kankan Railway and at the intersection of roads from Conakry, Mamou, Télimélé, and Makeni (Sierra Leone). Founded in 1904 as a collecting point on the railroad, it is now the chief trading center for the rice, cattle, bananas, pineapples, citrus fruits, and palm oil and kernels produced in the surrounding area. Kindia has a fruit research center, a medical center, and a school of agriculture.

At Kindia, the team visited a Community care center run by a woman’s cooperative named *Groupe-ment Salya Fissa*. The school building

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Dubreka Education Statistics$^{29}$</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult literacy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban adult literacy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rural adult literacy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of 7-12 year olds</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>% of 7-12 year olds in school</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of 7-12 year old girls in school</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of 7-12 year old boys in school</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Difference in attendance between boys and girls</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Kindia and Kolenté Education Statistics$^{30}$</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Statistics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kindia prefecture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary school</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total number in primary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male students</td>
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<tr>
<td>female students</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>number of schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>number of teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>male teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>female teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of female teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary school</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of female teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% female teachers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


$^{30}$ Ibid.
was in good shape and it was equipped with a nice playground. The cooperative teaches women how to tie-dye fabric and make soap and sell these items for a group profit.

**Kolenté**

Kolenté is a sub prefecture in the prefecture of Kindia. It is a rural community that specializes in producing pepper, tubercles and legumes.

Here, the team was introduced to each classroom from second to sixth grade before they went to interview parents and APEAE members, teachers and students. While the team did not visit the hangar where the Community Care center was located, they did interview parents from the center.

The Kolenté primary school was well kept and the classrooms were overcrowded, but it had a large open playground space.

At the Kolenté Nafa center classroom there are eight boys and 29 girls. The Nafa center was not as well furnished as the one in Dubréka. Importantly, it did not have sewing machines even though that was the intended trade to be taught.
DABOLA

Dabola is in central Guinea, situated at the eastern edge of the Fouta Djallon plateau near the Bouka branch of the Tinkisso River. Dabola lies on the Conakry–Kankan railway near the intersection of roads from Mamou, Kouroussa, and Faranah. Dabola is a chief trading center for rice, peanuts (groundnuts), millet, and cattle and also has a peanut-oil-processing plant.

At Dabola, the team visited the Héramakonon Primary school and interviewed students, teachers and parents (members of the APEAE Bureau and other parents). This was the only time the team was able to converse with a significant number of male parents and get their distinctly different point of view on girls’ education and the problems facing it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Dabola Education Statistics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Statistics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary school</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number in primary school</td>
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<tr>
<td>male students</td>
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<tr>
<td>female students</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of girls</td>
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<td>number of schools</td>
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<td>number of teachers</td>
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<td>female teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>% of female teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary school</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>number of girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>% girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>number of female teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>% female teachers</td>
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PART I

VOICES OF GUINEA:
Compilation of our interviews with the community

Following is a compilation of our interviews and focus group meetings with community members at the field sites described above. Names of the interviewees have been changed to ensure confidentiality although no assurance of confidentiality was given at the time of the meetings. Community members in large part were open to questions; often the reticence that was displayed by some adults seemed to be an effort to avoid complaining about their circumstances.
PARENTS
PARENTS

“Both systems have merit. Some [children] go to the formal schools; they have ability. Some go to the non-formal schools because they do not have the ability.”

A mother in Dubréka

The discussions with parents were carried out in semi-structured interviews. The transcribed interviews are attached in Appendix 4. Members of the Nafa Management Committee at Dubréka and Kolenté, mothers at the Kolenté primary school, and mothers and fathers at Dabola's Héramakonon Primary school were interviewed. Their responses have been structured around major themes and then grouped by formal and non-formal schools (Nafa centers) below.

FORMAL SCHOOLS

SPOTLIGHT ON MOTHERS

The group of female parents in Kolenté was very animated and proud to state that their children went to school. They said that it was rare for children not to go to school, and that all the girls came – “especially the girls.” Regarding what motivates them to send daughters to school, they immediately pointed to Radio Rural and the slogan, “wherever a man goes, a woman must go as well”. In addition, the mothers did not believe there were any challenges faced by the students to complete their schooling. When asking specifically about girls the response did not change.

The presidents of the APEAE of the Kolenté primary school and an APEAE executive member at the Dabola primary school said that they came to school everyday to monitor students. If there were absentees then they checked up on them at their village and took them to the hospital if they were sick. They also engaged in separating the children when they fought and monitored classroom maintenance among other things.

While discussing an ideal school, the Kolenté parents mentioned that it was one that had teachers and lots of students, as, “if there aren’t many students, the teachers don’t have much to do,” hinting at absenteeism that they never directly acknowledged.

An ideal school was also mentioned as being one where there were plenty of teachers, students and teaching materials. Furthermore, mothers noted that in an ideal school the child would learn something practical that could be used at home. An ideal teacher was one who asked the students questions. When asked about infrastructure, the parents naturally pointed to things that they were lacking; the Kolenté parents mentioned the lack of a secondary school and of a nicer building for their children’s center.

At Dabola, the mothers mentioned that creating the correct disciplinary environment before the child enters school is important so that they can behave appropriately with teachers once they attend school –“they should have a good education at home first. If they are well trained at home, they will give respect to their teachers.”
When we questioned them on potential challenges, such as absenteeism that could arise because of pregnancy, we noticed that a lot of these mothers started giggling before providing their response. They were quick to mention policies that were being carried out to ensure that a girl does come back to school - school officials talking to other girls not to make fun of her for instance. At the same time, they (and the mothers in Kolenté) were adamant that very few girls attending school get pregnant.

In regards to the language of instruction, in Dabola, we asked whether they would like their children to be taught in French or Malinke, and they resoundingly said “English”. It possibly reflects the large Sierra Leonean population in the area, and also an understanding of the more prevalent use of English in the world.

The women suggested various professions while talking about their aspirations for their daughters (doctors, professors, engineers, politicians, market women). The key point mentioned by the mothers was that the daughters need to do better than them. Some also mentioned marriage as an aspiration, but less frequently than professional ambitions.

The traditional role of women as providers for the family was also discussed. One woman said that she would like her daughter to make progress so that she (the mother) could benefit from her. While discussing how their daughters take care of them differently, some women stated that “only daughters know what pains a mother”. This again hints at the perception that educated women will be able to better provide for their husbands, their mothers and other people.

Excerpts from Interviews with Mothers

The primary respondent was Madame Fanta, member of one primary school’s Parent-Teacher Association, and a mother of four children (three sons and one daughter).

In response to the question, “What do you wish for your daughters?” one mother answered, “That my daughter would make progress.” After probing the woman explained that by “progress,” she was referring to money and marriage.

Madame Fanta defined “progress” as health and happiness, and “happiness” was equated with money. With that money, a daughter could “build houses, build schools, [and] build a future for her children.”

A third woman stated her desire for a “house” (building) for her children’s school.
At the Héramakonon primary school in Dabola, group meetings were held with over 40 fathers. Highlights of these discussions are presented below.

The President of the APEAE stated that he and association members went door-to-door to talk to parents about education. He encouraged them to register their children and send them to school so that they would not be unemployed and become a loss for their family, the prefecture or the country.

With regards to girls, the slogan “an educated woman makes an educated nation” was used. To overcome resistance, parents are told that the school is safe and also helps to avoid disease.

All fathers who participated in the interview had children in the school. However, some were reluctant for their daughters in particular to go on to secondary education. One father stated that “girls who go to school won’t work in the field and won’t marry just anyone. They won’t take (as a husband) a farmer, or a worker. They want a government official or a merchant”. Others felt that they were too poor for their girls to go to school.

When asked why some members of the community don’t send their daughters to school, one father referenced a concern that “older children and teachers brutalize girls”. Others explained that girls are needed at home, to assist with housework. Still others suggested that some families did not send girls to school because they worried that schoolgirls were at risk of pregnancy, which might prevent them from marrying.

The fathers’ opinion that girls’ education was important was a product of various sensitization campaigns. Some explained that they had learned this from different public meetings, from meetings at school, from local meetings, from the radio and at the mosque. One father explained that it was just common sense to recognize the importance of sending girls to school.

An elderly parent explained that education was important for all, even girls, because it helped to “expand their minds.” Others felt that education would make the girls better caregivers; they would be able to look after their families and children even better since they would have knowledge about health. While girls have always been caregivers, the importance given now to education was stated as being the result of the change in times. Fourteen out of approximately 30 fathers said they would send their girls to secondary school. One father said that life is too difficult without an education but “she should get married at 18 years”.

With regard to teaching behavior and “values,” some fathers felt that it was the parents’ job to teach good behavior to their children. They noted that even when girls get pregnant out of wedlock, they do so because of lack of upbringing by the parents. From their perspective, school starts with parents, who must make children do their work and respect teachers. If the child is badly taught at
home, he won't learn at school. One group also expressed that it was important for parents to work as partners with the teachers and students.

Currently formal schools are not linked with the studying of life skills, and fathers said they would like such a linkage if possible. They wanted the flexibility of learning many skills, and for the skills to be taught properly. Difficulties cited within the education system included the lack of food and basic materials. One father claimed that “school is too expensive.” Others agreed that life was difficult because of poverty. Some fathers expressed the need for more capable teachers. Most felt that they needed a more complete and good infrastructure; the shed should become a firm structure; a canteen and a wall was needed. Others felt the need for more teachers and classrooms since there were too many children.

**NON-FORMAL SCHOOLS**

Several members of the APEAE Bureau in the Nafa center at Dubréka were interviewed.

M. Diallo (Dubréka) spoke very highly of the Nafa center and how it was giving an opportunity to those who did not have a chance to attend a formal school. His personal example was of his niece who had come back from Sierra Leone and did not know a word of French. He said that he was initially very embarrassed by her. After going to the Nafa center she graduated and became an instructor herself, and now she is quite a role model to the other students. He also mentioned a few times that she was more useful to him than his own daughter, who was in university studying biochemistry.

Upon significant prodding on the question of how people perceived Nafa centers compared to formal schools, M. Diallo (Dubréka) responded, “Of course people view Nafa as inferior to formal schools. However, it is a situation similar to if you don't have a mother, it is better to have a grandmother than no one at all.” Madame Kamara (Dubréka) was more direct in saying “Both systems have their merit. Some go to the formal schools, they have the ability. Some go to the non-formal schools because they do not have the ability,” (with God determining who has ability). In response to a question on “who demands Nafa” M. Diallo said that it was women and female groups who demand it most of the time.

M. Diallo was impressed that the girls of his hometown were learning in French. It was clear that he valued learning in French, and overall parents expressed very little interest in having the students learn in local languages. However, local languages were sometimes chosen by parents as a valuable part of a hypothetical curriculum when presented with a hypothetical menu of languages. For example, Mme. Kamara wanted her children to learn in either French and Arabic or French and English. She also said that it would not be a problem if they were to learn Sousou (the local language) in addition to French and Arabic.

Mme. Kamara responded that an ideal school ought to have all the necessary furnishings (windows, doors, tables, computers, blackboards) and that there should be good teachers. Good teachers are those who come well prepared, are punctual and can communicate with the children. M. Diallo pointed out that if given a chance, he would prioritize spending on infrastructure, training of
teachers, and the living conditions of teachers. M. Diallo said that there are many female teachers. He thinks that the country has a problem of teachers, but not of female teachers.

Also, there was significant discussion on the need for trade diversification. The Dubréka Nafa center only had sewing machines, and when asked about the need for 15 girls trained in sewing in Dubréka M. Diallo agreed that this was a real problem. He said that he had gone to a seminar in Mamou where he had asked about Post-Nafa centers and activities, and also suggested an expansion of trades included in the Nafa curriculum.

APEAE members and parents displayed somewhat contradictory sentiments about the value of a formal versus a non-formal education. Although M. Diallo’s daughter is currently studying biochemistry at the national university, and he would like his son to do something in the technical sciences, he highlights his niece’s accomplishments quite often as something that is more “useful to him”, indicating that her education has allowed her to contribute to the family financially. In contrast, Madame Kamara stated that she wants all of her children to go to university and sees their educational events (primary, secondary and university) as main events in their life cycle.

Although there was recognition that youth faced challenges that could distract them from school, one mother interviewed did not think that either boys or girls face obstacles to completing school. Also, in the Dubréka Nafa center interviews, absenteeism did not come up as an issue. A member of the Kolanité Management Committee mentioned that boys need to help in the fields and therefore are not in school during the harvest season (November–December), and the same applies for girls as well. Similarly, Mme. Kamara noted that natural disasters (e.g., floods and droughts) may hinder attendance.

Overall, it appears that the movement for girls’ education is one that is occurring throughout the country, transcending cultural practices that previously kept girls out of schools. M. Diallo talked about how he used to live in a small town called Kubia and it was very religious. In those days, one did not think of girls going to school. Now when he visits there he sees that there are girls going to school.
Key Observations from Parents

- Appreciated the importance of girls’ education, but emphasized the traditional role of girls as caregivers and that an education would help a girl earn money to help her family.
- Very motivated and positive about Nafa centers because of skill-based teaching and a flexible time schedule, which allows the girls to help out at home.
- Would like to see trade diversification and better funding at Nafa centers.
- Associated formal school with higher status, and more ambitious careers.
- Concerned about infrastructure and teacher quality (absenteeism, punctuality, and ability to engage students).
- Reported children not involved in extracurricular activities.
- Emphasized their role in child’s educational development and the role of the APEAE in monitoring school infrastructure, student and teacher attendance.
STUDENTS
STUDENTS

“A husband may desert you but a career never will.”
A female student at Kolenté Nafa center

Students were interviewed at the Dubréka Nafa center (girls only), Kolenté primary school (girls and boys), Kolenté Nafa center (girls and boys) and Héramakonon primary school (girls and boys).

FORMAL SCHOOLS

GIRLS

Héramakonon primary school

When asked what they liked about school, the first thing the girls mentioned was that lunch was served. When probed for additional points, they cited subjects such as history, reading and math. They said that the teachers at the school were good, although strict, and that they treated the girls and boys equally. The girls admitted that they did a lot of housework (mostly in the morning) but said that they still had time to study. They also mentioned that boys have their own chores to do – girls cook, do housework, and wash clothes; meanwhile, the boys are responsible for fetching firewood from the bush and working in the fields.

The girls said that all children want to go to school, and the only reason they would not is that their parents do not want them to. The girls did not see money as being a problem preventing girls from going to school, but they did say that some parents would rather have their daughters selling things or working in the field than going to school. They reported that there wasn’t a big problem with students dropping out of school, and that those who did so abandoned school because they did not want to study. The girls all planned to send their children to school. Some of the girls had parents who had not been to school, and who spoke limited or no French; they said this was not a problem, however, and they reported that their parents were still able to help them with their lessons.

The girls had high aspirations for themselves. When asked what careers they wanted to have, they mentioned journalism, working with computers, mathematics, dressmaking and teaching. They all see themselves as having a family, but that this does not conflict with a career – they said that one characteristic of a good wife is that she is involved in business. The girls said that girls tended to get married at 16 or 17 in their community, and that students tended to leave school after the 7th or 10th year. There was a secondary school in the town, but going to university meant leaving the town.

The girls mentioned a number of infrastructure problems at the school – that there was a lack of books, no wall around the school courtyard, no proper school kitchen or cafeteria (lunch was cooked at the school, but in a shed-like structure), that classrooms were crowded with students

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31 Team member notes: I spoke with a group of about 12 girls selected from different grades by a teacher. I was again able to conduct the interviews in French, but this meant that I heard mostly from the older girls.
sitting three to a desk, and that there were not enough classrooms. The girls all walked to school – for most of them, it was only a 5 to 10 minute walk, but some of them walked up to 30 minutes each morning and evening. They also mentioned that they would like to have sports teams at school – many of the girls were very interested in sports and mentioned playing football and basketball with their friends (girls and boys) after school.

**BOYS**

**Héramakonon primary school**

To get a sense of how school fit into boys’ life plans and aspirations, the male students interviewed were asked to identify the major rites of passage, rituals, and transition points that marked a person’s lifetime. Boys cited the following life events: the naming ceremony, which happens when one is born; kindergarten at age six; [primary] school and Koranic school starting at age eight; primary school exams; completing school, between ages 18-30; marriage, between ages 25-30; and work, at age 24 or 30. All the boys in the discussion group also stated that they want to go to university.

Almost all students said their father had been the ones who decided to send them to school. They also all reported that their sisters go to school. The list of what interviewees liked best about school included: learning to read and write, math, French practice, and the need to be clean. Several noted that untidiness and disorder were the things they liked least, along with fighting at school (between students).

The boys described their daily activities, which illustrated the competing demands on male children’s time and attention (other than school). The typical weekday schedule includes some simple household chores, such as the following: toilet, breakfast, go to school, greet parents, go home, bathe and change clothes, help parents to work, study, rest, play football, and cook with parents. After probing, the boys described “help[ing] parents to work” as washing clothing and shoes, fetching wood and water, and helping to cook. When asked what chores their sisters do, they listed the following tasks: washing pans and dishes, helping with cooking, washing clothes, cleaning the house, and fetching water (but not wood).

Whether boys’ and girls’ chores really overlap this much is questionable, especially given that the girls in the same school gave a very different report of the division of labor between boys and girls. It does, however, reflect understanding of the message that boys and girls are supposed to share in household chores. This message may have been conveyed through community sensitization exercises, and/or through a new curriculum designed to promote gender equity.

Boys gave a wide range of answers when asked what they want to do when they finish school. They cited potential careers as a teacher, doctor, driver, journalist, policeman, school headmaster, computer specialist, and mechanic. When asked what skills or knowledge they will need to achieve these goals, they answered categorically that they must study—indicating that the question either wasn’t understood, or that studying was emphasized as the singular pathway through which they could achieving their professional aspirations.

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32 Team member notes: I interviewed a group of eleven boys, aged 8-14 years. The interviews were conducted in French with the assistance of a translator, and many interviewees only responded when their individual inputs were specifically solicited. There were also many cases where students gave the “ideal” or “desired” response, indicating that their reports might not have been genuine. In addition, the interviewees were selected by the teacher, perhaps with favoritism shown towards students with more positive attitudes or superior academic performance. These potential biases should be taken into account when interpreting the findings from the discussion.
The interview included a discussion about perceptions of an ideal husband and wife, to illuminate the factors that made a man and a woman best suited for these roles. Each student was asked to name qualities that would make someone a “good” husband. The most frequently cited answer was “to build a house for one’s wife”, followed by “to respect the wife’s parents” and “for the wife to respect his parents/mother”. Other qualities listed included: to respect one’s wife, to find a job, to introduce one’s wife to all his friends, to have children, to look for a guard to watch the house, and to demand respect from one’s wife.

All interviewees reported that they want to get married. A “good” wife was described as “clean,” “intelligent” and “respectful.” Other qualities listed included: “respectful to parents,” “nice,” “polite and well-behaved,” “healthy,” “doesn’t talk too much,” “honest,” “correct” (embodying many of the aforementioned qualities), “doesn’t disturb others,” “washes my clothes,” and “doesn’t steal.” When asked whether the wife’s level of education mattered, all interviewees responded affirmatively. As for how much education they want their wives to have, they stated that they want their wives to go to school and study like them, and also to attend university.

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**NON-FORMAL SCHOOLS**

**GIRLS**

**Dubréka Nafa center**

The female students were enthusiastic about their experience at the Nafa center. They were very proud of learning to read and write; they also took pride in learning a job skill that would enable them to set up their own business, make money, and gain a certain degree of independence and respect. They all felt that professional women were respected. One girl who had graduated from the program previously mentioned that they were going to form a women’s cooperative to pool their earnings and encourage other business activities. The girls admitted that even though some men don’t want an educated wife, their Nafa center education would help them to find a good husband. When asked who had made the decision to send them to the Nafa center, they were eager and proud to say which relative had allowed them to have this opportunity – their mother, grandmother, brother, sister or aunt.

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33 Team member notes: *All the Dubréka Nafa students are girls. I spoke with a large group of about 20 girls – most of the students at the Nafa center. Several of the girls spoke French very well so I was able to conduct the interview in French with the girls acting as translators for each as needed. Two of the girls I spoke with were married, and a third had her small daughter with her in the classroom.*
The girls also mentioned that the learning environment at the Nafa center is good: the teacher treated students better than teachers in the formal primary schools; he didn’t beat the students; and he took time to make sure that each student understood the lesson. They noted, however, that a serious problem at the Nafa center was that sometimes the teacher didn’t show up and there were thus no classes.

Despite the student’s positive feelings about the Nafa center, many of the girls expressed regret that they had not been able to complete their primary school education, and they all indicated that they would send their children to the formal primary schools. They felt that in the primary schools, so much emphasis was placed on girls that they were actually favored over boys. However, they also cited problems that had prevented them or other girls from finishing their primary schooling, including illness, unwillingness of the family to continue paying school fees, and pregnancy. The girls said that even if a pregnant girl was allowed to go to school, she wouldn’t because she would be ashamed to show herself in front of her friends.

**Kolenté Nafa center**

None of the girls had been to primary school, and they said this was true for all of the students at the Nafa center. They cited the lack of money as the main reason that kept children out of school. What the girls appreciated most about the Nafa center was the potential to learn useful skills and a trade. Unfortunately, however, although they were supposed to learn sewing at this Nafa center, a lack of sewing machines was preventing them from doing so. This was very discouraging for the girls, and they reported that many of their former classmates had been removed from the Nafa center by their parents to get married because they weren’t learning a trade. The girls had come into the Nafa center expecting to learn sewing, and were still very hopeful that this would happen, but they were also interested in learning other trades such as soap making and cloth dying.

Even though they were not learning a trade, the girls were still happy to be at the Nafa center. They felt that learning French was important, and were very proud of the fact that they learned to read. They also said that they had a good relationship with the teacher – he did not insult or hit the students, he came every day, and he took a personal interest in the students and followed up with a student who was absent. Despite being happy to be at the Nafa center, the girls regretted not having been able to go to primary school and would all send their children to primary school.

One girl said that for a girl “marriage was destiny” – they all foresaw a future in which they were married and had children. Indeed, two of the girls were married, and one of them was in the third trimester of her pregnancy. They said that many girls at the Nafa center were married. One girl had

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34 Team member notes: The class was composed of 8 boys and 29 girls. I spoke with a group of six girls selected by the teacher, but they did not speak French well enough to conduct the interview in French and a government official served as a translator. This presence of an older, powerful man intimated the girls somewhat and limited the length, and probably the candor of the answers I received.
her baby with her in class. They saw no conflict between marriage and education, and the married girls told me that their husbands encouraged them to go the Nafa center. If they had a career after leaving Nafa and earned money, they would hand it over to their husbands. Still, the girls did appreciate that having a career of their own was a safeguard – one girl said “a husband may desert you but a career never will”.

BOYS

Kolenté Nafa center

To provide an understanding of how school and education fit in with major life events and goals, the boys in the discussion group identified the major rites of passage, rituals, and transition points that marked a male’s lifetime. The early life events they cited included: the naming ceremony, which happens when a baby is one week old; Koran study, beginning at age seven; and circumcision, which takes place between the ages of eight and 12. Circumcision was described as “a big event because it is when a male becomes respectable. After circumcision a boy can no longer walk naked; he must wear clothes all the time.” Later life events included: marriage, which occurs around age 25 for village males who attend Nafa schools; work and prayer (an undefined time period); and the Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), which happens any time between age 40 and death, depending on when one could get enough money.

When asked how they got to the Nafa center, three of the boys reported that they had previously attended “Arabic” (Koranic) schools; however, two of those three indicated that they were finished or idle prior to enrolling in the Nafa center. They reported that they went to the Nafa center afterward as an alternative to doing nothing. One noted that his grandmother recommended the Nafa school so that instead of wasting time he would learn a trade. The other reported asking permission from his parents to attend “because he was fed up with sitting around with nothing to do”. One other student, who was the most vocal and openly ambitious of all the boys interviewed, had been selling goods until his father decided to send him to the Nafa center.

One interviewee had previously been in a formal primary school, but his father sent him to the Nafa center because he was not “succeeding” there. He was asked what specifically about the primary school was different, such that he was not succeeding there but was doing well at the Nafa center. He explained that in the formal school they merely teach “at” the students: they give information, and students are on their own to ensure understanding. In contrast, the Nafa center education uses two-way communication: teachers ask questions to make sure that students learn and understand the lessons.

The boys recounted their daily activities, which were as follows: wake up; wash face/toilet; breakfast; go to brook to wash; come home and change clothes; get books and go to school; school until 2pm; go home; lunch; study / go to friend’s home and study together; football at 4pm; bed at 10pm. They reported that on Saturdays and Sundays they help their parents on the farm, and on vacations they study.

35 Team member notes: I interviewed five boys, aged 12-16 years, at a Nafa center in Kolenté. This Nafa center is three years old and has 37 students, of which 29 are female and eight are male. The interviews were conducted in local languages with the assistance of a translator, and the majority of questions were answered by only one of the five interviewees. The interviewees were also selected by the teacher, perhaps with favoritism shown towards students with more positive attitudes or superior academic performance. These potential biases should be taken into account when interpreting the findings from the discussion.
Regarding future aspirations, the most vocal interviewee stated that he wants to study and to be useful to his people. Specifically, he wants to become a teacher, but when asked how to achieve this goal he answered that he doesn’t know how. The other interviewees’ goals corresponded with the skills taught at that Nafa center: tailoring and tie-dying. Two students wanted to be tailors, one wished to be either a tailor or a tie-dyer, and one hoped to learn a trade. Regarding how to reach these objectives, they answered that later on the center will provide them with the necessary equipment for learning their trades, but for now they are focused on studying.

We asked interviewees what qualities make someone a good husband, but only one interviewee responded. He stated that a good husband must “establish good laws for your wife to follow.” When asked to give explanatory examples, he elaborated as follows: “Tell her please listen to me whatever I tell you, maintain my children, [and] take care of the house.” He noted that a woman can’t leave the house without permission and should have limited outings. After repeated probing, the same student added that another quality of a good husband was to “try to meet all the wife’s needs.” No other students supported or contested this interviewee’s statements.

Before gathering interviewees’ perceptions of a “good” wife, we first asked if they wanted to get married. Four out of the five interviewees said yes, with the fifth stating “after I get a job” [implied yes]. When asked what they want in a wife, one interviewee said: “A woman who doesn’t create problems and who doesn’t cheat.” In response to the question, “Do you want a wife who is educated?” one student answered yes, noting that he prefers one with a job. This supports the notion mentioned in other settings that schooling is marketed as something that makes girls more marriageable because they can now offer a source of income.

All interviewees were asked what they liked best about the Nafa school. Their responses included: teachers, who are devoted and don’t cane (beat) the children unless they are at fault; learning things; and books. One interviewee said that he had always wished to be a tailor (and thus he presumably liked the prospect of learning this trade at the Nafa center), and another indicated that he likes school because of the progress he has made so far. One student expressed his appreciation of the center’s “modern chairs and tables, which are better than the locally made furniture at local schools.”

There was little response to the question of what interviewees liked least about school. After probing, one interviewee noted that he was always disappointed when the class was not full, because in those cases the teacher was not as enthusiastic. Another negative mentioned was that some students destroy books.

### Key Observations from Students

- Very proud of their educational accomplishments, many have great ambitions.
- Found atmosphere of Nafa centers and teacher’s attitude one of its main advantages.
- Although thankful to have the chance to go to Nafa, see formal school as preferable.
- Responses indicated sensitivity to gender issues, although traditional ideas about marriage and work allocation still remain.

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36 It is important to note in the sub-Saharan African context, the word “cheat” probably refers to *lying* rather than to infidelity.
TEACHERS

“I have always wanted to be a teacher—since I was a young girl. But the life of a teacher is very difficult.”
Female teacher, Kolenté Primary School

FORMAL SCHOOLS

DUBRÉKA

The school director stated that the school was moving in the right direction to improve the quality of education of the students, including girls. For example, at the end of the 2002-2003 school year, 100 out of 132 students had gone on to secondary school. At the end of the 2003-2004 academic year, 100 out of 142 students went on to secondary school.

There were 27 girls among the 54 students in the 5th grade classroom that was visited. The teacher, a young man from Kindia, had listed Dubréka as the second choice of three places that he wanted to be posted. Thus, in addition to spending on housing, he remits half of his monthly salary of 110,000 Guinean Francs (GF) (~ $41.93 US) to his mother and sister. He noted that although his sisters were not educated, should he have any daughters in future, he would educate them.

The teachers mentioned a lack of teaching and learning materials, such as textbooks. They mentioned that students have to travel long distances (5-15 km), with some having to use mini-vans (local public transportation). More and better classroom space was needed to improve the teaching conditions so that the classrooms would not be hot and overcrowded. The Director assured us that the school was free for all students.

KOLENTÉ

The teachers described the strides they have made in recruiting girls for school. For example, in the last year or so, they had more girls than boys (32:25) enroll. One of the successful strategies they cited was that some schools which were able to get more girls enrolled received more funds for infrastructure, which benefits the school overall. According to the teachers, this strategy does not lead to jealousy among boys (additionally, it serves as an incentive for the institution overall to enroll girls, and could be used as a strategy for schools to do a better job of retaining girls.). In their school, they also have extra classes for students who need them.

37 Team member notes: An unscheduled visit was made to the primary school, the Ecole elementaire GLC - Dubréka, which was next to the Nafa center. The school director and a 5th grade teacher were interviewed.
38 Team member notes: At the primary school at Kolenté, nine teachers were interviewed, of whom 3 were female.
They said that their community lacks NGOs that focus on education-specific work. In terms of things that they would like to see, they gave the example of Action Aid (Aide et Action) which used the strategy of setting up “boutiques” to provide educational materials, such as pens, etc., with the boutiques being managed by the community. They suggested that an additional benefit of having such a boutique was that the children came with their parents to buy the materials, and it raised everyone’s awareness of the investment they were making in education. Thus the communities became more engaged.

Regarding the relevance of the formal school system, they spoke about the language of instruction, which had been changed from local languages to French after the end of Sekou Toure’s presidency. By their report, however, (and as it was observed in discussions with the children and teachers) in class they use the local languages—but only orally, as they have no text in local languages. The female teachers were at first reluctant to discuss the language issue. When it was pointed out to them that they had received the first three years of their education in the local language, they recollected that it had been a good experience for them and that local language could be taught in the school more formally.

They also mentioned that the formal education system was weak in preparing students to learn practical income-generating skills, unless one went all the way through to the university level, which many of them could not do. At present, there is no secondary school in the area, so some students have not been able to move on to secondary school. (A secondary school is slated to open in 2005.)

According to the School Delegate for Primary Education (DSEE - Directrice préfectorale de l’Education), in order for Kolenté to address the lack of a secondary school, it is planned that the capital of each sub-prefecture will have a training center, funded by EFA/EPT. This is so that, for example, students who complete the sixth grade and do not continue to secondary school can learn some income-generating skills. They pointed out, however, that it was important that relevant material be provided in any training centers, whether in the formal or non-formal system. They mentioned that despite the success of Nafa centers in teaching practical skills, there was a problem with the Nafa center in Kolenté, which is relatively new and does not have equipment.

The primary challenge facing the school is a lack of material and equipment. For example, since the beginning of the school year only chalk has been supplied to them. In 2001 and 2002 they got support from UNICEF, and that was very helpful. Another problem is girls dropping out. One of the main obstacles that persists is early marriage (12-14) and family obligations. Teachers pointed out that for girls to stay in school, they must be motivated to continue. They recommended that measures be taken to assess where the needs are and how much it will cost. A third problem is the lack of food aid. Other places (Futa, Haute Guinea) have free lunches provided at the schools, but they don’t. Finally they mentioned that there were too many students, and that more schools needed to be built.
The teachers mentioned low salaries and lack of electricity at school as two challenges that they face personally. Another issue is housing: there was at least one male teacher who said he has been living with a friend since he got posted to the area about a year ago, as there was no affordable housing available for him. (The female teachers interviewed did not find housing to be a problem as they had been at the school for many years, and so they received housing.) Teachers also faced difficult teaching conditions such as long days (with the school day beginning at 8:00am and ending at 6:30pm), having to prepare lessons everyday, and teaching various subjects. They couldn’t use notes from previous years because textbooks and manuals changed. These challenges are compounded by lack of materials and a low teacher-to-student ratio. They did not initially cite the lack of female teachers as a problem, but when asked they thought it would be good to have more women teachers and more young teachers.

Another problem mentioned was lack of communication (telephone) or means of traveling, which might enable them to better communicate with their families. Some of the teachers hailed from as far as 108km away. Although some would rather live closer to their families, depending on the situation of the families, some of the teachers prefer to be far away from their extended families so that their family members cannot “bother” them with requests for financial and other assistance. Those teachers would rather be able to communicate with their families over telephone or radio if they could. Some of the teachers who came from another area of the country also mentioned difficulty adjusting to life and local diet in Kolenté.

A Talk with Teachers at Dabola

**Question:** What should be done to help girls go to secondary school?

Answers include: “Make girls aware”; “Have women teachers who can be role models; can talk to them”; “Encourage girls by changing the grading system—give them marks for trying.” (Note: The Directrice disagreed with this suggestion made by one male teacher; she didn't believe in reducing the standards to encourage girls).

**Question:** Why is it important to have girls study?

“Right now, men are the breadwinners in a family. With an education, girls too can earn a living. Therefore encouraging girls, even through incentives is good.”

**Question:** Do you think it is important?

All teachers answered: “Yes.”

DABOLA

Teachers in Dabola spoke about successes that have been made in the area of girls’ enrollment in school. They affirmed that the community sees the benefits of educating girls: not only men have to be breadwinners in a family, because with an education women too can earn a living. Therefore they feel that encouraging girls to go to school is a good thing—even if it is done with the help of incentives. In addition to the successes that have come from sensitizing parents to the value of girls’ education, the special incentives (such as supplies of oil and food for enrolled students) have even led to students transferring into their schools. At this school each girl receives one liter of oil, and all

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39 Team member notes: Seven teachers (of whom one was female) and the female principal of the school were interviewed.
the children are provided with one meal, with food that is donated by the World Food Program and cooked by volunteers.

To debunk stereotypes of female inferiority, the NFQE project has been highlighting equality of boys and girls through various means, including radio, and NGOs such as FEG/FAWE. Regarding the relevance of education, teachers felt that the subjects studied in school are not necessarily pertinent to their everyday lives. There is one course, “Managed Work” (Travaux Dirigé), in which students do activities such as cooking and making simple toys, but it is only “superficially done”.

One important problem facing the school that the teachers brought up was girls dropping out of school. At least three girls had dropped out recently. An interviewee stated that out of 246 female students, 236 were married by age 16. By the teachers’ report, girls drop out mostly due to the inability of their families to provide financial and moral support for their education, which is also related to them being married off early. The problem of poverty is compounded when parents have too many children to look after. Teachers stated that early pregnancy is rare, and also that some girls may drop out voluntarily. There was at least one example of a drop-out who, despite being requested by the director to return to school, preferred to stay with a rich man.

The teachers felt that it was important to sensitize parents about this issue. The general attitude of the teachers was that it is the parents who teach values to their children. Parents are responsible for making sure the girls “behave”, regardless of whether they are poor. Teachers also said that in secondary school, the teachers should mentor or take responsibility for particular students, so as to be able to track their development. Female teachers can be role models to the girls and can mentor them. In addition, there should also be incentives for girls, such as prizes to girls that do well.

Teachers described another girls’ education problem: girls fail exams because they are unable to spend enough time studying, due to their household duties. The strain of household chores is greatest in poor households. To address this issue, the school sensitizes students and parents about the need for distribution of household chores among sons and daughters. They also give performance incentives and rewards to female students.

Teachers reported that the school experiences certain physical and infrastructural challenges. They do not have enough supplies, such as books. Additionally, they do not have adequate storage, such as cupboards, for their materials. The provision of incentives (such as manuals and oil, etc.) increases enrollment and attendance, but then the schools need even more space and equipment to accommodate the expanded classes. Teachers also expressed the need for one person to handle all the supplies and their distribution; they preferred outside help with this task and implied that UNICEF or other NGOs could help.

Another problem is large class size – the teachers spoke of having up to 98 students in a class. To remedy this, they feel that more schools need to be built and more teachers must be hired. They are also in need of additional classrooms and a shed/hangar at the school. For security purposes they hired a guard, but the guard is not paid; hence the APEAE has to pay the guard’s salary. While their solution is a “sustainable” one in that it comes from within, the APEAE cannot continue to bear the burden.

The teachers, who are each assigned to a class, were satisfied with the training that they were receiving. They said that they receive training either in the community or elsewhere if needed, and they made mention of the training that was done by using the radio. In terms of standard of living, however, they spoke about the difficulties they face personally. They earn about 110,000 GF (~
$41.93 US) per month, which does not match the cost of living. Furthermore, they sometimes do not receive their salaries on time. For example, instead of getting their salaries monthly they must wait about 45 days to receive their wages.

Teachers also noted that housing was a problem. As “public servants” teachers are “placed”, not recruited from within community. This is to prevent corruption (i.e. patronage by preferential recruitment, giving jobs to those you know, etc.) but it adds to the teachers’ cost of living.

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**NON-FORMAL SCHOOLS**

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**DUBRÉKA**

Extensive interviews were held with two Nafa center trainers: a female trainer who taught practical skills, such as sewing, food preservation and dyeing, to the trainees; and a male trainer who did literacy training.

The female trainer had been trained at the center herself from 1995 to 1998. At the age of 14, having had no previous schooling, she had entered the Nafa center and learned to read and write. She had moved into Dubréka as an internally displaced person from the region of Guinea that borders Sierra Leone. Her uncle had enrolled her in the center after realizing that she desired an education but was unable to attend a formal school. After gaining some sewing skills at the Nafa center and graduating, she then learned food preservation and dyeing (two additional income-generating skills) and returned to the center to become a trainer.

The male trainer at Dubréka had 34 years of teaching experience, with eight of those years spent teaching at Nafa centers. He noted that Nafa center teachers have previously received regular teacher training, and they undergo additional training before teaching at Nafa centers. He was in his second year at Dubréka. He described the teacher-transfer process as cumbersome, making it difficult for him to transfer even if he wanted to do so. A letter would have to be sent to the DPE, then to the ministry, before a decision could be made. He seemed to be invested in the development of his students, and he mentioned how one of his former female students had written to him about completing her final exams at the formal secondary school level.

The male teacher reported that there are more training centers for formal teacher training than for the Nafa center instructors. The cost of teacher training depends on the place, but the government covers the cost of training. He explained that the responsibility for paying the Nafa center trainer’s
salary varied from place to place. In some places the parents paid for the trainer, whereas in other places, such as Dubréka, the local authorities were responsible.

He said that the Dubréka center currently had 25 first level students (four had dropped out) and 24 second level students (six had dropped out). The center’s timetable was decided by the trainees, parents, and the trainer. Classes are held 15 - 20 hours per week; they meet from 9am to 2pm on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, over roughly 5 months per year.

The trainers cited a number of reasons why Nafa centers are so successful. Generally, people are more interested in them because they are free. The time for them to complete is comparatively short (three to four years at a Nafa center versus six to eight years of primary school), and they provide a flexible timetable. The trainers stated that Nafa centers are more complete because of the practical skills that they teach. The female trainer also added that the teachers in the Nafa center were “kinder” and showed more interest and patience for the trainees.

When asked why the class we observed at the Nafa center was entirely composed of girls, the male trainer answered that the Dubréka Nafa center specifically targeted girls. He was of the view that the imposition of laws works, such obliging parents to send girls to school. Also, there are fewer dropouts due to the sensitization of the parents. He mentioned that he had proposed that they try to recruit 20-25 boys during the next recruiting cycle, and he hoped that would happen.

Furthermore, the trainer explained that girls were more interested in the centers because they learn skills that make them more desirable for marriage—and most of the girls want to get married. He said that eventually they marry some rich men who want wives that can manage their affairs. In addition, he stated that the parents brought their daughters there—whether they left formal school because it was unwelcoming, or whether they had become pregnant—and after attending the Nafa center the girls exhibited behaviors that were seen to be more socially desirable (such as staying home rather than visiting bars, etc.). A final reason he offered was that whereas the boys that had not gone to school could use their physique to earn a living (for example, through manual labor), in contrast learning some skills provides one of the few chances for uneducated women to earn an income.

The trainers mentioned a number of problems confronting the Nafa center. Among them was a lack of material and equipment. School materials are hard to come by (pens, books, etc.), and they would also like to have more tools and machines to teach more income-generating skills. Another challenge was that some girls drop out due to early pregnancy. However, the female trainer felt that the dropout rates were greater in the formal school systems as girls were unable to keep up with their peers, and they were not provided with adequate support.

Another barrier cited was the long distances (5–15 km) that students must travel to get to the Nafa center, with some having to use mini-vans (the local public transportation vehicles). The female trainer mentioned that more classroom space and more teachers are needed. She didn’t specify the need for a woman versus a male teacher, but when asked if women teachers would be more appropriate, she agreed, pointing to the fact that the female students are more at ease with her than with her male counterpart. She also didn’t initially indicate that she thought the short supply of female teachers was a problem, but she felt it would helpful to have more women teach.
Key Observations from Teachers

- Salary is insufficient to meet living expenses.
- There is a lack of materials (such as books and teacher manuals) in both Nafa centers and formal schools.
- Housing is often a problem for teachers.
- There is a need for more schools to reduce overcrowding and the distance students have to travel.
- There is a need for more secondary schools or other opportunities for students who finish primary school.
- Progress has been made in enrolling girls, but problems with drop-outs and discontinuation due to early marriage still continue.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

“There used to be teachers who were not at all interested in educating girls. [A male teacher] wouldn’t even look at girls in class but would send them to his house to do housework.”

Chef de Section Chargée d’éducation, Kindia

DUBRÉKA

According to the CPC representatives in Dubréka, the local authorities and the community have been actively engaged in the development of education. The community is responsible for helping to sensitize families about Nafa centers as an option for girls’ education—even for girls who are too old for primary school. The community also helps to equip the Nafa center to the extent possible, with the local authorities providing support when needed. For example, at Dubréka, after the trainees were initially faced with the problem of paying the animators of the Nafa centers, the local authorities covered their salaries. Additionally, the mayor’s office provides books for learners. The CPC thus sees the educational efforts in the region as a government-community partnership.

As the local government representatives pointed out, they do everything possible to make sure the Nafa center works very well. This is because the center has a vital importance in the community: the practical skills learned, such as embroidery and jam making, provide income to the trainees. The DPE representatives at Dubréka made it clear that they saw the Nafa centers as a measure to fill the gaps between the formal education system (where children begin school between the ages of six and nine), and adult literacy training (which addressed the needs of people aged 15 and above).

The Director of Education emphasized that the type of education received at the Nafa centers is more “complete” than in the formal education system, because the predominantly female graduates from the centers are able to generate income with the skills learnt at the centers. He added that the flexible schedule and short time taken to complete the Nafa centers allows trainees to pursue an education and work at the same time. Also, parents liked the Nafa centers as almost everything is free. He envisioned that if things continued the way they have been, and the Nafa centers continue to be successful at providing people with the practical skills for earning a livelihood, there may come a time when children will be sent directly to the Nafa centers (instead of formal schools).

When asked why boys are not participating in the centers despite the advantages cited, the Director made it clear that the centers were conceived to address the educational needs of girls who had either dropped out of the formal school system, or had never participated in school. The centers can recruit boys, however, to make up their numbers if they wish to do so.

Initially, trainees were supposed to pay a fee of 1,500 GF (~ $0.57 US) to attend, but they were unable to do so. Subsequently, the Prefecture included the cost of the Nafa centers in its budget and currently continues to fund the centers. UNICEF provides teaching materials such as books for each student. Recognizing the scarcity of books, after completing each of the three levels, the students leave the text books they used for the incoming class. For the foreseeable future, the DPE plans to continue providing materials, such as chalk and pens.

The Director of Education listed the following desires for the centers:
• They would welcome any support to sustain the Nafa centers, which they find to be very important. To this end, they proposed influencing NGO’s and other organizations that could provide support.
• They wish to increase the number of classrooms from two to six.

**Kindia**

At Kindia, the representatives of the CPC included the Prefecture Director of Education (a woman), the Director of Secondary Education, the Director of Child Development, the Nafa Director, and the Head of the Education Department. They spoke about a child care center that was run in the Kindia by a woman’s group and said that it played an important role in education. It freed up older children from the responsibility of caring for younger children, thereby allowing them to concentrate on their studies. It also prepares children for the experience of going to school and provides socialization for them.

They noted that the number of schools in Kindia in the district had greatly increased over the last ten years, and that many private schools had opened. Kindia offered all types of educational opportunities: public and private primary schools, Nafa centers, secondary schools, professional training centers, and a university. In addition, there were two child care centers/pre-schools in Kindia and an institution run by an NGO to help children who were in trouble with the law.

The government representatives stated that there is gender parity among students recruited to start school, but there is a problem retaining female students. They cited certain customs that can prevent girls from continuing their education, such as early marriage, the need for girls to look after younger children, and girls’ responsibility to help the family by cooking or engaging in petty commerce.

Some of the strategies they have to help maintain girls in school include: make-up classes for girls, help for poor parents, and prizes for girls who do well and for schools that are successful in retaining their female students. They also do parental sensitization campaigns targeting regions with low rate of girls’ enrollment, explaining the importance of educating girls and showing the examples of girls who have done well at school.

When asked about whether or not they were concerned that these special incentives for girls created jealousy among boys, they said that they were not at all concerned about this – that once the girls were as successful in school as boys, the incentives would stop and there would be no more reason for jealousy. They said that there had been, and continue to be, so many things that prevent girls from going to school – such as teachers who were not at all interested in educating girls, but rather used them to do housework, the lack of latrines for girls (which become especially important once girls reach puberty), and stereotypes in school books. The special incentives were needed to correct these inequalities.

**Kolenté**

At Kolenté the DPE had been involved with activities such as the planning of a Hangar for girls, which had been subsequently constructed. The DPE representatives also highlighted the issue of teacher transfer. The new strategy of transfer is that the sub-prefectures can request teachers to be
sent / transferred to places within their region. Also, the community can put in a request for teachers.

**DABOLA**

At Dabola there were 15 members of the CPC, including its President and representatives of NGOs. There were two Vice-Presidents in charge of promoting women’s affairs. According to the representatives of the CPC, their prefecture-level CRD was established in 1992. Currently, each of the 8 sub-prefectures has a CRD.

The community leaders spoke about the decentralization and democratization experiences. They then discuss needs and indicate different priorities. By providing settings for communal decision-making they attempt to make sure that everyone’s priorities are voiced. At the village level these priorities are captured in the development plan; at the sub-prefecture level, they bring all plans, elaborate on them, decide on them, and then attempt to bring the issues to the prefecture level.

At Dabola the local authorities said that due to the efforts over the years perceptions have changed, and most people recognize that “the boy is equal to the girl”. They made the recruiting of girls a priority as “women can take better care of their daughters” when they are given an education. Currently, girls’ schooling is improved, and grade repetition among female students has decreased. The local authorities also cited the example that teachers are now able to make girls heads of groups with boys. They mentioned some of the strategies which were beneficial. For example, due to services provided to mothers, girls have fewer chores and can now better participate in school. They also have recruited more teachers. The conditions now are ripe for further dynamic actions for accelerated learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Key Observations from Local Government</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Enthusiastic about involving the community and about decentralized school management and funding.</td>
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<td>• Active in promoting girls’ education through parent sensitization and incentive programs.</td>
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<td>• Advocated local partnerships.</td>
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<td>• Keen on local level democratic institutions.</td>
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GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS:

Spotlight on a Local Women’s Cooperative and an Early Childhood Development center

*The Saleya Fissa Women’s Group*

The Saleya Fissa Women’s Group (Groupement Saleya Fissa) is a women’s cooperative, established in 1991. The group teaches women how to tie-dye fabric and make soap, and these items are then sold for group profit. Members pay a fee to receive training and to take part in the cooperative. Before the group was created, tie-dyers were dispersed and individual. The president had the idea of joining everyone together into a collective organization, whereby each woman would contribute and consolidate resources. Many women volunteered to join, and the group began with 15 members.

In Kindia we met with members of the group’s board of directors, who are also the founding members. We discussed the history of this women’s cooperative and its integral involvement with the CEC center across the street. It is important to contextualize the roots of this cooperative by pointing out that in roughly seven out of 10 households in Guinea, the male head of the household has died. This puts an extra burden on the women in terms of income-generation, which in turn adds value to women’s cooperatives.

Membership in the Saleya Fissa group is comprised of married, widowed, divorced and single women. (Single women members were described as those who couldn’t pursue and education, or who had to drop out of school and learn a trade). The group has trained many women who went to work for themselves and thus became economically self-sustaining. A fee of 20,000 GF (5,000 or ~$1.91 US per month paid over four months) is required for membership. The members share the profits, save some for common needs (equally), and manage the income with care.

Members do their housework at home in the morning, and then they are free to work in the training center from 3pm-6pm. UNICEF helps the training center by donating cheap cloth for beginner tie-dyers.

*Early Childhood Development Center (CEC)*

There is a CEC (centre d’encadrement communitaire) across the street from the Saleya Fissa cooperative’s small office. The center has 46 children, aged three to six. The children aren’t necessarily children of the women’s group members; most of them come from the neighborhood that houses the center. Their parents would probably prefer private schools, but they don’t have the

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40 Team member notes: Our meeting with this group was conducted in French and the local language, with the assistance of a translator. This should be taken into account when interpreting the findings from the discussion.
means to pay for them because they are poor (and often jobless). CEC attendance costs 3,000 GF (~ $1.14 US) per child per month, which is significantly less than the private school’s monthly fee of 10,000 GF (~ $3.81 US) per child.

The Saleya Fissa Women’s Group reported that they set up the center when the war in Sierra Leone sent many displaced women and children from Guinea’s border regions into Kindia. UNICEF provided the building, materials and furniture. They still provide some school supplies, and they pay for a nurse who visits periodically.

The Saleya Fissa Women’s Group pays for two teachers (50,000 GF or ~ $19.06 US apiece per month) and two cleaners (5,000 GF or ~ $1.91 US apiece). Two of the group members are also at the center to help take care of the children from 8am-12pm every day, but this job is unpaid and is rotated throughout the group membership.

The Saleya Fissa Women’s Group is committed to keeping the CEC in operation. They wish the government would help to finance the school, but for now they rely on their own means. Parents of attending children can’t pay for equipment and maintenance of the school because they are so poor.

The group wants to cooperate with other NGOs to eliminate the CEC attendance fee, but that is difficult. They also would like to provide food (they feel it is inequitable when some children come to school with food and others don’t because they are poor), uniforms, and medicines for when children are sick.

### Key Observations from CEC group

- Importance of early child education.
- Self-reliance—a commitment towards education despite any odds.
- Need for expansion
- Importance of link with local government and UNICEF
- Importance of sustainable livelihood and community involvement
PART II

RESEARCH FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS:

“ALORS, VOUS AVEZ COMPRIS CE QUE NOUS VOULONS DIRE?”
A Father in Dabola

Our discussions with community members revealed concerns about the school system which we have categorized under the following four themes: infrastructure; relevance and quality of education; retention, completion and performance of girls in primary school, and community ownership in the education system. While we recognize that these issues are not new and have been addressed both by donors and the Guinean government, they warrant reconsideration because the primary stakeholders (parents, teachers and students) remain burdened by them.

41 “So, did you understand what we are trying to tell you?”
INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUNDING

Infrastructure and funding were two issues repeatedly described as critical challenges to educational initiatives in Guinea. There is a need for:

- Sustained and efficient construction of school buildings and classrooms;
- Providing supplies, equipment and other teaching materials;
- Further incorporating the transportation needs of students and teachers into current initiatives; and
- Addressing the issues of teacher salaries and their housing needs.

BUILDINGS AND CLASSROOMS

“[An ideal school has] all furniture and materials. The school building must be well-constructed, with electricity, a roof, water, tables, chairs, notebooks and pens. There should be a library, a laboratory…and computers.”

CONEBAT Correspondent for the Dubréka prefecture

Generally, infrastructural needs were high on the list of interviewees’ priorities. A management committee member in Dubréka reported that if he were in charge of education decisions, he would spend first on infrastructure, followed by investments in teacher’s training and living conditions. Parents in all three regions described infrastructural needs as one of the highest priorities.

A desire for more classrooms was the main infrastructural need expressed by teachers, students and administrators in Dabola and Dubréka. The Director of Education at the Nafa center in Dubréka wished that there were six classrooms instead of two. Female students in Dabola described lack of a courtyard and cafeteria and a shortage of desks and classrooms as points needing improvement.

Parents were very focused on the importance of good infrastructure—and of sufficient equipment and supplies (to be discussed the next section). Members of the parents’ management committee in Dabola explained that they wanted new infrastructure because the lack of it prevented students from going to school. Parents in Kolenté specifically cited the need for “houses” or buildings for the
school and the CEC, and they listed teaching materials and sufficient medicine among the components of an ideal school. When asked to describe “the ideal school,” a mother in Dubréka listed “good house, windows,…, tables, computers, blackboard” as her criteria.

The Guinean government has made some investments in village infrastructure that expand access to education, such as the installation of water taps and coal stoves. These facilities remove the necessity of going to a well for water or to fetch wood, tasks that might normally require daughters to stay at home rather than going to school.

**RELEVANT LESSONS**

As corroborated by UNICEF’s Guinea representatives, currently in some areas in Guinea, when there is a classroom shortage or where a school building is needed, community members work together to construct temporary classrooms and hangars. This is ideally a temporary measure, and is often supported by a donor who will supply funding for a bona fide school once the community has demonstrated its commitment to developing the local education system. The communities contribute, especially helping with infrastructure, via activities such as building classrooms or hangars when possible. These efforts are then complimented by the state, which assigns teachers (at least one teacher to a hangar), and by the other partners such as UNICEF, which provide furniture, school materials, etc. These partnerships strive to replace the hangars with permanent structures, thus rewarding the communities that take the initiatives to provide modest infrastructures as an interim measure. UNICEF would like organizations such as the World Bank to replace the hangars with properly constructed schools.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The strategy of supporting communities that show commitment to education by their infrastructural contributions should be highlighted in other communities and expanded. Additionally, we recommend that local people should be employed to construct the schools, so that they are engaged in the school and simultaneously improving their livelihood. This recommendation does not propose “volunteer labor”, but rather suggests integrating rural development and construction of schools—as a partnership between donor organizations, NGOs, local Government, the DPE, and APEAE.

**SHORTAGE OF SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT AND OTHER TEACHING MATERIALS**

“We need more materials such as sewing machines to make Nafa centers functional”

*Kolenté DPE*

Teachers, administrators, parents and students from formal and non-formal schools consistently note the lack of sufficient supplies and equipment as a problem. The DPE and male teachers in
Kindia reported that they don’t have material and equipment. At the time of the interview, they had been supplied only with chalk—and nothing else—since the beginning of the school year. Their supply situation had been much better in 2001 and 2002, when they got support from UNICEF.

At the Nafa center in Dubréka, a teacher reported that “school materials (such as pens, books, etc.) are hard to come by”. Procurement of these items is the responsibility of the school directorate. Teaching materials and books, in contrast, are provided by UNICEF in the first year—although the local education director must provide them thereafter.

The Dabola management committee stated that the ideal school “has all the necessary materials”, flagging a frequently cited resource problem. Dabola teachers reported that they do not have enough supplies, such as books, nor do they have adequate storage for their materials. Students in Dabola similarly lamented the lack of books, and parents cited a shortage of materials as one difficulty facing the school.

The resource shortage at the Nafa center in Kolenté threatens more serious consequences. This center has been marketed to villages as a place where students can be trained in tailoring and tie-dying. Unfortunately, however, the center has yet to procure the necessary equipment for this training. Meanwhile, students are taught French, reading and writing, but some have dropped out because they are not learning a trade as originally expected. This problem could damage the Nafa center’s reputation if expectations are raised and then not met.

In some cases UNICEF has provided schools with the necessary start-up materials, but without that external support many schools lack essential tools. The effect of this shortage ranges from minor (e.g., students share desks and books) to major (e.g., students withdraw from the Nafa center because it doesn’t have the equipment necessary to teach a trade). This situation illustrates the need for a system to equip schools with the necessary resources, in a manner that is sustainable and is not donor-dependent.

**RELEVANT LESSONS**

People interviewed in Kolenté spoke about the strategies by Action Aid, which involved their setting up a “boutique” to provide supplies. The boutique was managed by the community. A benefit of having such a boutique was that children came with their parents to buy the materials, and it raised everyone’s awareness of the investment they were making in education, and in addition, the community sees the revenue generated. Thus they became more engaged. Outside Guinea, there are examples of other strategies, such as in Bangladesh, where scholarships which included supplies and other related materials helped to increase enrollment.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Donors should maintain the provision of supplies and equipment among their priorities in their zones of intervention. As a priority, they should also diversify the equipment provided. The community needs to be engaged in the provision of supplies. For example, lessons from Action Aid’s “community boutique” approach should be used. Also, products of the training centers, such as clothes, can be bought by donors and the community to be used as uniforms in schools.

At the policy level, actors should ensure that each Nafa center is fully equipped and has the minimum capacity to provide skills promised. There should be a systematic approach to scaling up
the Nafa centers. As the concept of Nafa centers becomes consolidated, the next step would be to increase the number of skills provided before continuing expansion to other regions.

At the same time, expansion of incentives like providing rations should also take into consideration issues of storage and security of the same. In Dabola, for instance, while the school received oil for distribution to girls, the school lacked the facilities to store it.

**DISTANCE AND TRANSPORTATION FROM SCHOOL**

How do you get to school? *“We walk.”*
How long does it take you? *“An hour.”*

_Girls aged 7-13, Kolenté formal school._

People in each region visited indicated that living far from school creates barriers to access.

Parents of formal school students in Dabola noted that schools were too far away for some children to attend. Some of the formal school students in Kolenté also said the distance from their houses to school was a significant issue. One boy stated that he lives about 23 kilometers away from school. In Dubréka, a Nafa center student reported that she paid for public transportation, and it took her two to three hours to get to school. She found the exercise especially frustrating on the days when she arrived to find that the teacher was absent.

Additionally, in Kolenté, parents of formal school students said the problem with sending girls to school was the absence of a local secondary school. The only option after the sixth year of primary school is to send children to the secondary school in Kindia and arrange for them to reside there.

There has been a policy of building schools closer to villages, which has broken down access barriers experienced by children who live in more remote areas. Also, government investments in educational infrastructure have addressed the transportation problems in some areas.
RELEVANT LESSONS

In Thailand, the closing of the gender gap has been influenced by increased accessibility to schools. While transport does not bring the school closer in terms of distance, it does decrease travel time and provides some ease. Special arrangements were made to transport village children to secondary schools; local development also enabled transport as roads improved and public transport increased. It has also been suggested that cooperation between agricultural and transport agencies could free more resources for the transport sector. Concerning this issue, lessons can be learned by looking at the general approaches used, and ideas from the research team.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the policies and investment in school construction be continued. However, although the construction of additional schools was explicitly suggested by those interviewed, we also recommend that the provision of transportation services be viewed as a viable strategy for scaling up. It may also be useful to connect with the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD), a global network of individuals and organizations interested in rural transport issues in developing countries.

TEACHER SALARIES AND HOUSING EXPENSES

One teacher reported living with a friend because there was no affordable housing available.

Kolenté, Team notes

The need for more teachers—and better teacher support—was evidenced in discussions with teachers and parents. The lack of teachers relates to the unattractive teacher salaries and conditions of living. There are problems with teachers not getting salaries on a regular basis.

Formal school educators in Dabola described a shortage of teachers, which leads to teachers having to teach an excessive number of students. At Dabola, there are classes with as many as 98 students. However, the living conditions of teachers do not make it an attractive profession. Teachers reported that their monthly salary of 110,000 GF (~ $41.93 US) does not match the cost of living. Furthermore, their salaries are sometimes paid late.

Requiring teachers to relocate to new communities increases their cost of living, because they must pay for individual accommodations. Insufficient salaries—that may often be paid weeks behind

schedule—compound the problem. Moving away from their home villages and families is also hard on teachers. Parents echoed this problem, noting the need for more teachers.

Male educators at a formal school in Kolenté explained that teachers face difficulties adjusting to a new way of life and living away from their families. Challenges cited included: the lack of electricity; the adjustment to a new “life”, culture and diet; and strained communication with families due to poor telephone systems and long distances from their homes.

Under the Guinean education system, teachers are “public servants” who are placed within communities (rather than being recruited from within their home areas). This approach is to foster a fairer hiring system by preventing patronage, but it also places economic strain on the teachers, as described above.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Some countries have avoided the problems faced by teachers in Guinea by training and recruiting teachers to work within their home villages. If the Guinean government intends to encourage more men and women to become teachers, it will need to address some of these obstacles—either by making an effort to assign people to their home villages/regions, or by introducing infrastructural improvements. Thus policies made to address educational issues should address the issues of teacher motivation as well. One response to this issue was for alternative sources of funds (e.g., the mayor’s office, etc.) to cover teachers’ salaries because some communities lack the resources to pay for these costs.

Incentives to target particular issues, such as the retention of girls in schools, could be linked to improvement of infrastructure that will benefit teachers and the community as a whole. For example, donors should reward those communities that improve girls’ education by investing in their overall infrastructure and education systems. Such deliberate attempts, as modest as they may be, go a long way in creating incentives linked to the school system and the community, and subsequently improving standard of living.

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING INFRASTRUCTURE**

Innovative measures by different governments have partially succeeded in increasing school enrollment and completion. However, such strategies are context-specific and difficult to recommend without sufficient knowledge of macro-level policies. Based on the communities’ expressed economic needs, however, the costs of fees, uniforms, textbooks and permanent school construction should not be borne by them. Many of the parents and local government officials commented on the fact that they prefer Nafa because it is free while the formal school system is not.

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44 Examples of grants to households through Bolsa Escuela in Brazil or Progressa in Mexico; of rations in Indonesia are presented in the background paper of the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality and in What works in Girls’ Education.

45 According to Nancy Nafula (2001), countries such as South Korea, Cuba, Zimbabwe, all of whom progressed rapidly towards universal primary education despite high levels of poverty and inequality, did so by reducing the costs to poor households through increased public investment. More recent examples are Uganda, Malawi, and Ethiopia. Achieving Sustainable Universal Primary Education through Debt Relief: The case of Kenya. Nancy N. Nafula, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis, Nairobi, Kenya, 2001.
Also, they did not have to spend as much for material at the Nafa centers, as compared to formal schools. As such, assistance, especially in the provision of infrastructure should continue, with the local communities being integrated in the management of such assistance through measures such as their involvement in construction, training and employment of teachers locally, distribution of teaching materials and equipment, and linking education access with improving the community’s access to transportation.

Three Wishes for Education

A government official in Conakry listed the following three “wishes” he had for education in Guinea:

(1) More money for secondary schools;
(2) Better books for teachers; and
(3) Continuing education for teachers.
RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION

“In the past teachers would not even look at the girls, they would send them to their house to do their chores. Now, girls get equal treatment in the classroom. They answer questions, participate.”
A Local Government Official in Kindia

The 1996 Amman Affirmation focused on quality of education with the slogan “Access without quality is not access.” The notion of “quality” in education, however, has been defined variously. Our discussions with the community reaffirmed quality as being “relevant to context, to needs (both ‘needs now and needs later’) and to humanity”. Thus, quality education entails the acquisition of practical income-generating skills, while employing relevant methods and languages. This is especially true for women, who are primary care-givers.

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS:
SKILLS-BASED PRACTICAL TEACHING AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Those interviewed during the study agreed that the formal school system is handicapped by its inability to provide practical skills to the students and its weak link to providing livelihoods. Their suggestions pointed to giving non-formal education its due, by establishing links between non-formal and formal education. Generally, the Nafa centers seemed to address the practical concerns of the communities studied by providing a less costly option for parents to educate their children, and a more desirable outcome due to the teaching of practical income-generating skills. It is a Guinean solution to the problem of drop-outs (especially girls), and it offers a second chance to those who may not even have had the “first chance” to go to formal school.

RELEVANT LESSONS

In Madagascar, communes developed Community Development Plans, similar to the plans developed by the CPC in Guinea, which include detailed profiles of the commune with information such as the demography, topography, economy, and social structure of the community. Such plans facilitate the work and partnerships among various organizations that may wish to work in the communes. Organizations working in the community can then commit to employing the skills of newly trained community members.

Also, despite the benefits of having some practical skills being taught at the Nafa centers, those interviewed suggested that there is a need to diversify the skills that are being taught. For example, at Dubrêka, the community had noted that because sewing was the only skill that was initially taught at the Nafa center, they had produced quite a large number of seamstresses, thereby saturating the

market. At Dabola, there was not as much enthusiasm about the Nafa centers because they lacked the equipment to teach the trainees the practical skills they sought. This was because the relatively new Nafa center had opened without sufficient materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Generally, the skills-based training that is received from the educational system should be relevant to the realities of the community. For example, at Dubréka, where the primary activities include farming, fishing, and craft-making, the training obtained should be geared towards these skills. In this regard, much can be learned from some of the regions in Guinea, where World Education is intervening. As is previewed in the next phase of the Education for All initiative, training centers in the school system should be established to make them more relevant to the community and the students.

Much can be learned from the non-formal schools and applied in the formal system, including the following successful strategies: flexible age of entry to school; flexible school hours; free school materials (no burden of textbooks or uniforms); personal attention; and “progressive manuals”, such as the material devised by UNICEF.

Community development plans, as done in Madagascar (see box above), may also be useful in the Guinean context. By linking such plans to educational issues directly, these multi-sectoral plans would provide information on existing resources and raw materials as well as on the needs of the communities; all the partners (including the community) could then determine the relevant skills that should be taught in both the formal schools and Nafa centers.

At the Nafa centers, as well as training centers that may be incorporated in the formal school system, diversifying the skills taught would maintain their relevance. Girls and boys should receive an education that enables them to earn a living in the community and to function as active citizens and members of the society; this includes the capacity for oral and written communication in French and the local languages. This points to the need for carefully timing the setting up and expansion of Nafa centers and other training centers so that they adequately provide the services that the community seeks, and do not lose their relevance. The provision these centers should address both demand-side and supply-side issues. They should be created and expanded after a careful assessment of the needs as well as the financial feasibility.
**REPORT ON A TRANSECT IN KOLENTE**

We took a short trip on foot around the school neighborhood. After talking to a few people who lived nearby, we came across a few boys from the school walking back home. We talked to three of them – they were all in the fourth grade, but two were 15 years old and one was 12. We tried to get a sense of their understanding of French as we asked them basic questions on what kinds of work they did at home, etc. They responded, rather quickly, that they chop wood, grind millet and so on. They said that they go to school on Friday and Saturday and take a break on Thursday. The translator said that their level of French was very poor.

Language of instruction is problematic in most post-colonial countries where more than one indigenous language exists along with at least one colonial language. In most places we visited it was apparent that the local languages are used in the classroom to teach, in addition to French. However, there were no text books available in the local languages because instruction in local languages was officially “discontinued” in the mid 1980s. To the extent that the local languages are being used, it is important that the necessary support be provided to facilitate learning.

**RELEVANT LESSONS**

Given that local languages in oral and written form are being successfully used to sensitize community members and parents, there is evidence that local languages provide an important communicational bridge. Parents that have learned to read and write, even in just their local languages, are more likely to be engaged and provide assistance in their children’s quest to read and write in local languages and French.

Experiences in several countries indicate that children who started education in their mother-tongue performed, on average, significantly better than the graduates of standard primary schools, as comprehension of a second or foreign language is facilitated by the foundation which the first language provides. Studies conducted in Guinea-Bissau and Niger noted that i) bilingual schools had more dynamic interaction between students and teachers, and among students; ii) teaching was more student-centered; and iii) achievement was higher for girls than boys. Needless to say, instruction in one national language can be a unifying force and reduces the costs of education, but indigenous languages cannot be cast aside for that reason. Already the Khoi-San languages in southern Africa are presumed to be “extinct.”

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48 From team member notes.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Just as some learning materials have been modified to facilitate education by removing negative stereotypes, using material developed in relevant languages of instruction removes a barrier, and facilitates the involvement of parents, teachers, and the entire community in the education of its children – girls and boys. Further, if parents and children are both able to read and write in the local language, and eventually, in French and other languages, there is a greater likelihood that all parties will see the relevance of their literacy and can be invested in education overall. Additionally, such an approach preserves and gives respect to local culture, history, stories and literature while allowing for the community to expand into the national and global arena.

We suggest that consideration be given to pilot programs to test the effects of using written text in selected local languages (those most widely spoken and with easily available text). These programs should be implemented in a number of schools in different contexts (formal and non-formal schools; low-performing, medium-performing and high-performing schools; rural and urban settings; and at entry, middle and upper grades). The pilot programs could be designed in several forms, such as the following:

- Maintaining the current teaching in French and introducing the local languages alongside (i.e. teaching the local languages as a course, just as science or mathematics in a course).
- Starting with teaching in the local language and subsequently introducing French after a period of time (1 term, 1 year, 2 years, etc.).
- Extending the use of local languages in i) and ii) above to a number of selected basic subject areas that are taught at the entry level, such as math and science.

The test and control groups could then be examined on their knowledge of content after some pre-determined time-period.

There is a clear need for a national policy on language of instruction. This policy should account for the fact that local languages are used in the classroom and in commercial transactions. Allowing for local language use in schools could also contribute to community ownership and participation in the education system, because lack of French language skills would not become a point of exclusion.52

WOMEN AS CAREGIVERS AND PROVIDERS:
REINFORCING OLD AND NEW GENDER ROLES

Women serve an important role as caregivers in the family. Many girls are assigned chores from a young age and are expected to help their mothers in the home. As they grow and get married, they become responsible not only for caring for their husband and children, but also many times for their elderly parents. As one woman mentioned to us in Dabola, “only a girl can understand the pains of her mother”.

Girls are viewed as having a comparative advantage over men in the role as caregiver, and thus are assigned that role. One of the techniques to sensitize the community toward the usefulness of girls’ education is the “selling point” that an educated woman becomes a better caregiver and, more significantly, another bread-winner in the family. Nafa centers promise to teach girls practical skills that give them an advantage in the local marketplace, and thus position them as income-earners. A man looking for a wife may consider this a good quality, and thus will be more likely to choose an “educated” woman as a wife. This is another refrain that we heard often from teachers and parents as well as government officials.

**A Day in the Life of a Guinean Student:**

*Comparing the daily activities of boys who attend non-formal schools and girls who attend formal schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NON-FORMAL SCHOOL BOYS</th>
<th>FORMAL SCHOOL GIRLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wake up</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash face/toilet</td>
<td>Help mother with cooking and cleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>Clean up and get dressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to brook to wash, come home and change clothes</td>
<td>Walk to school—school starts at 8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get books and go to school</td>
<td>Break from school at noon—go home or play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School until 2pm</td>
<td>Back to school at 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go home</td>
<td>Walk home at 5:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Help with chores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study / go to friend’s home and study together</td>
<td>Study under candlelight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football at 4pm</td>
<td>Go to sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed at 10pm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RECOMMENDATIONS

There are some negative aspects to marketing education for girls in this fashion, however. Most women have three major roles on the household level alone (reproduction, production, and community management). Reinforcing their productive role through the provision of education may be one way to address inequitable power relations, and it may enable women to deal with poverty. Still, promoting girls’ education on the basis that it will make women economic providers would be akin to providing education to women in order to ensure population control. “The slogan ‘education a woman and you educate a nation’ may have increased attention on women’s role and contribution to children’s education and well being, but it also has framed women’s value within the socio-reproductive roles (and therefore reinforcing gender stereotypes).” The message perhaps, and one that the community may accept, is Amartya Sen’s capability perspective: people should have the capabilities to survive and function, and the freedom to pursue well-being.

Thus, emphasizing education as a way to simply better women in the roles they already have, rather than as an end in itself or for individual self-fulfillment, may ultimately lock women even more tightly into their current gender roles. In contrast, offering women the opportunity to take on new or different roles in the economy and home, and expanding their horizons, is the goal of education in many parts of the world. Bearing in mind this comparative framework, measures to endow women and girls with prestige, visibility and recognition such that they increase their decision-making power and broaden their roles should also be considered.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING RELEVANCE OF EDUCATION

In sum, there is the need to increase the relevance of education through measures that improve the social and economic status of a community, while affirming the self-identity of its members. Because of the low relevance of the education provided in formal schools to children—and also due to other socioeconomic factors—we see problems of enrollment and retention, especially for girls. These

55 The Millennium Project Task Force (TF) on Education and Gender Equality has written an interim report on achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of Universal Primary Education.
issues are presented in the next section. By linking all aspects of education to the overall being of
the individual and the community, though measures such as the learning of practical skills and the
use of the languages that one employs in daily communication, education becomes less abstract.
However, in sensitizing communities to educate girls, there is the need to emphasize the benefits of
education beyond improving ones earning ability - education develops the individual and society as a
whole.
RETENTION, COMPLETION AND PERFORMANCE OF GIRLS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL:
WHAT IS THE RIGHT POLICY MIX FOR GUINEA AT THIS JUNCTURE?

I will make sure my daughter goes to school.
Teacher, formal school, Dubréka

But she must be married by sixteen.
Parent, formal school, Dabola

ENROLLMENT

Guinea’s sustained increases in primary school enrollment over an entire decade make it an international success story, especially of girls’ education. According to 2003 figures, approximately 65% of Guinea’s school age children now begin first grade, and approximately 44% of school-age girls enroll.59 These figures reflect great progress made since the 1980s. By one measure, the net enrollment ratio for females has risen from 18 in 1985 to nearly 30 by 1998.60 Gross enrollment for girls rose from 22 to 40 over the same period61. This ratio was 49 by 2000-1, according to World Bank (EFA) data.62 While concerns remain regarding enrollment, significant progress has been made over the past two decades.

RETENTION AND PERFORMANCE

Despite the strides made in increasing girls’ enrollment, keeping girls in primary school, and enabling them to graduate remain critical challenges facing the Guinean school system. In other words, enrollment is only one component of promoting positive educational outcomes for girls; supporting high scholastic performance and attendance throughout primary school are two other key, but less successful, components. Girls in Guinea still drop out at a greater rate than boys, and fewer girls do well in school.63 In 1997, only 57% of Guinean girls reached the final year of primary school compared to 73% of boys, and only 33% of girls took the seventh grade exam compared to 44% of boys.64 Increasing girls’ educational performance and improving their rates of retention throughout primary school comprise Guinea’s next frontier of challenges in girls’ education; because even while enrollment rates are increasing, low female completion rates are alarming.

59 IES, December 2003.
61 Same as above.
64 Ibid. and also Promoting Primary Education for Girls in Guinea. CDIE Impact Evaluation, 1999.
The focus of Guinea’s policy mix on enrollment mirrors an international trend in education policy. The 2005 EFA Global Monitoring Report points out that in many countries the prevalent focus on access often overshadows the issue of quality. In Guinea the emphasis on access to primary school has restricted attention to the system’s continued inefficiency, wherein increased enrollment rates coincided with increased repetition rates. Repetition rates increased to 28% before dropping to 22% in 2002.

Repetition exacerbated by infrastructural constraints

Repetition is highest in grades five and six, which may reflect poor scholastic performance. The aforementioned figures suggest that girls perform disproportionately lower than boys. The concentration of grade repetition in the last elementary school grade also partly reflects the lack of places available for secondary schooling. The Princeton Team’s meeting with Guinea’s National Director for the ‘Education for All’ program echoed the promising role of a strengthened secondary schooling system in addressing the high rates of grade repetition. The Director presented the analogy of a herd of sheep—when the front sheep encounters a hurdle, the result is that the back of the herd gets caught in a bottle-neck.

Increased repetition drains scarce resources and creates incentives for dropping out of school. It also results in larger classes that have to be divided into sections, and teachers have less time to spend per pupil. With reduced teacher attention, students may not learn as much and thus face a weakened opportunity to be promoted to the next class. The resulting increased time spent in the school system is wasteful, and it can cause frustration that may lead students to drop out. In contrast, increasing the flow of students through the school system implies cost savings, since fewer student-years of schooling services have to be provided on average for a student to reach a given level. These savings offset the costs associated with grade repetition and wastage and lower incentives for dropping out.

RELEVANT LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study suggests that retaining girls in school until graduation is related to the economic well-being and the value of education in the communities where they live. Where education is valued, whether for the improvement it brings in earning capacity, social status, or standard of living, people have more of an incentive to send their girls (and boys) to school. In other words, education must make economic sense and be linked to creating or improving livelihoods in some way. At the same time, the access and quality of education are key determining factors for retention. Socio-cultural factors continue to be important barriers to girls’ education, although the gender-sensitivity campaigns appear to have had a significant impact.

Strategies to support girls’ performance and retention

Equity committees at the prefecture and sub prefecture levels have developed strategies to ensure that girls not only enroll in school, but also complete school. The Guinean EFA literature describes the positive impact of innovative school associations such as junior-high equity clubs, as well as after-school activities, in promoting girls’ leadership skills and scholastic performance. However, discussions with interviewees suggested that spending more time at schools for after-school

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65 Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2005: Education for All: The Quality Imperative
66 World Bank, Education Notes, April 2002.
67 Ibid.
activities was an unpopular or unattractive option. In all visited sites, none of the parents stated that their children were part of a club or an after-school activity. In addition to academic classes, parents reported that their children (including their daughters) played outside for gym class—but no other activities were mentioned. The team’s conversations with parents suggested that remaining at school after school hours was negatively perceived by parents, especially for girls.

Additionally, incentive mechanisms are used to promote girls’ retention and scholastic achievement. These include provisions of dry food rations to reward girls’ continued school attendance, and prizes rewarding outstanding scholastic performance. Local governments discussed the importance and successes of incentive strategies. Our conversations revealed that some local government officials believed the incentive schemes’ potential benefits to girls far outweighed concerns about boys’ jealousies. These strategies were considered an important step to redressing the strong historical biases against girls in education.

THE PLEA FOR GIRLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Regional Experience: The importance of higher education

An international research project evaluating the further education and employment experiences of secondary school leavers and university graduates in Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe suggests that the perception of unemployable university graduates in Africa is a myth. In contrast to this myth, the experiences of these countries suggest that graduates enjoy better health and employment outcomes than their peers that abandoned their pursuit of higher education.

The report concludes that the attainment of universal primary education at the expense of secondary and higher education would have disastrous consequences for human resource development. It also concludes that access to secondary schools, especially for girls, as well as higher education must be increased through measures such as bursaries.

Secondary School: Donor response

In 2002 the World Bank stated that donors have provided strong support to primary education but almost no support for secondary or higher education. The team’s meeting with the World Bank suggests that donors are integrating a focus on higher education into their efforts.

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68 Meeting on October 27, 2004, at the Kindia Government office.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 WB2002, p3
Community Perceptions: Can high scholastic performance and school completion be included on the community’s radar screen?

Our conversations with parents and teachers indicate that a key challenge facing the next steps of continued success in the Guinean education system involves the perceived role of girls and women in society. Will keeping girls at home be more beneficial to the community than the opportunity cost of keeping them in school? This decision is often framed as being a choice determined by (harsh) economic realities. Nonetheless it is also cultural choice. Quranic verses have been interpreted to emphasize the importance of schooling girls (FEG/FAWE; USAID Guinea), which could extend to retaining girls in primary school and beyond.

Some rural and traditional communities, where elders who didn’t see the benefits of a formal education and where local and religious mores actually discouraged any kind of western-style education as being a bad influence on young children, now share in the responsibility for their community’s school. Consensus stemmed from an eventual conviction that schooling young children would be beneficial to the community itself.

Indeed, our semi-structured interviews with senior level USAID staff indicated a cornerstone of sensitization was disseminating concrete examples of how education enabled girls to make a stronger contribution to their communities in general and their families in particular. For example, drawing on the reality that women often shop in the market, an effective message has been to ask the question, “What if your daughter did not know how to read? How could she buy milk in the market if she cannot read?”

Guinea’s high prevalence of female-headed households may facilitate the effectiveness of messages supporting girls’ education. According to one USAID official, “the women are not in great shape – so tell them that if girls do not get educated, they will inherit their situation.” Successes in enrollment have leveraged these dynamics to illuminate the importance of sending girls to school. The importance of keeping girls in school, and enabling them to perform well in school can similarly highlight the relevance of complete and quality education for girls to the community.

Female teachers

While female teachers may not contribute to improved educational outcomes for girls per se, they may be associated with increased comfort about girls’ continued attendance to school throughout primary school.73 The shortage of female teachers was conspicuously absent from conversations about challenges facing children that want to continue school, and from descriptions of ideal schools and teachers. When probed as to their perceptions of teachers and gender, mothers stated that there were enough female teachers; however, regional statistics noted that in Kolenté prefecture there were only 12 female teachers as compared to 37 male teachers. This could suggest that the lack of female teachers has not been internalized as a potential factor contributing to lower girls’ retention, or it may be less influential in the case of Guinea. Teachers in all the regions interviewed agreed, however, that having more women teachers would be more helpful to keep girls in school.

73 In Pakistan, for example, parents prefer to send their daughters to school if there are women teachers present, but accept a male teacher if he is from the community “Closing the Gender Gap? The Informal sector in Pakistan” in Gender, Education and Development, 1999.
Female teachers do not necessarily contribute to the learning outcomes in girls.
Community involvement plays a promising role in promoting girls’ retention. For example, USAID cites the case of an epileptic girl in the village of Sountoudiana. The Parental Association (PA) ensured that the girl remained in school by first identifying that she dropped out, then talking to the family. Ultimately the PA spoke to the teacher about changing his methods, which were sparking the young girl’s epileptic fits. As a result, the young girl returned to school. Similarly, in Dabola, where World Education has been working with the community, the female school Director stated that she discussed with parents any issues regarding a student dropping out of school; however, sometimes the problem of poverty was too big for the parents to allow the daughter to continue.

Our field work further supports the potential strong role of community involvement. However, community perceptions and actions remain focused on increasing girls’ enrollment and are less explicit about keeping girls in school.

**Classroom environment**

Classroom environments appear to be supportive of girls, but it seems that formal schools are losing students due to their strict rules. Strict timetables don’t offer girls the flexibility often needed to balance household responsibilities with schooling. Gender-sensitivity training of teachers appears to have been effective; gender-sensitive teaching materials, however, remain scarce (as do all teaching materials).

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74 USAID, July 2004.
COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

It is important for communities to be involved in genuine partnership with national and international actors in education on planning, implementation, management and evaluation of all activities that relate to the community’s educational needs. Moreover, community participation in every aspect of the education system – teacher selection, monitoring and management, and policy design – are equally integral for the success of education initiatives. Full community partnership is particularly important in producing results from gender sensitization campaigns and achieving the desired results on enrollment, attendance, performance and retention.

While local officials in Guinea appeared to be pleased with the democratic institutions in place, there remain challenges in ensuring full, equitable community participation without the agenda being driven by a few powerbrokers (usually the donors). All too often, greater involvement of community members has focused solely on their ability to bring more resources to the table.

Community participation without equitable representation is also an important issue because community networks can function to give more advantage to those already advantaged. As pointed out by Bray, “Participation without redistribution of power is meaningless because it allows the power holders to claim that all sides were considered, but then makes it possible for only some of those sides to benefit, thus maintaining status quo.”

Further mechanisms through which local communities’ agendas and voices can be heard and incorporated into education policy planning need to be devised.

RATIONALE FOR PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION

- **Ownership for relevance and sustainability:** If the community becomes fully engaged from the initial planning to the final evaluation of the program, they can help make it more relevant and consequently, increase the likelihood that it will sustain after the program has left.

- **Equitable Representation:** Partnerships can lead to more accurate identification of needs. If a community takes full ownership of the process and is actively engaged in the various aspects of education decisions then it can more fully represent its voice in planning local educational programs. Also, partnerships can be mobilized, perhaps with government intervention, to figure out pathways to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable groups are heard.

- **Funding:** When different partners come together, they can harmonize their activities and utilize available resources more effectively.

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75 Bray (1999) discusses a wide array of definitions for true partnerships. In general, participation in real decisionmaking at every stage of the process – problem identification, feasibility study, planning, implementation and evaluation would enable a community to participate genuinely in the process.

76 According to Reimers, 1997 – educational participation would be in the following areas: i) designing policy, ii) mobilizing resources, iii) curriculum development, iv) teacher hiring and firing, v) supervision, vi) payment of salaries, vii) textbook design/distribution, ix) certification, x) building and maintenance.
The *EFA Thematic Study on Community Partnerships in Education*\(^{77}\) outlines guiding principles that can be applied to community partnerships in Guinea. The report lists the following factors that will make partnerships between communities and institutions optimally effective: a long-term joint commitment to girls’ education; mutual trust, understanding and acceptance of each party’s role; a recognition of the differing perspectives among the partners; two-way communication; capacity-building as necessary; and shared decision-making by all partners.

Of all the aspects of partnerships described above, shared decision-making is the most relevant to the Guinea case. This implies that each partner provides more than mere inputs, such as funding, labor, raw materials, or time. It calls for all partners—including donors and communities—to have a voice in the process of determining educational goals, barriers, and strategies to expand access and improve quality.

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**TOWARDS COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP OF THE NOTION OF EDUCATION**

From discussions with people within the school system and in the communities, it appears that great strides have been made in getting the community to “own” the idea of girls’ education. UNICEF’s Social Contracts\(^{78}\) with communities engage them in the ownership and sustainability of efforts to improve the quality of education in Guinea. Sensitization programs appear to have been successful in increasing awareness. Rural radio initiatives also appear to be very popular and effective. However, challenges remain in addressing the relevance of retaining girls in school.

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**INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES**

The *Sara Communication Initiative* was developed in 10 countries of Eastern and Southern Africa, with UNICEF assistance. Educating adolescent girls and their parents about the importance of staying in school is one of the main messages of this lively radio series. Other issues such as sexual harassment, HIV/AIDS, early marriage, genital mutilation and girls’ domestic workload, are skillfully woven into the entertaining plots about Sara and her friends. In addition to the radio series, the initiative has developed animated films (See [http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/video_catalogue_title.html](http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/video_catalogue_title.html)), comic books, storybooks, audiocassettes, posters and guides.

Other countries, such as India and Bangladesh, have successfully promoted gender equity issues through an innovative animated cartoon series known as *Meena*. Education modules include topics such as “Will Meena Leave School” [http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/video_7630.html](http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/video_7630.html). They also use the life of the cartoon’s heroine Meena as a vehicle to address socio-cultural barriers to retaining girls in school. In Bangladesh ‘Meena Day’ is observed nation-wide, with awareness about gender equity raised through seminars, art competitions, group paintings by children, and story writing by children and teachers.

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\(^{78}\) These agreements are designed to ensure community participation in UNICEF-supported projects, such as building schools.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Further communication strategies should be developed at the local level. When asked about newspapers in Dabola for example, a local government official informed us that the newspaper comes from the capital, Conakry. Thus, sharing community information laterally via media such as radio and hand-written newsletters may yield positive competition among communities as they may strive to highlight their successes. Additionally, there should be more information sharing among the organizations that are working on sensitization, to exchange ideas about how to increase community ownership of the initiatives. Community theater and short films, such as those based on the Sara Communication Initiative (described above), could also be broadcast in popular theatres where movies are screened.

COMMUNITIES’ INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

“I watch over work at school. I sensitize parents to send their children, especially their girls, to school. I watch over students and teachers and monitor their punctuality. I come here every morning and check on attendance and monitor that students wear their uniforms. I ask teachers to let in late students. I monitor school cleanliness; if it is not clean I ask parents to clean it. Every morning I see if desks are broken and get repairs done as necessary. If children fight, I separate them.”

APEAE President, Héramakonon Primary School, Dabola

Community involvement is necessary because donor and national contributions are not adequate to finance Guinea’s education needs. Thus communities must continue to complement the system with their own resources.

The Guinea school system has adopted the APEAE as a centerpiece of its community partnership model. This stems from the recognition that parents, close relatives and the community are the main vehicles of change in education. Also, community ownership has to start with creating relevance for education in the mindset of the parents, because they have the most control over getting girls to school.

The APEAEs are primarily engaged in tackling attendance (seeing whether students are in the school or not, and inquiring about absenteeism); engaging in classroom environment issues (disciplining students, monitoring teachers); and sensitizing parents (encouraging them to send their children to school). The non-formal Nafa system in Guinea has Management Committees, which have administrative functions in addition to their sensitization roles. Their primary commitment displayed was to manage school finances and conduct activities as directed by the DPE. Management Committee members interviewed did not seem to be strongly involved liaising with the DPE on behalf of the community, however.
The main roles of APEAEs with regard to attendance and retention are mostly to sensitize parents, and to encourage them to send their children to school. It is here that they can make the most impact because they form a bridge between communities and schools.

A telling point from our talks with parents was that although membership in the APEAE was automatic, few parents would say that they were members unless they were in the elected Bureau (comprised of selected parents with specific managerial responsibilities in the school).

UNICEF is actively involved in increasing parents’ role in schools, and has advocated APEAEs that are closely interlinked with the school system. UNICEF has also provided parental education and training on utilization of health centers, child discipline, importance of school and parental involvement, arranged marriages, nutrition and breastfeeding.

**RELEVANT LESSONS – GUINEA AND BEYOND**

USAID’s strategy in girls’ education under the Education for All program is to involve the community from the bottom up. It does so inside and outside of the classroom. Outside the classroom activities refer to community sensitization from the bottom up. World Education, funded by USAID to run PACEEQ, provides management and other training to local NGOs that run adult literacy centers and are directly involved with the APEAEs. APEAEs may be eventually federated at the subprefectural and regional level. The democratically elected Board (“le Bureau”) of each APEAE participating in PACEEQ has a gender program to put pressure on families to keep girls in school and act on helping pregnant girls stay in school and return to school after delivery.

**Clustering schools within a region**

In Cambodia and Thailand, a larger committee is responsible for several schools (a cluster) within a particular area. In Cambodia the system was developed by government with NGOs and UNICEF. These organizations were shown to promote community partnership by guiding and supporting APEAEs and other community bodies. These cluster committees generally had at least one Buddhist Monk in the system – addressing the need to involve an important component of the community in addition to parents of school going children. Such clusters can provide other network externalities – schools within some region can share resources, help in teacher transfers and training, and this can become a forum for learning from each other.
Ownership of teacher selection process

Currently in Papua New Guinea, communities and related agencies select teachers, and upon their approval from Provincial Education Boards (PEBs) they are provided training and certification by the national government. Delegating teacher selection to the community allows local ownership of this process, and government financing of teacher training and certification relieves communities of a financial burden. This division of responsibility enables the national government to focus on building effective teacher training tools and centers. Concerns remain that local hiring may promote favoritism and nepotism, but these issues may be small in comparison to the serious shortfall of teachers in Guinea.

Ensuring equitable participation

UNICEF/Guinea has expressed concern about female under-representation in most APEAEs. Even when they are present, they tend to have the stereotypical female roles (e.g., secretary) and are not seen in leadership positions. Sub-equity committees exist to sensitise prefectures on the importance of girls’ education which may benefit somewhat. Papua New Guinea’s Management Boards79 are found to be highly unequal in representation. Out of 541 schools that provided data in a survey, 63.4% indicated that they had no female Board members and 21.6% indicated that they had only one female member.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Community participation can be increased by giving community members a bigger planning and implementation role in school construction and teacher selection, and by involving non-parents. This will help them gain financial and non-financial ownership of the process and allow them to add local relevance to the school system. Recommendation of such an expansion has to be judiciously balanced with understanding how to minimize under representation of various minority groups—especially women.

Financing education

Donors and international NGOs are critical players in the Guinean education system. While there is high financial dependence on donors, communities contribute significantly to educational initiatives and this local investment yields positive results such as ownership and participation. Increased community involvement in financing in education projects is recommended, and is increasingly the trend.

Infrastructure

Multiple donors contribute to financing costs in the school system and they have increasingly envisioned community participation in the system.

World Bank

The World Bank is a key player, providing funding to support construction and maintenance of schools, wells, latrines, and training schools. They coordinate with bilateral donors and outsource work to international NGOs. The World Bank representative in Guinea stated that communities

79 World Education Forum, http://www2.unesco.org/wef/en-leadup/findings_community%20partnerships%203.shtm
contribute about 20% of the costs for these education infrastructure projects. He noted that communities tend to become more involved in the education system when they build the school building.

Specifically, under the EFA1 phase of the EFA project, under the decentralization initiative, some small grants will be channeled to schools under the School Improvement Program, under the DPE, and grants for construction will be given out through the CRD. Under the EFA1, the construction of 25% of primary schools will be carried out directly by the communities, and in the rest of the construction projects NGOs will be contracted with a fixed proportion of community participation following PASE II processes.

UNICEF

Many UNICEF-supported education projects highly encourage communities to help in building classrooms or hangars. Their cooperative effort reflects community ownership, which may later be used to advocate for World Bank funding that will pay for actual schools (in place of the more temporary hangar structures).

For UNICEF related infrastructure development, particularly the Nafa centers, the community provides local materials—sand, manual labor, and managerial oversight of the community input. UNICEF funds the building or renovation of school infrastructure. NGOs such as Concern Universal work with local contractors on construction.

The CEC we visited in Kindia is another successful case of community ownership. UNICEF helped to set up the center by funding the building, materials and furniture. They continue to provide some school supplies, and they pay for a nurse who visits periodically. The Saleya Fissa women’s group also helps keep the center running through financial and labor inputs. The group pays for two cleaners and two teachers, and members take turns serving as “caretakers”. The group expressed its commitment to keeping the CEC in operation, even if they were to lose UNICEF support.

CPCs AND EQUITY COMMITTEES: TACKLING EQUITY AND COORDINATION ISSUES

The Coordinating Prefecture Cell (CPC) and Sub-Equity Committees

Various local government bodies and NGO entities can unify and streamline educational equity initiatives. CPCs enable partners to coordinate their activities and minimize duplication; they also play an important role in ensuring that local, minority voices are heard. UNICEF has helped put Sub-Equity committees, prefectural extensions of National Equity Committee in place in the AGEI project zone. The members work directly with the DPE. Their main function is to work in sensitizing the prefecture on the importance of girls’ education. Modules have been developed on the rights of girls and women and have been used to train trainers and members of Sub-Equity committees.
RECOMMENDATIONS

In the task of sensitizing prefectures or parents on the importance of girls’ education, the Sub-Equity committees should place particular emphasis on hiring female teachers, highlighting retention issues and on emphasizing the benefits of higher education. Sub-Equity committees could also be used to address the issue of female under-representation in APEAE membership, in addition to gender issues within the school system.

The CPC should continue to be an important instrument for building local capacity in the education system. Also, CPCs should continue to significantly contribute to effective community-donor interactions and participation as they have gradually built local capacity and refined information and coordination mechanisms in the prefecture.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

While community financing is considered a positive development for spreading costs, it may all too often become regressive with communities shouldering a disproportionate share of the burden.

Therefore, one needs to be cautious of the costs that are being taken over by communities. Second best alternatives may be needed in cases where communities cannot handle the burden placed on them.

Active community involvement should be encouraged. One suggested approach is to create “Educated Communities” in which adult literacy programs and related social campaigns target women, who then overcome their fear of community participation, and become empowered and engaged in the education of their children, especially girls. Community involvement with donor-financed projects ensures better identification of needs and locally appropriate project implementation – key components of sustainability.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

While enrollment of both girls and boys at all the formal schools visited appeared to be increasing, it was not clear what lead to this increase. In some settings, incentives may play a role in stimulating matriculation; whereas direct and indirect financial costs can be barriers to enrollment. For example, the formal school at Kolenté, with its open-space and relatively large (albeit crowded) classrooms did not have the incentives of school lunches nor proper sanitation to encourage parents to send their girls to school—but there was an increase in enrollment. In contrast, the school in Dabola provided these incentives but showed no corresponding increase (perhaps because some Dabola parents found the cost of sending their children to school prohibitive, even though there were no official school fees).

Thus it appears that improving educational indicators requires a complex mix of interventions, which will vary by location. One constant observed across regions, however, is that after almost ten years of mobilization and sensitivity campaigns, education for both girls and boys is slowly being accepted by communities, at least at the primary level.

Furthermore, bringing children to school is not enough. The problem of retention and the issue of promotion to secondary school remain critical problems, even in countries which have achieved almost complete universal enrollment in primary education. It is for this reason that policy must focus on retention and providing higher education that is linked to both income generation and life-long learning. Increased enrollment in primary education cannot be sustained without linking it to retention as well as to expansion of secondary, vocational and non-formal education. Issues pertaining to the improvement of quality of instruction cannot be detached from enrollment.

Partnerships with the community, with the donor community, and with the government are crucial to sustainability. Without community ownership and investment in education, strategies and projects will be short-lived. Indeed, it was heartening to see partnerships functioning at the local level through the CPC. These local level development initiatives and partnerships must continue to be reinforced if the Guinean government and UNICEF aim for sustainable education and development. Expansion of partnerships with the World Bank, and others such as FAO and WHO under the helm of the CPC would allow for education, health, and rural development to expand in tandem. Bi-lateral or multi-lateral partnerships similar to the South to South cooperation programs instituted by UNFPA could also be considered. To this end, Guinea could learn from, and possibly coordinate technical assistance with, countries such as India that are similarly tackling retention and access to quality education.80

Finally girls’ education and education for all in Guinea cannot be isolated from African renaissance. While the system of Western education and educational norms of the North have now been accepted in the post-colonial world, African knowledge, culture, languages, folklore have already taken a back-seat. But an education that ignores traditional knowledge will be damaging in the long-term, whether it is from an ecological standpoint or a cultural one. Thus, a new vision81 for an

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80 India, for example, has embarked on a new program Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The SSA hopes to achieve the long cherished goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) through a time-bound integrated approach, in partnership with the state. SSA aims to provide useful and quality elementary education to all children in the 6-14 age group by 2010. See Bajpai, Nirupam and Sachs, Jeffrey. 2000. India’s Decade of Development. Center for International Development (Harvard University) Working Paper No. 46.

African renaissance calls for viewing education as a catalyst for the regeneration of societies, promoting peace, work, justice, multilingualism, multiculturalism, reconciliation and African unity. For this to occur then, a balance of both global and local values\(^{82}\) must be sought: partnerships like the ones we found at the CPC and at the women’s cooperative of Saleya Fissa are a good beginning for achieving a relevant and living education for all Guineans – female and male.

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REFERENCES


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### Appendix 1: Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role/Title</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alison Qualter-Berna</td>
<td>Office of Public Partnerships</td>
<td>UNICEF - NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohamed Lamine Camara</td>
<td>Chauffeur</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jihad Bassil</td>
<td>Directeur General</td>
<td>Riviera Royal Hotel BP 1708 Cornakry / Rép. de Guinée</td>
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<td>Assane Amadou</td>
<td>Administrateur Programme Education de Base</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Brittain</td>
<td></td>
<td>UNICEF - Guinée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mamadou Saïdou Bah</td>
<td>Assistant Programme Education de Base</td>
<td>UNICEF - Guinée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcel Rudasingwa</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>UNICEF - Guinée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadia Bantusha</td>
<td>Intern</td>
<td>UNICEF - Guinée</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Hadj Mamadou Kebaly Sow</td>
<td>Inspecteur d’Enseignement, Cordonnateur</td>
<td>CONEBAT - Commission Nationale Education de Base Pour Tous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Momo Bangoura</td>
<td></td>
<td>DNEE - National Directorate for Basic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hadja Passy Kouzouna</td>
<td>Cordonnateur</td>
<td>CNE - Comite National d’Equite</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dirui Diali Dore</td>
<td></td>
<td>DNEPPE - National Directorate for Pre-Primary Education Child Protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>N’fa Mamadi Camara</td>
<td></td>
<td>INRAP - Institut National de Recherche et d’Actions Pedagogique</td>
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<td>Tabassy Baro</td>
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<td>Oumar Barry</td>
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<td>Christophe Kondo Dia wara</td>
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<td>FEG/FAWE - Forum des Educatrices de Guinée</td>
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<td>Hadja Djeinabou Sampil</td>
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<td>World Bank/Banque Mondial</td>
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<td>Natasha DeMarchkon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Maladho Balde</td>
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<td>A Tidiani Diallow</td>
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<td>Bah Salimatou</td>
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<td>CONEBAT/DPE - Direction Prefecturale de l’Education - Dubréka</td>
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<td>Alpha Ibrahimia Bah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moise N’Poulnah Nappeny</td>
<td>Secretary General, Collectivites Decentralisees de Kindia</td>
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<td>Hadja Mariama Bah</td>
<td>Inspector (Inspectrice d’Enseignement)</td>
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<td>Thierno Gnamcou Diallo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboubacar Soumah</td>
<td>Head or the child development program (Responsable de Programme Development d'enfants)</td>
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<td>Elhadj Souleymane Yansané</td>
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<td>Hadja Mariama Barry</td>
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<td>CEC Management Committee - Saleya-Fissa</td>
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<td>Karim Camara</td>
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<td>Community Animator (Animateur Communautaire)</td>
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Appendix 2: Actors

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<tr>
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<td>Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEC – Early Childhood Development centers - Prefecture Coordinating Cell/la Cellule Préfectorale de Coordination</td>
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<td>CEC – Early Childhood Development centers - Women Group in charge of the CEC/Le groupement féminin en charge du CEC</td>
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<td>AGEI/IEFA Schools - (DPE) Prefectural Directorate of Education/ Directrice préfectorale de l'Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGEI/IEFA Schools - School Delegate for Primary Education/Le DSEE</td>
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<td>AGEI/IEFA Schools - School Director and Teachers/Le directeur de l'école et les enseignants</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>AGEI/IEFA Schools - Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>APEAE – Parents and Friends of the School Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAP – Literacy Vocational centers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>COGETEP – Gender and Equity Committee in Technical Teaching and Professional Training</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPO – Education Programme Officer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>INRAP – National Institute of Research and Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNA – National Literacy Service</td>
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<td>AME – Mothers’ Associations</td>
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<td>DNNE – National Elementary Education Directorate</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONEBAT – National Commission of Basic Education for All</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNEPPE – National Directorate for Pre-school Education and the Child Welfare</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNPF – National Directorate for Female Promotion</td>
<td>Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEPU-Ec – Ministry of Pre-University Education and Civic Education</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MET-FP – Ministry of Technical Education and Professional Training</td>
<td>Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>PUP – Parti de l’unit et du progress (Unity and Progress Party)</td>
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<td>Actors</td>
<td>Category (government, academic, program, etc.)</td>
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<td>CIDA – International Canadian Development Agency</td>
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<td>Ecoleiers du Monde</td>
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<td>European Union</td>
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<td>GTZ – Gesellschaft Fur Technische Zusammenarbeit</td>
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<td>Plan International/Guinea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Save the Children, USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>WCARO – West and Central Africa Regional Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>WFP/PAM – World Food Programme/Programme Alimentaire Mondial</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGEL/IEFA – African Girls’ Education Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>ECD – Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>FRESH – Focussing Resources on Effective School Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIPC – Heavily Indebted Poor Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRBAP – Human Rights-based Approach to Programming</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDGs – Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTSP – UNICEF Mid-term Strategic Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>PASE – Structural Adjustment Programme</td>
<td>Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRSP – Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
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<td>SIPS – Sector Investment Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWAPS – Sector Wide Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAT – Technical Assistance Team</td>
<td>Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDAF – United Nations Development Assistance Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>WES – Water, Environment, Sanitation</td>
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## Appendix 3: Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When/Quand</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>With Who/ Avec Qui</th>
<th>Activities/ Activités</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23-Sa</td>
<td>Conakry</td>
<td>UNICEF – United Nations Agency for Children</td>
<td>Q</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-M 9:00</td>
<td>Conakry</td>
<td>Comité de pilotage de l'accélération/Acceleration Steering Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-M 11:00</td>
<td>Conakry</td>
<td>FEG/FAWE – Forum of Educators in Guinea/Forum for African Women Educationalists</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-M 2:00</td>
<td>Conakry</td>
<td>WB/BM - World Bank/Banque Mondiale</td>
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<td>25-M 3:00</td>
<td>Conakry</td>
<td>USAID – United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>25-M 4:00</td>
<td>Conakry</td>
<td>EFA/EPT – Education for All/Education Pour Tous</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-M</td>
<td>Conakry</td>
<td>UNICEF – United Nations Agency for Children - Child Development Section/La section “Développement de l'Enfant”</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-Tu 12:30</td>
<td>Dubréka</td>
<td>Prefect, Mayor and Commune Council or Prefecture Coordinating Cell/Le Préfet, le Maire et le conseil communal or CPC Management committee/Comité de Gestion</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-Tu 2:00</td>
<td>Dubréka</td>
<td>Nafa center - Visit to training center and observation of session with 21 young women</td>
<td>Q</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-Tu 3:00</td>
<td>Dubréka</td>
<td>Nafa centers - Animators and trainers/Les animateurs 1 woman, 1man</td>
<td>Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-Tu 3:00</td>
<td>Dubréka</td>
<td>Nafa centers - Learners/Les apprenantes</td>
<td>Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-Tu 3:00</td>
<td>Dubréka</td>
<td>Nafa centers - Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-W 9:00 - 11:30</td>
<td>Kindia - center</td>
<td>AGEI/IEFA Schools - (DPE) Prefectural Directorate of Education/Directrice préfectorale de l'Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-W 9:00 - 11:30</td>
<td>Kindia - Saleya-Fissa</td>
<td>CEC – Early Childhood Development centers - Women Group in charge of the CEC/Le groupement féminin en charge du CEC</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-W 11:30 - 12:00</td>
<td>Kindia - center</td>
<td>CPC - Prefecture Coordinating Cell/la Cellule Préfectorale de Coordination</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-W 12:30 - 2:00</td>
<td>Kolenté (or Samyankhouré)</td>
<td>AGEI/IEFA Schools - (DPE) Prefectural Directorate of Education, School Delegate for Primary Education / Directrice préfectorale de l'Education. Le DSEE</td>
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<td>27-W 2:00 - 4:00</td>
<td>Kolenté (or Samyankhouré)</td>
<td>AGEI/IEFA Schools - School Director and Teachers/Le directeur de l'école et les enseignants</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-W 2:00 - 4:00</td>
<td>Kolenté (or Samyankhouré)</td>
<td>AGEI/IEFA Schools - Students</td>
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<td>APEAE – Parents and Friends of the School Association</td>
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<td>Nafa center - Visit to training center and observation of session with young women</td>
<td>Q</td>
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<tr>
<td>27-W 2:00 - 4:00</td>
<td>Kolenté (or Samyankhouré)</td>
<td>Nafa centers - Animators and trainers/Les animateurs 1 woman, 1man</td>
<td>Q</td>
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<tr>
<td>When/Quand</td>
<td>Where</td>
<td>With Who/ Avec Qui</td>
<td>Activities/Activités</td>
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<td>Nafa centers - Learners/Les apprenantes</td>
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<td>28-Th</td>
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<td>CPC - Prefecture Coordinating Cell/la Cellule Préfectorale de Coordination</td>
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<td>28-Th</td>
<td>Mamosu</td>
<td>World Education</td>
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<td>AGEI/IEFA Schools - Prefecture Director for Education and School Delegate for Primary Education/Le Directeur Préfectoral de l’Education et le DSEE</td>
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<td>Classroom and Playground observation</td>
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<td>29-F</td>
<td>Dabola</td>
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<td>30-Sa</td>
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Appendix 4: Interviews with Students

*Nafa center - KOLENTE*

Introduction

On Wednesday, October 27, I interviewed five boys, aged 12-16 years, at a Nafa center in Kolenté. This Nafa center is three years old and has 37 students, of which 29 are female and eight are male.

The interviews were conducted in local languages with the assistance of a translator, and the majority of questions were answered by only one of the five interviewees. The interviewees were also selected by the teacher, perhaps with favoritism shown towards students with more positive attitudes or superior academic performance. These potential biases should be taken into account when interpreting the findings from the discussion.

Life cycle map

We opened the interview by asking the students to identify the major rites of passage, rituals, and transition points that marked a person’s lifetime. The purpose of this question was to gain an understanding of how school and education fit in with major life events and goals.

The early life events they cited included: the naming ceremony, which happens when a baby is one week old; Koran study, beginning at age seven; and circumcision, which takes place between the ages of eight and 12. Circumcision was described as “a big event because it is when a male becomes respectable. After circumcision a boy can no longer walk naked; he must wear clothes all the time.”

Later life events included: marriage, which occurs around age 25 for village males who attend Nafa schools; work and prayer (an undefined time period); and the hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), which happens any time between age 40 and death, depending on when one could get enough money.

The answers given indicate that interviewees listed the key life events specifically for males, but not necessarily for females. Due to translation difficulties, however, it is impossible to know how the question or the responses were phrased.

Daily activities timeline & schedule

To learn about the competing demands on students’ time and attention, inside and outside of school, we asked the boys to recount their daily activities. Interviewees listed their weekday routine as follows: wake up; wash face/toilet; breakfast; go to brook to wash; come home and change clothes; get books and go to school; school until 2pm; go home; lunch; study / go to friend’s home and study together; football at 4pm; bed at 10pm. They noted that on Saturdays and Sundays they help their parents on the farm, and on vacations they study.

This report of minimal/no home responsibilities generally supports the contention that girls have chores while boys have free time, a point that has been frequently cited in reports and interviews to explain the gender gap in school attendance and performance. Under this arrangement, more boys go to school because the opportunity cost of their attendance is lower (or nonexistent from a parental perspective), and they fare better than girls because they have free time for studying.

Future plans

We next asked interviewees what they wanted to do when they finished school, and what skills or knowledge they would need in order to achieve these goals.

The most vocal interviewee stated that he wants to study and to be useful to his people. Specifically, he wants to become a teacher, but when asked how to achieve this goal he answered that he doesn’t know how.

The other interviewees’ goals corresponded with the skills taught at that Nafa center: tailoring and tie-dying. Two students want to be tailors, one wishes to be either a tailor or a tie-dyer, and one hopes to learn a trade. Regarding how
to reach these objectives, they answered that later on the center will provide them with the necessary equipment for learning their trades, but for now they are focused on studying.

An important note is the absence of equipment. This Nafa center has attracted students on the premise that it can teach tailoring and tie-dying, two local trades that offer the hope of income generation. The center does not yet have any equipment for these purposes, however, so students are still waiting to learn sewing and tie-dying.

Perceptions of a “good” husband and wife

We asked interviewees what qualities make someone a good husband, and only one interviewee responded, stating that a good husband must “establish good laws for your wife to follow.” When asked to give explanatory examples, he elaborated as follows: “Tell her please listen to me whatever I tell you, maintain my children, [and] take care of the house.” He noted that a woman can’t leave the house without permission and should have limited outings.

These statements implied that he perceived a “good” husband to be someone who had control over his family and home. After repeated probing, the same student added that another quality of a good husband was to “try to meet all the wife’s needs.” No other students supported or contested this interviewee’s statements.

Before gathering interviewees’ perceptions of a “good” wife, we first asked if they wanted to get married. Four out of the five interviewees said yes, with the fifth stating “after I get a job” [implied yes].

When asked what they want in a wife, one student expressed a preference for a woman that was “not very tall,” with “fair complexion.” After probing as to what qualities (other than physical) make someone a good wife, one interviewee answered: “A woman who doesn’t create problems and who doesn’t cheat.” It is important to note in the sub-Saharan African context, the word “cheat” probably refers to lying rather than to infidelity.

In response to the question, “Do you want a wife who is educated?” one student answered yes, noting that he prefers one with a job. This supports the notion mentioned in other settings that schooling is marketed as something that makes girls more marriageable because they can now offer a source of income.

How they got to the Nafa center

We asked each interviewee what he was doing before he began attending the Nafa center. Three of the interviewees had previously attended “Arabic” (Koranic) schools, but two of those three indicated that they were finished or idle prior to enrolling in the Nafa center. One interviewee had been in primary school and another had been selling goods.

When asked who made the decision to send them to the Nafa center, two of the respondents simply named the decision-maker. In one case the father decided, and in the other the father and mother made a joint decision.

The other three interviewees told us who made the decision and also provided a reason for which they enrolled. The two interviewees who had completed their Koranic schooling apparently went to the Nafa center as an alternative to doing nothing. One said that his grandmother recommended the Nafa school so that instead of wasting time he would learn a trade. The other reported asking permission from his parents to attend “because he was fed up with sitting around with nothing to do.”

The interviewee who had been in primary school said his father sent him to the Nafa center because he was not “succeeding” in the formal school. I asked him what specifically about the primary school was different, such that he was not succeeding there but was doing well at the Nafa center. He explained that in the formal school they merely teach “at” the students: they give information, and students are on their own to ensure understanding. In contrast, at the Nafa center they ask questions to make sure that students learn and understand.

Perceived positives and negatives of the Nafa centers

All interviewees were asked what they liked best about the Nafa school. Their responses included: teachers, who are devoted and don’t cane (beat) the children unless they are at fault; learning things; and books. One interviewee said that he had always wished to be a tailor (and thus he presumably liked the prospect of learning this trade at the Nafa center),
and another indicated that he likes school because of the progress he has made so far. One student expressed his appreciation of the center’s “modern chairs and tables, which are better than the locally made furniture at local schools.”

There was little response to the question of what interviewees liked least about school. After probing, one interviewee noted that he was always disappointed when the class was not full, because in those cases the teacher was not as enthusiastic. Another negative mentioned was that some students destroy books.

**PRIMARY SCHOOL - DABOLA**

**Introduction**

On Friday, October 29, I interviewed eleven boys, aged 8-14 years, at a primary school in Dabola. The interviews were conducted in French with the assistance of a translator, and many interviewees only responded when their individual inputs where specifically solicited. There were also many cases where students gave the “ideal” or “desired” response, indicated that their reports might not have been genuine. In addition, the interviewees were selected by the teacher, perhaps with favoritism shown towards students with more positive attitudes or superior academic performance. These potential biases should be taken into account when interpreting the findings from the discussion.

**Life cycle map**

Once again we opened the interview by asking the students to identify the major rites of passage, rituals, and transition points that marked a person’s lifetime. They cited the following life events: the naming ceremony, which happens when one is born; kindergarten at age six; [primary] school and Koranic school starting at age eight; primary school exams (no age specified); completing school, between ages 18-30 (no clear consensus on a typical age); marriage, between ages 25-30; and work, at age 24 or 30 (again no clear consensus).

Due to the different opinions on the age at which school ends and work begins, I got the impression that not all students will attend university. When asked, however, they all claimed that they do want to go to university.

**Daily activities timeline & schedule**

The interviewees listed their daily activities as follows: toilet, breakfast, go to school, greet parents, go home, bathe and change clothes, help parents to work, study, rest, play football, and cook with parents. At first description, the boys listed the following details of what “help parents to work” entailed: wash clothing and shoes, fetch wood, fetch water, and help to cook. When asked what chores their sisters do, they listed the following tasks: wash pans and dishes, help cook, wash clothes, clean house, and fetch water (but not wood).

Whether boys’ and girls’ chores really overlap this much is questionable, especially given that the girls in the same school gave a very different report of the division of labor between boys and girls. It does, however, reflect understanding of the message that boys and girls are supposed to share in household chores. This message may have been conveyed through community sensitization exercises, and/or through a new curriculum designed to promote gender equity.

**Future plans**

Students gave a wide range of answers when asked what they want to do when they finish school. Careers listed included: teacher (four respondents); doctor (two respondents); driver (two respondents); journalist, policemans, school headmaster, computer specialist, and mechanic (one respondent each). When asked what skills or knowledge they will need to achieve these goals, they answered categorically that they must study. (I was uncertain whether or not this question was understood.)

**Perceptions of a “good” husband and wife**

We asked each student to name qualities that would make someone a “good” husband. The most frequently cited answer was “to build a house for one’s wife” (3 respondents), followed by “to respect the wife’s parents” and “for the wife to respect his parents/mother” (2 respondents each, although the second quality indicates that the question was not
clearly understood). Qualities listed once each included: to respect one’s wife, to find a job, to introduce one’s wife to all his friends, to have children, to look for a guard to watch the house, and to demand respect from one’s wife.

All interviewees reported that they want to get married. A “good” wife was described by two respondents each as “clean,” “intelligent” and “respectful.” Qualities listed once each included: “respectful to parents,” “nice,” “polite and well-behaved,” “healthy,” “doesn’t talk too much,” “honest,” “correct” (embodying many of the aforementioned qualities), “doesn’t disturb others,” “washes my clothes,” and “does not steal.”

I asked whether the wife’s level of education mattered, to which all interviewees responded affirmatively. As for how much education they want their wives to have, they stated that they want their wives to go to school and study like them, and also to attend university.

**How they got to the primary school**

Almost all students said their father decided that they would go to school. They also all reported that their sisters go to school.

**Perceived positives and negatives of the primary school**

The list of what interviewees liked best about school included: learning to read and write, reading, writing, math, French practice, and the need to be clean (unclear). Several noted that untidiness and disorder were the things they liked least, along with fighting at school (between students).
Appendix 5: Interviews with Parents

Nafa centers

Dubréka, Management Committee

5 members of the management committee were present to talk with us. We decided to talk to two individuals separately.

Respondent 1.
Date: Tuesday, October 26, 2004
Interviewer: Nathalie Gons
Respondent: [Name removed to protect respondent’s confidentiality]

She is a mother and an executive member of the APEAE. She is a mother of 5 daughters and 5 sons- they are all in school. She speaks Sousou.

- **Introduction of myself. Please introduce yourself.** I would love to learn about you and your life here in Dubréka. “My life is not very different from yours.” Some of my children attend formal, some attend non-formal. Both systems have their merit. Some go to the formal schools, they have the ability. Some go to the non-formal schools because they do not have the ability.

- **How many sons and how many daughters go to non-formal schools?** 3 daughters in the non-formal school; 2 daughters in the formal school.

- **What are the main events in your children’s’ lives?**
  - Naming ceremony
  - Circumcision, both for girls and for boys, it is equal.
  - Primary School
  - Secondary school
  - University
  - Marriage: all family members come from all over, especially for the girls
  - Job: the first salary is good and it goes to the parents.

  This life events chart applies for both her girls and her boys; only if the girl doesn’t have the ability or if she gets pregnant will the events in her life be different than the above. I want all my children to go to the university.

- **What are the greatest challenges in Dubréka?**
  The “soudure”- or drought. The “clang”, there are many of the clang which are like gangs- young hooligan men.

  I am very strict with my children. They have a strict schedule and I keep an eye out on them. When they come home I ask, or the older brother asks to see their notebook.

  Other challenges for children in Dubréka: alcohol, drugs.

- **How can a parent know if her child has the ability to go to school?**
  God determines ability.

- **What are your language preferences?**
  French and Arabic; French and English
  If they can learn Sousou in addition to French and Arabic then there is no problem.

- **What about after school activities?**
  My children go home right after school. There they work and do their homework. (I am very strict with them.)

- **How did you learn about the APEAEs?**
  All parents were informed about this.
• **How?**
  Notes were sent with the students.

• **Did all the parents become members?**
  No, only some of the parents.

• **Why?**
  Because only 7-9 can become officers. All parents are members.

• **What do you do as an officer?**
  We meet and discuss challenges and solutions.

• **How often?**
  Monthly

• **Could you give me an example of the challenges and the solutions that you discuss?**
  In the last meeting we discussed ways to repair classrooms.

• **What is an ideal school?**
  Good house
  Buildings
  Windows
  Tables
  Computers
  Blackboard
  All the materials must be in the school.

• **What is an ideal teacher?**
  Teacher prepared
  Teacher can communicate well
  Most teachers are prepared and can communicate well. Really we need classrooms and materials.

• **What is an ideal school?**
  **Respondent:** [Name removed to protect respondent’s confidentiality]

  [Ms. Bah was present for the duration of the meeting. She is the CONEBAT Correspondent for the prefecture.]

  Tous les fournitures et matériels/ all furniture and materials.
  The school building must be well-constructed, with electricity, a roof, water, tables, chairs, notebooks and pens.
  There should be:
  Library
  Laboratory
  Les lecciones
  Ordinatuers (computers)
  Good teachers.

• **What is a good teacher?**
  Well-prepared, good communicator, disponible (available) and punctual.

**Respondent 2.**
**Date:** Tuesday, October 26th, 2004
**Interviewer:** Priya Joshi
**Respondent:** [Name removed to protect respondent’s confidentiality]
He is an accountant at the Nafa center. He has 2 children – a girl who is studying biochemistry and a son who has just started university.

He started with the example of his niece – She came from Sierra Leone after the war when her parents died. She then went to Nafa. Because she did not know any French, he used to be ashamed of her, but now she is an instructor at Nafa, and basically a role model.

• What is his role and how does he interact with parents?
  They are here to sensitize parents.

• What do parents say?
  They talk about time tables, payments etc.

• What if parents don’t want their children to go to school?
  Before, they didn’t want to send their kids to school because of employment opportunities, but now they definitely do because with Nafa they can find jobs.

• What happens when you can’t find a job because Dubréka doesn’t need 15 sewers?
  The training is not complete here. They can read and write and thus can go to another profession. It is a real problem. Here, as you can see you can do some jam making. There was a seminar in Mamou where he asked about Post Nafa and had suggested that they should train them so that they can get other trainings.

• Who demands Nafa centers?
  Female groups (He doesn’t give a name for these groups and states that they are ‘just a bunch of women’).

• Do you communicate the voice of the community to the higher levels?
  No, the management committee only manages. The director asks us questions and we answer them. For example, he tells us that he needs 60 people to continue school and we only have 50, and hence need to get 10 more.

• How have things changed since your time?
  As his time, he lived in a small town called Kubiah and it was very religious – did not think of girls going to school. Now when he visits he sees that there are girls going to school. Toure taught only in national languages and now everyone’s learning in French. His niece, no matter what, will teach her daughters and it will be such an advantage. His niece is more useful to him than his daughter.

• So, you are saying that you would have liked your daughter to go to Nafa school?
  He would have liked his daughter to go to Nafa if she had fit the criteria.

• Do people view Nafa as lower than schools?
  A law in this country allowed pregnant women to go back to school. It was a great vision by minister Aicha Bah.

• Repeat- do people view Nafa as lower than schools?
  Yes, everyone thinks school is better. It’s the same as in if you don’t have a mother, it’s better to have a grandmother than nothing at all. That is how the Nafa is viewed.

• What do you want for your children?
  His daughter wanted to go become a journalist. But I told her – for what reason would you want to become a journalist? He put pressure on her and now she is saying that the sill do either medicine or mathematics. The son will do some technical sciences.

• Does your daughter, in higher education, feel difficult/alone?
  It is difficult for her. He put his daughter under a brother there. He comes here on Friday and then Monday morning rides her to Conakry (difficulties for him)

• What do you know about NGOs?
He didn’t know of any NGOs – UNICEF is the only organization he is familiar with.

- **In a hypothetical situation, if you were in charge of education decisions, what would you spend on?**
  1) infrastructure, 2) training of teachers, 3) living conditions of teachers.

- **Follow up: what about female teachers?**
  There are many female teachers. The country has a problem of teachers, but not of female teachers.

**Kolenté, Management Committee:**

**Date:** Wednesday, October 27th, 2004  
**Interviewer:** Elizabeth Foster  
(Brief Discussion)

The management committee discussed their role as looking after the good functioning of the school, which included watching over kids and families. They say that they are close to the kids and seem them daily and watch over school materials.

Some raised the issue of distance from school, and some girls had to come from as far as 5 km away.

As far as infrastructure, they would like to have a canteen as soon as possible.

The boys need to help in the fields and therefore, there are a lot of absentees now. They will come back after the harvest (November – December) and the same applies for some girls as well.

**AGEI SCHOOLS**

**Kolenté, Primary School**

**Date:** Wednesday, October 27, 2004  
**Interviewers:** Nathalie Gons and Priya Joshi  
**Respondents:** There were 9 women, 3 men and some children present.

These women manage a small CEC in Kolenté. We introduced ourselves by talking a bit about our culture, our family lives etc. and then asked questions.

Out of the 9 women present, Madame Souma, the president of the PTA and the CEC, a woman who helps assist her at the CEC and two other women were the only ones who responded. The others only responded when we asked questions about the ideal school and what they would want for their daughters.

Madame Souma has 3 boys and 1 girl – some go to Nafa, some to primary school, and some to centers (It was unclear whether she was answering for herself or the whole group).

- **Who here is a member of the PTA?**
  Madame Souma was the only person who said she was a member, and she was the President.

- **Is everyone a member automatically?**
  In order to become a member, you have to become a member of the women’s group – if you are a woman. But the men are chosen differently. [We did not pursue the follow up question – how are men chosen?]

- **What do you do in your role as the President of the PTA? (to Madame Souma)**
  She said that she comes to school everyday to check if there are absentees. Then, she goes back to the village and if people are missing school because they are sick, she takes them to the hospital/clinic etc. The translator added – How do you take them to the hospital? She said that she walks with them to the hospital/center.

- **How many children are not coming to school?**
A few of them definitively said that it was rare, and that all the girls came, “sur tout les filles”.

- **How have the girls managed to go to school?** We said that in Nepal and Suriname girls aren’t going to school – what do you specifically do to get them to come to school?
The answer was Rural Radio – there are always messages on their radio. They have issued a challenge – wherever a man goes, a woman must go as well”. Thus, they are always talking about girls’ education.

- **Do the girls in 1st or 2nd grade drop out by the 5th – the translator phrased it as do girls abandon school?**
Again, the women definitely said no.

- **Is there nothing wrong/difficult in sending the girls to school then?**
The problem they mentioned was the absence of a secondary school. After the sixth year of primary school, they have to send their children to secondary school in Kindia, and arrange for their stay there. This is the only real problem according to them.

- **What do you want for your daughter, what do you want them to do?**
NB: The translator asked the questions and started giving examples of high end professions – doctor, professor, engineer. N. Gons intervened and asked him to give examples of low, mid, high professions (market, seamstress etc.) The problem here was that by giving these choices, we went over the issue of marriage.

Initially, the president reacted by saying that if she finishes school and gets married and that there is no problem that’s fine. [Here, the translator tried to lead the answer, but we stopped him.]

The other answers were:
3 daughters – medicine, teaching
1 daughter – medicine
5 daughters – medicine, sewing, teaching
(number not mentioned) – sewing, ministry – “politics because to become a minister you have to join politics.”
3 daughters – teacher, police, doctor

- **What kinds of after school activities do they take part in?**
The children do not really take part in after school activities, but they do play games when they are in school.

- **What is an ideal school?**
One that has teachers; lots of students – if there aren’t many students, the teachers don’t have much to do; teaching materials, enough medicine in center for children

- **Then, what is an ideal teacher?**
He doesn’t miss school, doesn’t come late. When children get into the classroom, they must be able to ask questions. If you don’t ask a child, she will not be able to use it. The child specially should be able to remember to be clean and respectful – “the ideal teacher is reflected in the child in what they take home with them.”

- **How have you used your education in your life?**
If you go to school, you definitely have a different understanding of life and you fare better. [We tried to ask him, what this better understanding of life meant, but we didn’t get any answers.]

- **How do you relate with the Imams?**
When the women have anything they want to achieve, they go to the Imams. But generally, they go there just for blessings. Follow up – so, have the Imams blessed girls’ education? They said that he definitely has.

- **What are your wishes for your daughters?**
One woman said that she would like her daughter to make progress so that she can benefit from her.

- **What kind of progress? What is good for her?**
She would like to have her be married and have money. Madame Souma said that she would like her to have health and happiness – happiness being money.
• **What would you do with the money?**
  Build houses, build schools, build a future for her children

• **If you had a magic wand, what would you want?** Translator adapted it to say: If you close your eyes, what would you like to see changed?
  A lot of women pitched in with their answers and most replied – money, health, build houses, schools, prepare for future. And immediately, would like to prepare for their children – build a better house for the children in the children’s center, and build a secondary school.

  A note from the translator: They rely on their children and vice versa.

After we ended the conversations, they asked the translator what we were doing here and he responded by telling them that we were from a university, doing research that will be presented to other people. He added that maybe some day other people will come back to help them – that is, trying to keep the hope alive. We thought it was probably the best way to go in that circumstance.

**Dabola, Héramakonon Primary School**

There were three sets of interviews – 1) a 12 member group of mothers, 2) a 12 member group of fathers, and 3) a 35 member group of fathers.

1.

**Date:** October 29th, 2004  
**Interviewers:** Nathalie Gons and Priya Joshi  
**Respondents:** 12 mothers

There were 12 women present – 1 spoke Malinke, the rest spoke Pular.

We started off with the usual introductions. We then asked questions in a more interactive format to get more women to get involved. Overall, the mothers this time around were very animated and one person did not dominate the conversation.

• **Raise your hands if…**
  You are a mother – all raised  
  You have sons – 7 raised  
  You have daughters – 11 raised

• **What are the children doing?**
  The general answer was that some children go to secondary school and some to primary, and some to center for children (CEC).

• **How many women here are members of the APEAE?**
  Only one woman responded (we believe she is the only one on the APEAE Bureau)

• **Can anyone become a member?**
  Yes, anyone can via an election process.  
  [ However, we realized that there is confusion over the levels of APEAE (bureau/board, association, parents of children who are in the school) and that people only say they are members if they are on the elected board. ]

• **Is there an AME?**
  The women said that there was no such thing there.

• **What do you do as a member of the APEAE?**
i) Monitor students – see if they come to school
Check their times of arrival
Check their food [I take it to mean when they get their food]

**How often?**
Every day

ii) if conflict between teachers and students arises, then the Bureau comes to school and solves this out. What kinds of conflicts arise? If children fight, and teacher punishes one child more than another and the child isn’t satisfied then they have to go.

iii) they come from time to time to ask the headmistress if they are doing well.

- **When you check on students – is pregnancy a big issue and how do you deal with it?**
  [The first reaction was a few women were embarrassed, and started to giggle.] Then they said that there is a law now that allows people to come back. She goes to school and when she becomes too large, she goes and delivers. Then she comes back to school after 40 days.

- **We then asked that in our countries it is difficult to deal with this because people make fun of her. What do the mothers do to help here?**
  Once a girl gets pregnant, generally the director talks to all students so that they do not laugh at her. But, not a lot of people get pregnant here.

- **You and your neighbors – how many are not sending their children to school?**
  All of their neighbors send children to school

- **Do your neighbors live far or near to the school?**
  They live both far and near from the school

- **Is school too far for some?**
  Yes, for some it is.

- **Don't all of you mothers need help from your daughters and sons at home?**
  Lots of women responded here – they basically said that the girls help out early in the morning by sweeping and also do similar chores at night when they get back.

- **What is an ideal school?**
  An ideal school is one where you can learn something theoretically and go and practice it.

- **Specifically then - what can a daughter practice?**
  One woman said she can become a nurse. Then the translator added – but there is no way that she can practice nurse where they are. The woman responded that they can go to some other place where they can learn nursing later (we assume after passing out of secondary).

- **What would you like your daughters to do?**
  One woman said that she would have loved it if after her daughter finished school that she could learn computers and English at night.

- **Would you like your children to learn in French, Malinke or both?**
  Definitely learn in English!

- **What is an ideal teacher?**
  A perfect teacher must be able to teach very well, should be able to discipline them, take care of the children. When he takes care of the children, he should be able to find out why the child isn’t coming to school.
Because of the lack of time, we left them with 3 major questions to discuss and prepare and then went to talk to the men. I sat down with the men for the first few minutes and then went back to talk to the women.

1. What can be done to get a girl to stay in school

- it is important to have a good education at home first. (Follow up 1)
- If they are well trained at home then they will give respect to their teachers
- If she is in school, the work that she does at home is shared with boys. This will give her time to study at school and at home (Follow up 2)

Other comments that don’t directly answer the question but rather the question – why is it important for girls to go to school:

- It is important that she learn something very important but she should be able to practice it – useful also at home.
- It is important that she becomes more successful than you.
- When a daughter is successful the least is she’ll take care of you also. (Follow up 3)
- If you go to school, then you definitely ensure that your daughter goes to school also.
- One woman said that she deeply regretted not having gone to school.

Follow up 1: What do you mean by a good education at home?

- you wash and clean yourself
- listen to what your parents say
- if she follows the parents, she will listen to the school
- if she reads well in school then her children will read also

Follow up : What do you do to ensure that your children follow them?
If you talk to the child and they don’t respond too well, then discipline them (take the cane).

Follow up 2: Do the boys do the work that they need to share in at home?

The boys share in the tasks – they wash, sweep, wash plates, go and fetch water, clean house etc.

Follow up 3: Do sons not take care of you then?

Yes, they do take care of you.

Follow up - If they do, then how do daughters take care of you differently?

- the daughters give them clothes
- the daughter knows what pains a mother
- they take care of the mother when they are sick

2. What would you want your daughters to do when they grow up?

- Minister, doctor, mayor, professor, judge, journalist, ambassador etc.
- Everything that a man is capable of doing. If a woman goes to school, she’ll be able to do.
- For instance, why are you here? Because you went to school.

3. If you had a magic wand, what would you wish for?

- Her son should be in the US. Some other women gave the same answer as well.
- Another woman said that she would like her children to go to school and be successful.
Other observations:
The women in blue, was our translator for one person who spoke Malinke – she has a son in DC and she is going there herself soon.

At the end of the conversation, I spend some time talking to a couple of the women later. One woman’s husband was in agriculture. This woman said “Here, Pular” a few times. Which is an interesting ethnic specificity issue – why make such a point of it? I asked what occupations where most women involved in – she said that they go to the market.

The other person was a cook at the school and her husband was a driver. I asked the cook about the school. She said that there are 4 of them who rotate their schedules. And also that there was a lot of firewood smoke; big pots to carry. The translator cut her short by saying that she manages – we were also running out of time so I didn’t have an opportunity to probe this further.

The other interesting then about this place is that a lot of people had more affinity with English – some spoke broken English and were from Sierra Leone or had gone there for some time any way.

2.
Date: October 29, 2004
Interviewer: Nathalie Gons and Elizabeth Foster
Respondents: 12 fathers

- Raise your hands if...
  - You are a father – all raised
  - You have sons – 6 raised
  - You have daughters – 10 raised
  - In this school? All of their children that go to school attend this primary school.
  - In other schools? Eleven fathers had children in other schools, which were not Nafa centers nor were they CEC centers.
  - Members of the PTA? 4 members of the Bureau of the PTA are here.
  - It is a mixture of members and officials from the Bureau.

- What is your role in the APEAE?
  Respondent: APEAE President
  His first role is as President. He watches over work at school. He sensitizes the parents to send their children, especially their girls, to go to school. He watches over students and teachers, and monitors their punctuality. He comes every morning and checks on attendance and monitor that students wear their uniforms. He asks teachers to let in late students. Monitor school cleanliness; if it is not clean he asks parents to clean it. Every morning he sees if desks are broken and repairs as necessary. If kids fight, he separates them.

- How do you sensitize parents?
  I go tell parents to register their children. I talk to the parents and tell them to send their kids to school so they don’t become unemployed- a loss for their family, prefecture, country. School helps avoid disease.

- How do you find the parents?
  I go door-to-door

- Do you give the same message for boys and girls?
  I tell parents that girls are more important because girls help instruct nations, and mothers help education. He refers to the slogan: an educated woman is an educated nation.

- Do you go to all the houses?
  The President tells the association members where to go (which houses to visit). Women are also part of le Bureau, (and therefore of this process)

- Why did you want to become an APEAE member?
We are parents of children at this school. Every father, every mother is a member.

• **How do you elect the Bureau?**
The state accepted to partner with EPT/EFA created structure. They called parents together and told them to choose 9 members.

• **Do you have any idea about parents that are not sending their kids to school?**
Yes, there are pockets of resistance. We continue to sensitize them. There are still families that do not want to send their girls to school. Maybe they will get pregnant. They think there are teachers that will brutalize the girls.

• **Why do some families not want to send their girls to school?**
Girls are registered at 7 years. Some get pregnant, not married. Girls who go to school won’t work in the field and won’t marry just anyone. That won’t have (as a husband) a farmer of a worker. They want a functionary or a merchant.

• **Other reasons why families don’t want to send their girls to school:**
Older kids and teachers brutalize girls
Girls have to work at home.

• **What is the special message given to these parents?**
The school is safe.

• **What is an ideal school?**

*Please split into 2 groups and report back your answers:*

**Answer from Group 1**

• Good infrastructure- complete
• Capable teachers- available, discipline students
• Parents have to be partners with teachers and students. Look after health. See whether teachers are on time. See whether they have all their necessary materials (cahier).
• School starts with parents. Make children do their work, respect the professor. If the child is badly taught at home, he won’t learn at school. Send “educated” children to school- materials, cleanliness.
• Learn to read
• They learn X, Y, Z (spoken in Fulani).
• Equality between students- the student is available and disciplined. Parents work with the teacher and the students.
• A perfect director

**Answer from Group 2**

*Language probe: Anko- it is Malinke language and has its own alphabet. First mentioned Franco-Arab, then Anko, then English.*

• **If God could give you anything what would it be?**
  • New school infrastructure because we have a lot of children.
  • More teachers
  • Good collaboration (with donors) - to raise funds. We need a wall.
  • School wall and canteen.

3.
**Date:** October 29, 2004
**Interviewer:** Nii Addy and Toni Sethi
**Respondents:** Approx. 35 fathers

Most of them had girls in the school, some 4, some 3, some 1.
• Do you support secondary education for girls?

There was one young man present—23 years old—said he was an uncle who came to represent the family. He was quiet at first but upon being addressed about the importance of girls’ education, especially secondary, was strongly supportive. Said he himself had finished secondary school but not the final exam (the BAC).

One said he had a girl in the 6th and she would go on to secondary school. 14 said they would send their girls to secondary school.

• Why would you send your girls for secondary education?

Because it is not easy to live without an education. The cost of school is about 3000 GF per month per student. They send the girls to school so the girls can take charge of their parents, look after their children. When they get educated, as parents, they can analyze a problem, learn more, and think more. They would like the flexibility to be able to learn the skills if they want.

Currently formal schools are not linked with the studying of life skills, and they would like to link it if possible.

Parents think girls must be educated even though it’s expensive.

• How did they come to think like this?

One tapped the side of his forehead—i.e. common sense.

• When pressed further—after all, your families didn’t think like this before; girls didn’t come to school before, so what makes you think differently now?

(Summary of long answer): We learned from different public meetings. From meetings at school, from local meetings, from the radio, at the mosque. Girls who are educated manage the home better.

• But they were always managing the home, no?

Yes, but now they know how to look after the families better. The children of today are not the children of yesterday. They also learn better behavior. The school teaches better behavior? No, that is the parents work.

One gentleman: The cost of school is too much!

One gentleman, better dressed than others, turned out to be a government servant who had a daughter in the school. He said: une fille éduquée, elle peut s’épanouir—an educated girl can grow/expand…Live is too difficult without an education. But she should get married at 18 years.

• What are the difficulties they face?

Materials
Food

Causes of drop-outs include:
- Early marriage
- House work
- Girls that don’t get support don’t finish school
- Early pregnancy is rare

The subjects studied in school are provided in a given list. They include one practical course, “Managed Work” (Travaux Dirigé), in which they are to do activities such as cooking and the making of simple toys, although it is only “superficially done”.

In secondary school the teachers should mentor or take responsibility for particular students, (so as to be able to track their development).
There should also be incentives for girls, such as “affirmative action” and prizes to girls that do well.