

Country strategic plan summary for 1999 – 2013

This document describes how Plan Guinea Bissau and its partners will mobilise the different resources to improve the welfare and prospects of vulnerable children. It provides the strategic framework for consistent and continued action from 1999 to 2013.

About Guinea Bissau

With a total area of over 36,000 km², Guinea Bissau is one of the smallest countries in West Africa. It is located along the Atlantic coast and is bordered by Senegal to the north and by Guinea Conakry to the south and west.

As Guinea Bissau looks ahead to the future, it must continue to struggle with the constraints of the past. The population of Guinea Bissau is around 1.2 million and an estimated 88% of this population lives on an income of less than one US dollar per day, while the average in Sub-Saharan Africa is 46%. With an annual population growth of over 2%, Guinea Bissau can barely meet the basic needs of its citizens. What this means for children in this country is increased risk of poor health and malnutrition, low school enrolment and high dropout rates.



Young people discuss development in their community



Children's carnival in Bafata

No matter what problems it faces, Guinea-Bissau also has a considerable potential for advancement, both economically and politically. The cessation of the civil war which took place from 1998 to 1999 presents unprecedented opportunities and challenges to rebuild the society and revive social infrastructures, which are both necessary for the growth and development of children. However, the current combined efforts of the government, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations are unable to shoulder the entire burden of development. They need additional financial and technical assistance. Plan Guinea-Bissau's strategy is therefore designed to help address the country's most pressing needs.

History of Plan Guinea Bissau

Plan started working in the Region of Bafata in 1995. Since then, Plan's efforts have been primarily focused on social areas, namely education, water and sanitation, health and children's rights. In an attempt to raise the living standards of the communities, Plan has built and remodelled school buildings, health centres and clinics, supported teacher trainings, supplied school materials and equipment, implemented community awareness campaigns, constructed school kitchens and canteens, supplied office equipment and motor bikes for school inspections, initiated vaccination campaigns, installed borehole wells with hand pumps and facilitated public-awareness campaigns promoting the rights of the child.

Some issues affecting children in Guinea-Bissau

The insufficient number of primary school teachers and their low level of qualification limit the effectiveness of efforts to improve the quality of education. Moreover, due to parents' high illiteracy rate and lack of information on their roles, their involvement in school management is very low. Other problems are lack of water distribution points and latrines and little concern for basic sanitation standards, which lead to the prevalence of water borne diseases and other epidemics such as cholera. In the area of health, improvement of the health condition in the communities is hindered by the low number of qualified technicians, lack of health centres and community-based health units, high death rate among infants and mothers, high rate of malaria and little knowledge of the growing impact of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Furthermore, communities are unaware of the importance of issues related to children's rights, especially birth registration.

Program of Plan Guinea Bissau

The country strategic plan of Plan Guinea Bissau is child-centred. The strategic objectives intend to enhance the ability of children to satisfy their own rising expectations. Thus, the important components of the strategy are primary education, health of infants and mothers, water and sanitation, rights of the child and building relationships.

The strategic objective in education is to increase primary school enrolment and to reduce dropout and repetition rates. The strategy focuses on public and community schools including *Madrassas* (Arabic schools) in the rural areas, and consists of the following activities:

- Construction and remodelling of school buildings.
- Participation in school feeding programs. Recent experience of Plan and the World Food Program has shown that school canteens are associated with increased school enrolment and lower repetition and dropout rates.
- Provision of educational materials.
- Training for teachers on teaching methods and school management.
- Training for parent-teacher associations on school management.

The strategic objective in health is to support local efforts in expanding the reach and use of effective preventive health care including child survival and reproductive health services.

Working with both the government and non-governmental bodies to develop sustainable service delivery systems offers the promise of reaching a larger proportion of the population, thus enabling expansion of activities for child survival and provision of information and services related to HIV and AIDS.

The strategic objective for potable water and sanitation, based heavily on community participation, is to increase access to safe water and sanitation. This is an important component in carrying out positive and consistent activities for child survival.

- Plan will support construction and rehabilitation of wells and installation of hand-pumps.
- Students will act as advocates for changing behaviours and attitudes toward sanitation. This will indirectly affect their parents' behaviours as messages are taken home.
- The beneficiaries, particularly women, will take an active role in community water management.

Promotion of children's rights and building relationships will be fully integrated to other programs to reinforce them. The component of building relationships will create a real bond among families, communities and

donors by breaking down the cultural barriers among them and expanding their educational horizons.

It will bring the difficult social circumstances of the children and families in Guinea Bissau and their possible solutions closer to the public of the donor countries, in order to nurture continued support from them. Plan Guinea Bissau will actively participate in promoting the rights of children and will also promote the advocacy component, including efforts to generate pressure on the government to promulgate and enforce laws to protect the civil rights of children and women. Plan has contributed to the forming of a children's parliament in the country as a means of giving children the opportunity to speak out and assert themselves. Plan has provided basic training on the Conventions on the Right of the Child to six radio hosts and producers. Gender concerns will be addressed throughout the programs.



New borehole in Bafata

Program approach

The strategy is designed to be flexible, with the possibility of shifting resources as priorities change. It has been carefully chosen to focus on the areas that will have the greatest impact in achieving our mutual goals. The country strategic plan will encourage the society to place focus on children and will directly support the government's top priorities in the sectors of health, education and water and sanitation. It aims to provide new skills and to change the behaviour of the future generations of Guinea Bissau's children.

Targeting children as advocates of sound environmental practices will indirectly affect their parents' behaviours as messages are taken home. Gender concerns will be integrated in all the programs by taking steps to incorporate women as full participants and beneficiaries in all the projects. Plan will provide most of its development assistance through partnerships with local institutions such as the regional government offices, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations. Development of strong community institutions is expected to provide a major vehicle for children and youth to improve their social and economic standing. A monitoring and evaluation unit will be created to continually monitor and evaluate the progress made towards achieving results.