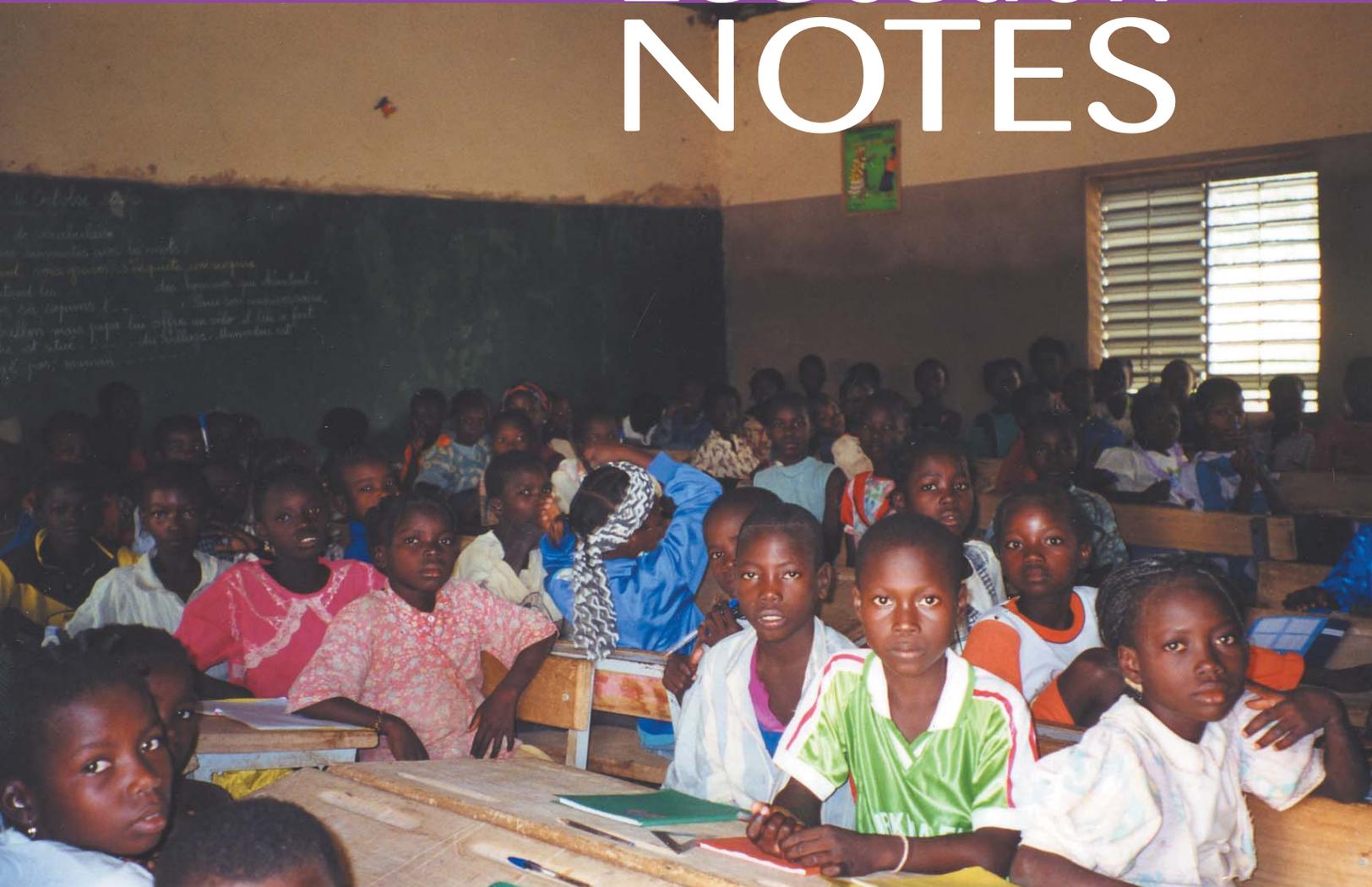




Education NOTES



Guinea: A Steady Growth Path to Achieve Education for All

Guinea is one of the few countries world-wide to have sustained over an entire decade the primary school enrollment rate increases necessary to achieve the key Dakar EFA goals without degradation of quality. Gross Enrollment Rates increased almost 10% annually from 1991-2001, with girls' enrollment increasing at 12% annually each year. Gross primary enrollments increased from 28% to 61% over this ten-year period, in spite of a weak macroeconomic environment. The Guinea case, then, provides guidance on how resource-poor countries can plan and follow a steady course toward Universal Primary Education through policy change and hard work, even where conditions, on the surface, are not particularly favorable.

The success of Guinea

in expanding access by “muddling through” is remarkable. Guinea has mastered the art of the “first adequate solution”. Rather than waiting for or trying to design the perfect environment, Guinea has a well-tested track record in moving ahead quickly as soon as a reasonable approach has been worked out. On the positive side, this has led to fairly quick action on a number of fronts, and Guinea has been among the first West African countries to adopt innovative approaches such as preventive school health, teacher-driven school grants, interactive radio, sample-based assessment of student learning, gender equity committees, NGO-managed construction programs, and reform of teacher education. On the negative side, the quick adoption of merely adequate solutions, has in some areas led to complacency, and a general reluctance to conduct meaningful program evaluations.

Access

Coverage has been impressive. Guinea focused on the gross enrollment rate as the key indicator measuring success, and achieved one of the world’s highest rates of GER growth over the decade. However, the focus on gross enrollments masked in part the continued inefficiency of the system, and repetition rates reached as high as 28%, before dropping recently to 22%. This reflects in part the lack of places available for secondary schooling (repetition is highest in Grades 5 and 6). Guinea’s Primary Completion Rates are still low, but have increased from 16% in 1990 to about 32% in 2001.

Quality

Guinea was able to avoid degradations in quality during this period of expansion, in part by ensuring that teachers were key partners in developing school improvement plans. The Ministry since 1994 has developed a teacher-driven in-service education program to give teachers more professional autonomy. With the help of ministry personnel designated as facilitators, teams of teachers design projects to improve teaching and learning and compete for small grants to carry them out. The program has been widely seen as successful and has engaged virtually 100 per cent of teachers in many rural areas and more than 80% of primary school teachers country-wide. These teachers have received significant guidance from inspectors and pedagogic advisors over a sustained period of time, dealing with specific teaching and learning issues. On the input side, improvements have been made in recent years in teacher quality (teachers are now recruited after Grade 13 rather than Grade 10; pre-service and in-service education have been greatly strengthened; solid classroom level in-service support is available) and textbook availability (better than 1:1, up from 1:20 five years ago).

The Drivers of Change

The successful experience in Guinea can be attributed to four particularly important drivers of change: (i) the personal commitment of key actors, (ii) private sector and NGO support, (iii) consistent donor support, and (iv) a gender-based policy vision.



Closing the Gender Gap: Gross Enrollment Ratios as Percentage of Total Enrollment



Personal commitment of key actors. While much has been said in the international literature about the importance of political support, the real success stories in Guinea can be traced to the personal commitment of key actors—for the most part, mid-level civil servants who believe passionately in what they do, and have worked hard to bring about change. It has been possible in Guinea to use the profound commitment of individual actors as a starting point from which to build a more broad-based reform effort, and as the basis for a good deal of long-term planning, which essentially was able to lock in this vision through a form of “positive inertia” over a long period of time (i.e. once things got started, even with a change in actors, they tended to keep going).

Private sector and NGO support. The private sector was almost completely absent in education in Guinea until 1990. Yet by the end of the decade, the growth in enrollments of private schools accounted for much of the overall growth in the system. In 1997, the most exceptional year in this regard, primary school enrolments increased by 24,897 new students, with private school enrollments accounting for 24,010 of these. Guinea has also worked effectively with the NGO community. More than 20 NGOs have been contracted to construct primary school classrooms, mobilize communities in support of the school and are increasingly involved in sectoral innovation

Donor support. The role of the donor community in Guinea has been disproportionately important as compared to other countries in the region. There has long been agreement on sector indicators among donors and government. However, there have also

been ups and downs in terms of donor coordination, and some awkwardness in terms of specific instances of donor collaboration where donors were working on different elements of the same activity together (in service teacher education, textbooks, procurement, school construction, etc.). Of greater concern than the occasional poorly managed program is the long-term impact on the sector when the donors have a disproportionate role in establishing the sector’s agenda. In Guinea, for instance, donors have generally been unconcerned with urban issues and have preferred to devote their energies and resources to providing support in rural areas. Similarly, the donors have provided strong support for primary education but almost no support whatever for secondary or higher education. While each of these decisions, taken separately donor by donor, can be justified, the cumulative effect has been to skew spending patterns and overall sectoral development

A gender-based policy vision

Guinea has been among the few countries to consistently use the gender equity issue as an organizing tool for its EFA efforts. With USAID support in the early 90s, and then with FAWE (Federation of African Women Educationists) support, Guinea created one of the continent’s first gender equity committees (in 1991) within the Ministry of Education. The purpose of this group was to ensure that factors known from the literature to affect girls’ attendance and participation would receive close scrutiny in all donor- or government-funded programs. This has come to include such factors as: the distance between home and school, the sanitary facilities available, the extent to

Education in Guinea

Socio-Economic Indicators:

Population (millions)	7.4
Percent below poverty line	40
GNP per capita	450
IDA/IBRD	IDA
PRSP ¹	2002
HIPC ¹	2000

Education Indicators:

Adult illiteracy rate: Total [Female/Male]	65
Primary gross enrollment rate: Total [F/M]	61 [50/72]
Primary completion rate: Total [F/M]	28 [16/40]
Secondary gross enrollment rate: Total [F/M]	15 [8/21]
Tertiary gross enrollment rate: Total [F/M]	1 [0/2]
Total Education Spending as % of GDP	1.8

which teachers provide a supportive environment for girls, the opportunity cost of schooling, the direct costs of schooling. The World Bank's lending to the sector has been profoundly influenced by such considerations. The government's sectoral program also specifically targets the under-representation of women in parents' associations, within the teaching corps, and at higher levels of the education system.

Remaining Challenges

While Guinea is still only about midway on its path toward EFA, it has successfully demonstrated that the remaining very low enrollment countries can break out of the mold, and that it is in fact possible to turn around decades of failure. However, despite the gains in gender equity in access, gender disparities across urban and rural areas persist. The degree of expenditure bias is much higher in rural areas where expenditure on boys is 1.9 times that of girls in primary and nearly 4 times in secondary education. Guinea's future success will depend in large part on its ability to further build teaching and learning quality, to strengthen equity, and to ensure that adequate resources are available at the school level.

Lessons Learned

- Steady growth can be sustained even in difficult environments if close attention is made to creating strong, committed leadership teams at all levels; this can be done in ways that are consistent with building quality.
- Sustainable movement towards EFA means that reform and support will be required at all levels of education. While it is appropriate to target primary education, and rural areas, this cannot be to the exclusion of other areas of legitimate concern.
- Donor collaboration is crucial to the EFA context, but unless there is joint "basket" financing, it is probably best to agree on discrete complementary packages of support rather than trying to coordinate on a single activity.
- The complexity of decision-making processes during periods of intense reform can often be more easily managed by adoption of a "first adequate solution" approach.

This note series is intended to summarize lessons learned and key policy findings on the World Bank's work in education. The views expressed in these notes are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the World Bank. For additional copies of Education Notes, please contact the Education Advisory Service by email at eservice@worldbank.org or visit the web site: <http://www.worldbank.org/education/>

¹ The *Heavily Indebted Poor Countries* (HIPC) Initiative was proposed by the World Bank and IMF and agreed by the international community in 1996, as the first comprehensive approach to reduce the external debt of the world's poorest, most heavily indebted countries. Since 1999, it has created a strong and transparent link between debt relief and poverty reduction by tying nationally-owned, participatory *poverty reduction strategy papers* (PRSPs) to the provision of HIPC debt relief and concessional lending.