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**GUINEA**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Fulfilling a Promise for Better Education

**Textbooks, scholarships and training boost the quality and accessibility of primary education**



Photo: USAID/Laura Lartigue

Guinean schoolgirls receive language arts textbooks donated by USAID.

***“Providing quality textbooks will help our children succeed in school,” says Education Minister Guilavogui. “For that we are extremely grateful.”***

In May 2004, singing, dancing, and smiling schoolchildren from all over Conakry, Guinea, animated a ceremony where USAID handed over 500,000 textbooks for primary students throughout the country. Held at Frederico Mayor Primary School, the ceremony celebrated the ongoing fulfillment of a promise made by USAID’s Africa Education Initiative to expand educational opportunities for African children. Guinea is the first of six African countries to receive textbooks from the Initiative.

At the ceremony, Galema Guilavogui, Minister of Pre-University and Civic Education, said, “Providing quality textbooks in sufficient quantity helps us fulfill an essential part of our program — improving educational quality — and will help our children succeed in school. We are extremely grateful.”

In a country where the adult literacy rate is only 41 percent, and where rural children — girls in particular — face daunting barriers to basic education, strengthening the educational system is essential to development. To supplement the textbook initiative and encourage girls to complete primary school, USAID began offering a

scholarship program for young girls in the 2004/2005 school year. USAID is also helping train primary school teachers to improve the quality of classroom instruction. To ensure the sustainability of these initiatives, USAID works closely with the Guinean government and is the largest bilateral contributor to Guinea’s Education for All program, a World Bank-sponsored effort to increase rural access to schooling and reduce crowding in urban schools.

Though Guinea remains plagued by a shortage of teachers and instructional materials, there are signs for optimism. During the 2003-04 school year, the percentage of school-aged children attending primary school grew from 74 percent to 77 percent, and from 67 percent to 70 percent for girls.

Reflecting the government’s firm commitment to improving education, Guinea was one of seven countries nominated for the G8’s Fast Track Initiative, which aims to ensure universal primary education in Guinea by 2015.