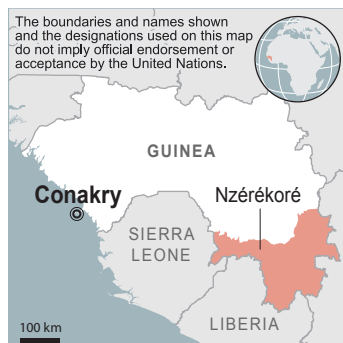


Quick impact programme for refugee zones. Community-based production centres and community rehabilitation projects with skills upgrading in Forest Guinea



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



Fast Facts

Country: Guinea

Duration: May 2007 to December 2008

Implementing UN Agencies: UNIDO; WHO; UNICEF; UNHCR; WFP

Other Implementing Partners: Ministry of Trade, Industry; Territorial Administration and Decentralization

Budget: \$1,095,038.62

Key Words: Refugees; returnees; IDPs; income generation; social cohesion

BACKGROUND

The civil conflicts of the 1990s in neighbouring Sierra Leone and Liberia transformed Guinea into one of the largest refugee hosting countries in the world. With widespread poverty and food insecurity already overwhelming the economy, the influx of refugees placed significant strain on the limited resources of Guinea. In particular, host communities in the Forest Guinea region - where large refugee, returnee and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) resided - faced a growing number of challenges stemming from lack of access to social services including potable water,

sanitation, health and education facilities; the destruction of infrastructure, loss of property and land for agricultural activities; and growing poverty. Subsequently, after many years of relative calm, the combination of these growing challenges and the limited capacities of the Government and the communities to respond to them effectively resulted in rising tensions between refugees, IDPs and the host communities; tensions which not only impacted Guinea's long-term development but also threatened its peace and stability.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

By improving access to social services, restoring infrastructure and strengthening the productive capacities of those living in the Forest Guinea region, the project aimed to reduce tensions between host communities and refugees. Specifically, the project helped to create income-generating opportunities that collectively benefited host communities, refugees, returnees and IDPs. The project sought to do this by

setting up Community-based Production Centers (CPCs) that were tasked with providing intensive skills-upgrading training courses, bolstering collective self-help entrepreneurial initiatives and restoring community infrastructures. Ultimately, through communal management of the CPCs, the project advanced social cohesion and strengthened the capacities of those living in the Forest Guinea region.

BENEFICIARIES

The project targeted roughly 5,000 individuals. The direct beneficiaries were local communities, including refugees, returnees and IDPs, living within Forest Guinea region, which covers the provinces of Kissidougou, Gueckedou, Macenta, N'Zerekore,

Yomou and Lola. Indirect beneficiaries included family members of the participants and the communities in general. Both were able to improve their incomes through increased capacities and more targeted business development opportunities.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) Over 6,500 people, including members of host communities, refugees, returnees and IDPs benefited from training opportunities in a variety of areas such as entrepreneurial skills, literacy, and targeted technologies for food processing, hairdressing as well as embroidery. Such trainings allowed the beneficiaries to improve production levels, increase profits, and promote new businesses that created additional income-generating opportunities and introduced new products and services in their communities. In addition, the project had a multiplier

effect with the participants sharing their know-how with others including apprentices and partner associations.

(ii) The project had a catalytic effect, extending beyond Guinea through sharing of experiences with members of the Manu River Union who had expressed interest in replicating the approach. Furthermore, a large mining company had also indicated interest in applying the CPC approach to assist communities living close to mining sites.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project highlighted the importance of an inclusive and integrated framework that seeks to address multiple insecurities through a human security approach. By bringing together host communities and refugees, and through their collaboration, the project exemplified how existing capacities within competing groups could be identified and further developed, thereby leading to mutual respect and positive interdependencies. Moreover, such collaborations provided the foundation for resource-sharing and collective decision-making, thus reducing tensions among the target groups. In addition, by building upon

the collective capacities of the various groups, the project promoted a broader set of activities that resulted in local creativity and entrepreneurship. Lastly, while political instability and violence in some regions, as well as a deteriorating economic situation throughout the country delayed implementation on a number of occasions, nevertheless, the engagement and the commitment of the beneficiaries remained resolute and resulted in reducing tensions, improving access to social services and increasing community development for all those living in the Forest Guinea region.