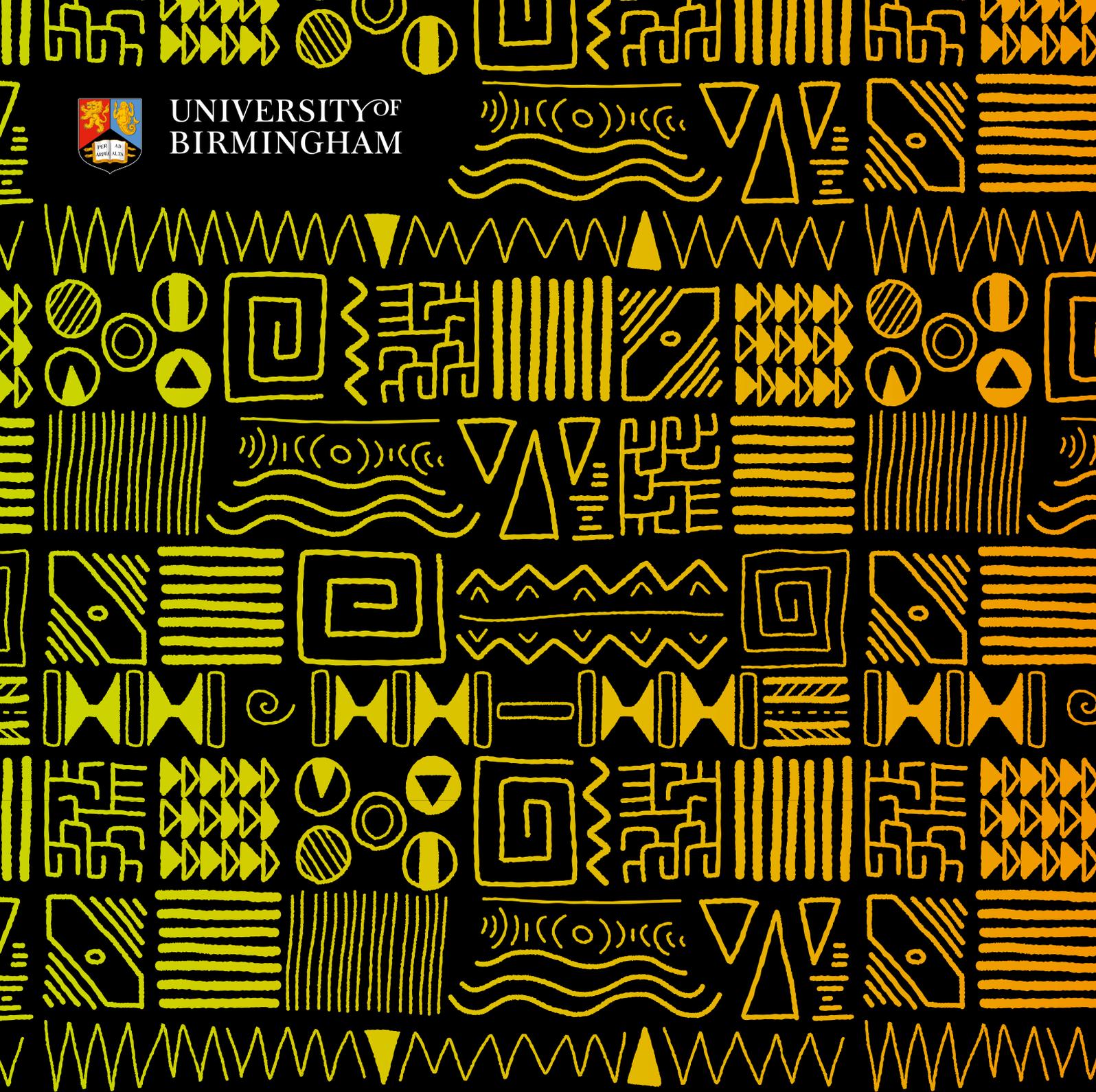




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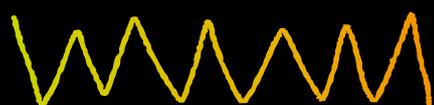


# MIGCHOICE COUNTRY REPORT: GUINEA

ESTER BOTTA, MICHELLE ENGELER, ABDOULAYE SOMPARÉ

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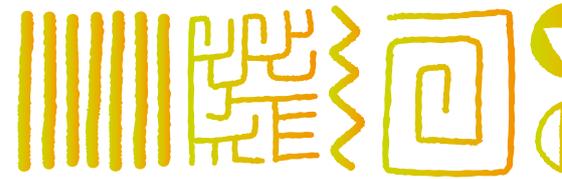




# INTRODUCTION

This report focuses on the relationship between development interventions and migration in the Republic of Guinea. Although Guinea is a small country in West Africa, with a surface area of 245,857 Km<sup>2</sup>, it is a country of great natural and ethnic diversity, with four natural regions that bring together populations that are very different from a cultural point of view, but also with regard to the culture of migration. The Fulani and Malinke populations of Middle and Upper Guinea, as well as the Conianke of the forest zone and the Diakhanké of Boké, have a long tradition of mobility. On the other hand, the populations of Maritime Guinea and most of the ethnic groups in the forest zone are more sedentary, but they have a long-established culture of welcoming foreigners into their homes, which also influences their interrelation with migration. Against that background and with regard to current conjunctures the migration projects of Guineans seem to be shaped by three different factors, namely the migration cultures of each ethnic group, the evolution of the Guinean state's migration policies and the current trend perceiving migration as a strategy of social reproduction for the wealthiest families and social mobility for the less privileged strata.

# HISTORICAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION IN GUINEA



During the colonial period, the fact of having been colonised by the same imperialist power, France, encouraged international migration and a mixing of the populations of the different countries of West Africa. It is within this framework that Guinea welcomed, during the colonial period, many Senegalese and Beninese workers and professionals, whose descendants still live in the centre of the capital. Moreover, the French colonial system, by integrating the economies of the colonised peoples into world trade and developing plantation cash crops to the detriment of food crops, also favoured a significant migration of Syrian and Lebanese traders, who ended up settling in Guinea as in the other countries of the *Afrique-Occidentale française (AOF)*. The agricultural policy of exploiting the indigenous labour force had set up in the colonies a system known as 'navetanat', which favoured the movement of people from the border areas between Guinea, Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire. Moreover, because of family or social ties, economic interdependence, linguistic and cultural similarities, these populations have always moved and lived independently of the borders of their respective States.

As far as the Fulani are concerned, initially nomadic livestock breeders from Fouta Djallon, since pre-colonial times they have migrated to Maritime Guinea in search of transhumance areas and better pastures. From 1984, the political liberalism of the Second Republic attracted several inhabitants of Fouta Djallon to the capital, where thanks to community networks, they were able to become traders. The Fulani therefore used internal and later international migration as a strategy of social mobility, corresponding to a shift away from agriculture and animal husbandry, which were considered unprofitable, to trade. This change is determined by the low profitability of agro-pastoral activities, to which is added today the opening up of the villages of Fouta caused by the construction of road infrastructures and the spread of mobile phones. This explains the attraction of the new generations, increasingly educated, for new lifestyles and jobs in the modern sector, in Guinea or abroad. Nevertheless, it is the economic capital in terms of livestock that gives members of this ethnic group a greater capacity to finance migration projects. As for the Malinke of Northern Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, long before colonisation, they had begun to populate the area of Forest Guinea in the context of trade, in search of bananas and cola nuts. This migration continued throughout the First Republic, hence the spread of the Malinké language, which is spoken by most families in Forest Guinea.

The cultural politics of Guinea's different regimes also play a determining role in predisposing attitudes towards migration. In 1958, Guinea's independence brought Sékou Touré to power, and he quickly distanced himself from Western countries, moving closer to the communist bloc. In contrast to neighbouring Senegal, Guinea's cultural and ideological policy favoured the sedentarisation and integration of the population into the young nation. Through cultural activities and the media, young people were supported, encouraged to stay and contribute to development. They were also invited to adopt an African authenticity that the President displayed by eating porridge for breakfast and always wearing traditional African clothing. However, many of those who did not adhere to Sékou Touré's socialist and nationalist policies, including political opponents and big businesspeople, whose interests were harmed by the ban on private trade, went into exile abroad, especially in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire: they were accused of being anti-Guinean. Among these, members of the Peul ethnic group, suspected of having participated in plots against the president, were especially numerous. Cooperation with other communist bloc countries allowed the best Guinean students to benefit from scholarships in Eastern European countries, the Soviet Union, China and Cuba.

In 1984, on the death of Sékou Touré, General Lansana Conté took power: this was the beginning of the Second Republic, marked by the opening up to Western countries and the absence of any policy to discourage emigration. This favoured, on the one hand, numerous departures, especially towards France and, on the other hand, the return of professionals and traders from the diaspora, who returned to invest in their country of origin, for example by opening the first supermarket and numerous department stores. Thus, from the end of the 1980s, the intellectual and economic elite from the diaspora imposed itself as a model of success, as much in the business world as in political life. The strong representation of the elites from the diaspora in the different governments of the Second Republic, and in the different decision-making bodies, was perceived by many young people as a social success acquired abroad, which encouraged them to formulate, in their turn, a migratory project. Obtaining international diplomas thus corresponded to a strategy of social reproduction of elite families. Moreover, the application of the structural adjustment policy, which put an end to the automatic recruitment of university and vocational graduates into the civil service, encouraged young people to formulate

<sup>1</sup> In fact, Guinea's 1970 aggression, orchestrated by the Portuguese to free the son of the mayor of Lisbon imprisoned in Guinea, was organised with the help of Guinean opponents in exile abroad. It was on this occasion that several mercenaries were recruited in the border areas of Fouta Djallon and Senegal, whose regime was opposed to Guinea. Among the mercenaries recruited, the Fulani were very numerous. It was only in 1977, following the arrest of some members of the Fulani elite, including Telly Diallo, Secretary of the OAU, that the coups, true or false, were described as a 'Fulani conspiracy'. This stigmatisation contributed to the migration of members of the Fulani elite to neighbouring countries. (Kaké, I.B. 1970. *Sékou Touré: the hero and the tyrant*. Paris: Jeune Afrique livre).



Photo credit: Michelle Engeler, Conakry 2020

projects for professional integration and social mobility through their migration to the developed countries of the North. This explains the increase in the number of graduates among candidates for regular or irregular immigration, in a context of economic and social crisis and widespread unemployment. Hence the over-investment of the poorest families in the migration project, which often resulted in Guinea, especially in urban areas, in the sale of land properties (even by depriving oneself of part of the land on which the family home is located) or real estate, in order to finance the journey of one of the family's children.

Since the early 2000s, new technologies resulting from globalisation, particularly mobile phones and the internet, have greatly contributed to bringing Guineans living abroad closer to those living in Guinea, through more regular telephone calls and latterly video messaging. The importance of international migration and the gradual enhancement of the status of Guineans abroad during this period is clearly perceptible in the semantic shift from the pejorative word 'adventurer' to the positive connotation of 'diaspo'.

Moreover, if previously international migration was reserved for ethnic groups such as the Fulani or the Diakhanké, who had built migration networks, from 2011 onwards, with the opening of the Libyan border, migration has occurred amongst people from all social and ethnic origins.

<sup>2</sup> Epiney, T. (2008). Dynamique de l'émigration extracontinentale des jeunes Guinéens. Case study in Conakry (Guinea).

<sup>3</sup> GERM (2019). Migration – my project. Candidates and migration networks – the case of the Republic of Guinea. Saint-Louis, Laboratoire des Etudes et Recherches sur le Genre, l'Environnement, les Religions et les Migrations, Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis.

<sup>4</sup> GERM (2019). Migration – my project. Candidates and migration networks – the case of the Republic of Guinea. Saint-Louis, Laboratoire des Etudes et Recherches sur le Genre, l'Environnement, les Religions et les Migrations, Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis.

## 1.3

# RECENT EMIGRATION FROM AND IMMIGRATION TO GUINEA – A SUMMARY

After Guinea's independence in 1958, emigration peaked in the early 1970s. This corresponded to the discriminatory measures against the Peul population taken by President Sékou Touré, and also to the economic boom of 1975–1978 in coffee and cocoa exporting countries such as Cote d'Ivoire. Many Fulani took refuge in neighbouring countries and some 100,000 Guineans went to seek work in the Côte d'Ivoire. A wave of immigration in the 1990s was due to the massive influx of refugees fleeing the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia. From the 2000s onwards, the migratory flow was reversed and emigration clearly took precedence over immigration.<sup>2</sup>

More recently, international emigration has increased significantly; according to very recent research carried out at the GERM (*Laboratoire des Etudes et Recherches sur le Genre, l'Environnement, les Religions et les Migrations, Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis*) and published in 2019<sup>3</sup>, most migrants left Guinea between 2007 and 2014 for professional reasons (56.2%), or for study (15.6%) or family reunification (13.5%). Other reasons such as insecurity (0.12%) play only a small role. By doing a differential analysis by gender, this same report shows that men (67.2%) are more likely to move with the objective to find employment. As for women, they move more (50.3%) to join their husbands or to reunite with their families. Most often, people moved to Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. And, just as important: migration, according to this analysis, most often concerned young men between 15 and 30 years old: '(...) la migration en Guinée est une affaire des hommes et de jeunes que de femmes' (GERM 2019: 28). The highest proportions of migrants were recorded in the 20–24 and 25–29 age groups, with almost 13% for each group.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, the International Organization for Migration IOM speaks of a significant increase between 2014 and 2017 in the number of migrants from Guinea. According to IOM, at the beginning of 2017 Guinean nationals represented the most important contingent of migrants (ahead of Nigerians and Eritreans) arriving on the Sicilian coast, although it is unclear if this is in absolute numbers or per capita.<sup>5</sup> In 2019, Eurostat noted that there were more unaccompanied minors of Guinean origin than any other country, with the exception of Afghanistan, Syria and Pakistan.<sup>6</sup> In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has of course had major consequences for people's mobility, also in Guinea.<sup>7</sup>



1.4

## KEY DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

The most recent development interventions in the context of migration are linked to the increasing 'irregular crossings' of Guinean populations to Europe. Since then, several agreements have been signed between Guinea and European countries or international institutions within the framework of migration flow management. Among others we can name the following:

- in 2006 the Spanish government granted financial aid of €20 million to Guinea to support its development and fight against poverty.<sup>9</sup>
- in 2011, a migration co-operation agreement with Switzerland provided for encouraging and assisting returns described as voluntary. Guinea also undertook to readmit to its territory its nationals who did not have, or no longer had the right to stay in Switzerland. The agreement provided for assistance with reintegration in the country of origin, as well as the establishment of a migration dialogue. The two countries also agreed to collaborate in the fight against human trafficking. Awareness-raising campaigns on the risks of irregular migration and training courses for consular staff were planned.<sup>10</sup>
- in 2015, the European Union granted €5.4m to implement a programme for 'Strengthening the governance of migration and supporting the sustainable reintegration of migrants'.<sup>11</sup>
- in 2017, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa INTEGRA project (Support Programme for the Socio-Economic Integration of Young People) was launched with a budget of €65m, whose objective was to contribute to the prevention and limitation of irregular migration, as well as to enable the reintegration of returning migrants and the sustainable socio-professional integration of young Guineans in order to promote the inclusive economic development of Guinea. The partners were GIZ, ENABEL and ICT.<sup>12</sup>

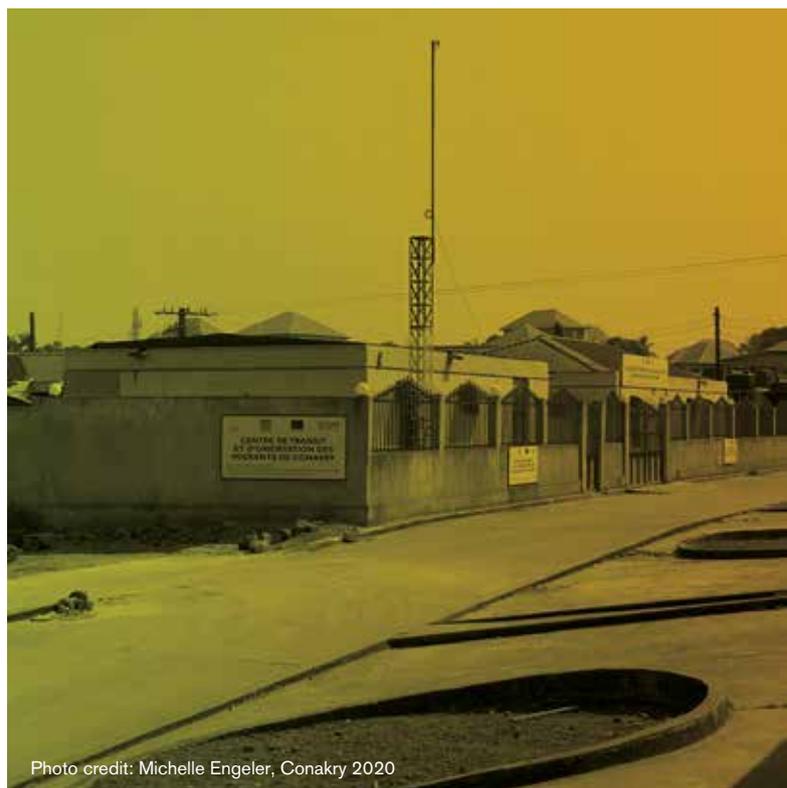


Photo credit: Michelle Engeler, Conakry 2020

In addition, in all the areas covered by this report, there are projects that have been carried out thanks to ANAFIC (*Agence Nationale pour le Financement des Collectivités*), a fund created in 2019 which is supported by mining revenues and which is mainly used to build infrastructures, such as roads, schools, health centres etc. Meanwhile, the FODEL fund, created in 2017, is intended for localities most affected by mining: in our survey, we encountered activities financed by this fund in Siguiri and Kamsar and Kolabou. In our survey, we also took into account large national projects in the field of agriculture, such as the PNAFAA, and local projects to support peasants, organised by the Consortium of Italian NGOs CESVI and by peasant confederations.

Apart from these large projects and interventions, Guinea also has a number of smaller development interventions that touch on the subject of migration; among others, projects financed by religious organisations, by international companies such as mining companies, but also organised by small local or international NGOs, for example in the context of the fight against irregular migration of unaccompanied minors of Guinean origin.

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/t05-eutf-sah-gn-01\\_-\\_integralfinal.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/t05-eutf-sah-gn-01_-_integralfinal.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/portlet\\_file\\_entry/2995521/3-28042020-AP-DE.pdf/c4826abe-d737-1cbd-cd1c-74c53958b9bb](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/portlet_file_entry/2995521/3-28042020-AP-DE.pdf/c4826abe-d737-1cbd-cd1c-74c53958b9bb). Otherwise, the EU also gives us more general figures on Guineans in Europe: <https://bluehub.jrc.ec.europa.eu/atlas/finalExt/GIN.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> [https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/Flow%20Monitoring%20Survey%20-%20Impact%20of%20COVID%20in%20WCA\\_FR\\_FINAL.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=10531](https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/Flow%20Monitoring%20Survey%20-%20Impact%20of%20COVID%20in%20WCA_FR_FINAL.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=10531)

<sup>8</sup> GERM (2019). Migration – my project. Candidates and migration networks – the case of the Republic of Guinea. Saint-Louis, Laboratoire des Etudes et Recherches sur le Genre, l'Environnement, les Religions et les Migrations, Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis.

<sup>9</sup> GERM (2019). Migration – my project. Candidates and migration networks – the case of the Republic of Guinea. Saint-Louis, Laboratoire des Etudes et Recherches sur le Genre, l'Environnement, les Religions et les Migrations, Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.sem.admin.ch/ejpd/fr/home/actualite/news/2011/2011-10-14.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://migrationjointinitiative.org/sites/default/files/files/pdf/depliant-eutf.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/sahel-lake-chad/guinee/programme-dappui-integration-socio-economique-des-jeunes-integra\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/sahel-lake-chad/guinee/programme-dappui-integration-socio-economique-des-jeunes-integra_en)



2.1

## CONAKRY: THE COMMUNE OF RATOMA

The capital of Guinea, Conakry, which in 1885 was a village inhabited by about 300 people, has become in 130 years an urban agglomeration of about 3 million inhabitants. Originally inhabited by the Baga, the city received several waves of migration: the construction sector, fuelled by the need to build the colonial administration buildings, attracted Soussou people from Maritime Guinea, but also workers from Senegal and Sierra Leone. After 1984, following the advent of the capitalist and liberal regime of the Second Republic and the opening of the country to the Western world, the city of Conakry expanded very rapidly and its population almost tripled. Today Conakry is composed of five urban communes.

Ratoma and Matoto, on the outskirts of the capital, are the largest and most densely populated of these municipalities, with one million inhabitants each. This is due to internal migration, particularly of Fulani people from Fouta Djallon who, from the 1990s onwards, have gradually turned away from agriculture and livestock farming in favour of trade in the capital. In Conakry, they settled in arid plateaux that are very isolated and were devoid of urban, educational and health infrastructures. Thus, they have organised themselves as a community in order to appropriate urban space, creating public schools and clinics, which sometimes do not comply with health standards. In Conakry, these Fulani neighbourhoods are often stigmatised as 'the axis of evil' because of the high frequency of strikes, shop closures, and sometimes violent demonstrations through which residents, particularly young people, express their discontent. Many conflicts are determined by the frustration that such spatial segregation leads to, especially when it is exploited by political leaders. Urban and community solidarities constitute very strong identities, which sometimes, but not always, overlap with ethnic affiliations.



2.2

## URBAN KANKAN

The city of Kankan, located in Upper Guinea, is the second largest urban agglomeration in Guinea after Conakry, inhabited by 533,530 inhabitants. Located in the heart of Guinea, near the forest region and the Fouta Djallon massif, the Kankan region is close to the Ivory Coast and especially Mali, which is only 340 km away. This geographical situation has favoured the mobility of populations and commercial activities, although the state of the roads is currently very poor.

Kankan was one of the first Islamic cities in West Africa, before becoming a flourishing commercial city, more densely populated than Conakry during the colonial era. However, the socialist and authoritarian orientation of the first regime (1958–1984), hostile to private trade, led many of the great Kankanese merchants to migrate to Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, which were more conducive to their activities. Nevertheless, Kankan maintained an underground economic activity of black market and trafficking, so that its merchants were labelled 'Seytan' (evil), because they sabotaged the economic policy of the first regime. It is only in the 1990s, with the liberalism of the Second Republic and the return of the elites of the diaspora, that we witnessed a resumption of economic activities in the city. Kankan has a highly mobile population due to commercial activities, but also due to the departure of young people (including many students) to the nearby mining areas, where gold and diamonds are produced. It is also a crossing point for Guinean migrants on their way to the Malian border and a reception point for returning migrants, welcomed by the IOM before being sent back to their respective towns.

2.3

## RURAL KANKAN

The Kankan rural site included three localities: Balandou, a village inhabited by Fulani herders 10 km from Kankan, Tintioulèn (22 km from Kankan) and Sabadou Baranama (75 km). The three villages have fairly diversified agro-pastoral activities, with the practice of several crops, livestock farming and, in the case of Sabadou Baranama, fishing. Each village has its own specificities: Sabadou Baranama is specialised in the rice and fishing sector (mainly practised by a specific professional category, the sonomo), Tintioulèn is known nationally for its yam and Balandou is famous for the production of néré, although we also studied the market gardening sector. Livestock is considered as capital to be resold to finance other activities (agriculture, studies, migration projects); the livestock must be renewed by buying new head of cattle as soon as possible with the fruits of the harvest.

2.4

## SIGUIRI AND KINTINIAN

Siguiiri is a prefecture located 200 km from the town of Kankan, and borders Mali. From the 8th to the 15th century, the Bouré region, in which the town of Siguiiri is located, was one of the centres of trans-Saharan trade, with the exchange of North African products (dates, horses, wheat, barley, salt, cloth) for products from sub-Saharan Africa (colas, millet, copper, ivory and especially gold). Previously poor and depopulated because of the very hot climate and the aridity of the soil, Siguiiri, which has a population of nearly 800,000, is now one of the most attractive urban agglomerations in Guinea. Rich in gold, the territory of Bouré is exploited by SAG, which employs around 3,000 workers. Its establishment from the 1990s onwards has favoured the urban growth of this locality, with the arrival of permanent or temporary workers and job seekers, but also of many shopkeepers, bar and restaurant owners. Gold is also exploited in the traditional way, by local or foreign gold panners: since 2010, exploitation has intensified following the spread of gold detecting machines. Gold panning and industrial exploitation lead to a strong degradation of the environment, which is combined with increasing demographic pressure and health problems related to dust. In addition, SAG is destroying and displacing entire villages as it discovers gold deposits to exploit.



2.5

## BOKÉ

Finally, in Boké we focused on two sites: Kamsar and Kolaboui. The Compagnie Bauxite de Guinée, which started mining bauxite in 1973, created a workers' city in the centre of Kamsar at the time it was established. Since then, there has been a strong contrast between the industrial city (called Kamsar-city), a true modern enclave, and the peripheral neighbourhoods (Kamsar-village), slums without any urban infrastructure. Meanwhile, Kolaboui, the capital of the sub-prefecture, was a small Landouma village which, thanks to the construction of roads, became a very large crossroads after independence. The population of Kolaboui (60,000 inhabitants) is made up of indigenous farmers, some civil servants (teachers, doctors and members of the sub-prefecture administration) and traders. Transport and trade activities at the crossroads divert many farmers from agriculture in favour of the jobs of drivers or black market petrol sellers. However, many of the young people in the centre of Kolaboui are unemployed.

# 3 METHODS

In order to understand the relationship between development interventions and migration across the five sites, we conducted interviews and observations with men and women living in each site as well as analysing a range of different development projects and their activities and actors. The development projects studied cover three main areas: youth training (general and vocational education and training, support for entrepreneurship), agro-pastoral activities and the mining sector. The five sites studied take into account both urban and rural environments.

Overall, we adopted a qualitative methodology, based on interviews and, where possible, participatory observation with immersion in the environment. In Ratoma, we first conducted our research with a small selection of young men and women living in the neighbourhood, mainly through biographical interviews. Taking into account the history and context of the district, the aim was to understand the life course of its inhabitants and the role played by migration in their trajectories. In addition, we sought to grasp their migration projects and the impact of development projects on their personal trajectories. Then, the central question became more general; the interviews led us to reflect on the factors that influenced the most important decisions in people's lives with regard to mobility. Interviews were conducted in Ratoma in a concentrated period from Jan–Feb 2020 by Michelle Engeler, with the field facilitation of two research assistants, Aboubacara Sidiki Lema Camara and Abdourahamane Bah, both affiliated to the partner university *Université Kofi Annan* based in Conakry, Guinea.



Photo credit: Michelle Engeler, Conakry 2020

In urban Kankan, work from Feb–May 2020, work conducted by Ester Botta and Abdoulaye Sompore, with translation and field facilitation by two research assistants, Dougo Kpakpavogui and Aboubacar Soumah, focused on two vocational training projects for young people, namely the Don Bosco Vocational Training Centre and the ENAE (National School of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry). In addition, we studied two groups in the market gardening sector: KOSIMANKAN and SABATI 1. Interviews were conducted with key informants, including the Directors of ENAE and DON BOSCO, and the Presidents of the Confédération Paysanne de la Haute Guinée and FUMA (Federation of Market Garden Unions). In addition, our qualitative approach included semi-structured and biographical interviews targeting vocational school students, Don Bosco teachers, farmers from market gardening groups and agricultural entrepreneurs; and collective interviews with members of the agricultural groups. Work then continued in rural Kankan from June–Oct 2020, covering the same agricultural development projects, but also the presence of the DIWASI natural park, established by the French NGO Non Nobis. Work here involved participatory observation, individual and biographical interviews and group interviews. In Balandou, interviews were conducted by Ester Botta and Abdoulaye Sompore. At the other sites, data was collected by Dougo Kpakpavogui, Aboubacar Sidiki Camara and Ibrahima Alamako Keita, under the supervision of Ester Botta and Abdoulaye Sompore.

In the site of Siguir, we concentrated on urban youth, and in Kintinian, we preferred to immerse ourselves in the social world of the gold panners. Work was carried out from Oct–Dec 2020, and data was collected by Dougo Kpakpavogui, Abdoubacar Sidiki Camara and Ibrahima Alamako Keita, under the supervision of Ester Botta and Abdoulaye Sompore. The data collection strategy focused on individual interviews with workers in Siguir, and interviews and participant observation in Kintinian. Finally, work in Boké took place in Jan–Feb 2021 and again involved interviews and participant observation.





## 4.1

# DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS AND MIGRATION: INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The focus of this report is on the relationship between development interventions and migration. Yet across our five sites, the extent to which our respondents considered the two to be related varied considerably. In Ratoma, we found that migration – or more specifically spatial mobility – is important, not only as a lived experience, but also as a general aspiration of young people who have been confronted for years with economic difficulties and poor access to state services, which leads to a feeling of exclusion. Yet development interventions seemed less well known amongst the young people we interviewed. Many of these interventions are linked to the EUTF programme to support the socio-economic integration of young people (INTEGRA), with, among others, partners GIZ and ENABEL. This programme's objective is to contribute to the prevention and limitation of irregular migration, as well as to enable the reintegration of returning migrants and the socio-professional integration of young Guineans. Yet our research among those in charge, the target public and the beneficiaries of these projects has shown difficulties linked to the fact that the interlocutors of these institutions are often structures such as commune offices, youth centres, official youth representatives. Thus, these projects do not really work with individuals who, even if they do not play any official role, are often more listened to by the youth of these neighbourhoods. Moreover, these projects are not well known by most people living in the neighbourhood. This may be because people are not very interested in the activities organised by the municipality, or because they are not very optimistic about the possibility that this kind of project, which is often limited in terms of time, will really make a difference in the long term.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- Key partners of development interventions are very often municipalities and official youth representatives; a more diverse and inclusive partner selection could probably improve the projects' visibility, reliability and trustworthiness
- Time; short term projects are not considered to really improve the situation of the participants
- Urban-rural connections; only a few development interventions connect the urban to the rural world and vice-versa, although many (possible) participants do commute between the two worlds – a more creative approach might help to really connect to people's lifeworlds.

In Kankan, by contrast, many more respondents highlighted development interventions as relevant to their experience. Among the many development projects that have affected them, farmers highlight the PNAFA project (National Support Project for Actors in the Agricultural Sector), co-financed by the State, IFAD and in cooperation with Arab countries; the DEFMA project (Development of the Marshland Sector), financed by the European Union; and the initiatives of the Belgian NGO TRIAS and the consortium of Italian NGOs CESVI-LVIA.

Before examining these projects, it is worth highlighting that the main economic activities in Kankan are related to trade, handicrafts and subsistence agriculture, which, according to the INS, absorb 55% of the working population. Meanwhile 38% of workers, whom the NSI calls 'family helpers', are in fact unemployed or precarious workers who work in the domestic and informal economy, in a context where production relations are embedded in kinship. The main activities of young people, who are precarious and poorly paid, are motorbike taxis and mobile telephony. The private sector is dominated



Photo credit: Michelle Engeler, Conakry 2020

by banks, mobile telephony and a dozen or so petrol stations, around which there is petrol trafficking by small retail vendors. The construction of modern houses, with the presence of numerous building sites, has favoured the creation of jobs linked to the building industry, with an important artisanal production of bricks. Also noteworthy is the presence of two factories, respectively in the field of road asphaltting (GUITER) and the processing of groundnuts and mahogany nuts. Civil servants (1.5% of the population) work in administrative services such as the prefecture, hospital and schools. A university town, Kankan is home to Guinea's second largest university, with more than 10,000 students and 250 teachers, which fuels economic activities around room rentals, catering and transport, with an impressive number of motorbike taxis. Our survey shows that there is a significant peri-urban market gardening sector, which represents the main source of income for the women who work there and for the young agricultural entrepreneurs, mostly men, who are increasingly involved in this activity. We look below at two areas in which development interventions have been particularly significant.

#### 4.1.1 VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROJECTS: THE DON BOSCO VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE AND THE NATIONAL SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK (ENAE)

In a context where vocational training is often devalued and considered too theoretical and ineffective, the Don Bosco Professional Centre is an exception. Founded in 1986, it is equipped with modern machinery that allows students to benefit from both practical and theoretical training, unlike other similar institutes. Its good reputation makes it easy for its students to be recruited by mining companies. Don Bosco offers four professional courses in General Mechanics, Auto Mechanics, Industrial Electricity, Building Electricity, leading to the CAP (Certificate of Professional Aptitude). Vocational education is accompanied by civic and moral education courses aimed at transmitting to students the knowledge and professional ethics related to their profession, as well as the values of citizenship. The school is also home to a carpentry cooperative that guarantees a stable salary for its members and training for apprentices.

Meanwhile the *Ecole Nationale de l'Agriculture et de l'Elevage (ENAE)*, which has been in existence since 1989, offers young people, in addition to theoretical courses, the opportunity to learn about the practice of agriculture and animal husbandry by working on the school's farm, fields and nurseries. Even though many former students are unemployed, or practise trades disconnected from their training, the ENAE graduates we met during our survey are seeking to become agricultural entrepreneurs, like some of their elders, who have been able to set up cooperatives and small businesses. They also sell their expertise to agricultural entrepreneurs or share it, free of charge, within agricultural groups, where they introduce innovative techniques.

In our interviews, we noted that the choice to go to the ENAE often depends on the advice of a parent agronomist or agricultural technician, who has a positive view of the agricultural and stockbreeding professions. In the same way, at Don Bosco, the pupils who chose this institute as their first choice benefited from the advice of a relative, often a qualified worker or technician, who helped them to enhance the value of their future profession. Thus, these specialists enable the young people to look with interest at professions that are disqualified or despised in Guinean society, such as that of a worker or, even more so, a farmer, by showing that they open up prospects for professional integration, particularly in entrepreneurship.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- Development interventions that further support and underpin institutionalized vocational training of a high standard can help to support, embed and anchor (young) people in their respective regions

## 4.1.2 AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN KANKAN

In Kankan many farmers' associations have sprung up with the encouragement of the state and development institutions to defend the interests of workers in the agricultural sector. Thus, farmers have formed themselves into groups, unions and federations.

In Kankan, we worked on the market gardening sector, mainly composed of women, which is gradually becoming more male. Market gardening offers farmers a regular income, due to the very short growth cycles of the different agricultural products. Nevertheless, productivity is hampered by difficulties in water control, which leads to droughts during the dry season and floods during the rainy season. In the sites of rural Kankan, we worked on market gardening (Balandou), the yam sector (Tintioulèn) and the rice sector (Sabadou Baranama).

The groups have received support from a large number of development projects, including in particular the PNAFA, the DEFMA, the project of the Belgian NGO TRIAS and the interventions of CESVI, a consortium of Italian NGOs. The KOSIMANKAN market gardening group in Kankan has also received help from the association of diaspora nationals to buy a water tower and solar panels. Among the achievements of these projects are the construction of infrastructures (warehouses, sales area), literacy training for the women farmers, training of the peasants in modern agricultural techniques, initiation to management and market studies, in order to adapt their production to the requirements of the consumers (DEFMA Project). Farmers have also been able to buy agricultural inputs at favourable prices, benefit from the expertise of agricultural technicians and have easier access to micro-credit. We have also interviewed groups of young herders and farmers who, thanks to WAP funding, have obtained seed capital to launch entrepreneurship projects.

Overall, in relation to agricultural development projects, we have made the following observations, which also apply to the rural Kankan region:

- Farmers have a positive opinion of development projects. They see them as an opportunity to increase productivity and to learn new techniques: training in agricultural techniques is particularly appreciated. However, in spite of the efforts made by the partners, the problem of water control is not solved.
- Farmers sometimes develop wait-and-see and passive attitudes towards development projects, which prevent them from sustaining what they have achieved. Tools and infrastructure are not well maintained. In Sabadou Baranama, due to the lack of support for projects during 2019, the rice harvest has not taken place.
- Farmers complain about the poor management of some projects, sudden and inexplicable interruptions which they attribute to misappropriation, which fuels a feeling of mistrust towards the authorities, development partners or intermediaries.
- Development projects have an impact on the structure of the farmers' associative world, in that a few individuals (often literate men or people with a trade) acquire a certain amount of power by acting as intermediaries between development partners and farmers.
- Although they succeed in improving women's working conditions, development projects have a very limited impact on gender and age inequalities in the production and marketing of agricultural products.
- Despite the vibrancy of farmers' associations, many farmers work in isolation and therefore do not benefit from any development project; their isolation also excludes them from the exchange of endogenous knowledge, experiences and reflections on the peasant condition that characterise the world of farmers' associations. Moreover, certain specialised professional categories, such as sonomo fishermen, do not benefit from any development project.
- Some villages, such as Tintioulèn, jealously guard the monopoly of agricultural production, which limits productivity: this is the case of the yam sector.

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- Rural areas are very open to development interventions; long-term projects, interlinked with local initiatives and associations, should have the opportunity to apply for further funding, also for training activities, but should also be motivated to develop greater initiatives to become independent
- Development interventions and projects should also include new partners and incorporate rather 'invisible' groups, partners and initiatives
- Development interventions should include an approach that is sensitive to gender and generational relations –in order to not exacerbate existing inequalities

## 4.1.3 PROJECTS IN MINING AREAS

In rural Kankan, great hopes have been placed on cashew tree production, which, however, appears today to be a less profitable crop, with falling prices. In every village, there are agricultural groups of peasants who feel powerless against the traders, who charge them low prices for their products. This is particularly true in the case of the yam and cashew nut sector: there is a strong demand addressed to the state for price regulation that is more favourable to producers.

In all the villages in this region, residence is viri-patricolocal: the sons live in the paternal concession, where they bring their wives. All members of the domestic group are subordinate to the authority of the father or older brother, whose wife also has a position of power over other women. The domestic group is also a production unit, with an organisation that favours the older brothers, who manage the collective fields. It is very difficult for younger brothers to accumulate capital through the cultivation of individual fields, to which they can devote little time. Agricultural activities are of little benefit to women, as men manage the production and marketing of the main crops and use women labour. This is true for *nééré* (Balandou), yam (Tintioulèn) and rice (Sabadou). In Tintioulèn, the exclusion of women from yam production is also based on prohibitions and their exclusion from the transmission of certain agricultural know-how that is kept secret. Only market gardening provides women with a certain autonomy, which does not translate into social mobility, but rather into the possibility of financing personal and child-related expenses.

Less literate than in the rest of the country (45.6% compared to a national average of 62.3%), young people in these villages have limited opportunities to access employment in mining companies and their professional integration projects revolve around agriculture and livestock farming, crafts and the tertiary sector, particularly mobile telephony. They are influenced by a tradition of mobility to neighbouring countries that has existed at least since the first republic (1958–1984). This has led to the creation of migration networks based on kinship, in Mali for Balandou, in Côte d'Ivoire for nationals of Sabadou Baranama and Tintioulèn. Seasonal or permanent mobility to the mines or to border countries can be seen in part as a desire to emancipate the elderly and as a trajectory of individualisation.

<sup>13</sup> Women are excluded from some phases of the production. This is based on the conviction that women are 'impure' could negatively affect the quality of the harvest, even prevent yam from growing at all. Actually, the use of the dichotomy pure/impure justifies a situation where men want to preserve their control over the production and commercialisation of yam, the most important source of profit in the area.

Turning to the village of Kintinian, those whom we interviewed say they are literally sitting on gold: the women, just by washing the dust they sweep in front of their houses, obtain enough gold dust to support the family. But this extreme richness of the soil, whose discovery by some gold panners gives them great purchasing power, contrasts with the extreme poverty of this region, which is confronted with problems of drinking water supply, the existence of a single health centre, a single school and a single mosque, the latter two both offered by SAG. Such a contrast makes Siguiro a prefecture where conflicts are frequent. SAG is under constant pressure, with roadblocks preventing workers from getting to the factory. The demands made to the company are for the recruitment of young people from the Bouré villages, but also for financial compensation, the construction of schools and health centres and the regular supply of running water and electricity.

The intensification of artisanal exploitation through gold panning has raised great hopes of social mobility among young people, to the point of leading many pupils and even students at the University of Kankan who come from Siguiro to drop out of school. Young workers set out in search of gold, abandoning their trade; even though a minority manage to succeed, others come to tragic ends, due to the total lack of security when the gold pits collapse. Alcohol and drug abuse are also on the rise, as young gold panners take drugs to brave the fear in order to cope with the working conditions and risks. It should be noted that gold panning has always existed in this region, but as a secondary and seasonal activity, complementary to agriculture: it is now becoming a full-time job, involving about 300,000 people.

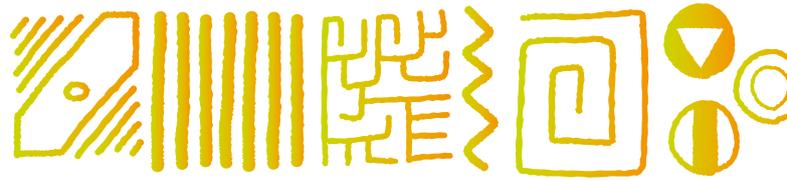
SAG has initiated very ambitious development projects, which seek to create socio-economic activities that allow people to have alternative financial income even after the end of mining operations. SAG's projects are threefold: cashew nut cultivation, fish farming, and the construction of schools in the sub-prefecture of Bouré. In our research, however, we focused on work on the FODEL fund, a state-provided fund, fed by revenues from the mining sector, which is granted to areas impacted by mining extraction. The fund is granted to groups, cooperatives or entrepreneurs who are setting up projects and who need a loan to finance their activities, for example through the purchase of equipment. It is an interest-free loan, which these groups take out from their respective communes, but which requires guarantees in kind, such as plantations, public schools and houses. These are at risk of being confiscated if the loan is not repaid. In a context of conflict over the professional integration of young people, this fund enables young people to find professional activities without relying on mining companies. It also aims to reduce artisanal gold mining, a source of accidents, by offering alternatives. In Kintinian we met groups that have benefited from the FODEL fund to set up a logistics and transport company, agricultural entrepreneurs, three carpentry and boilermaking cooperatives and fish sellers who have been able to equip themselves with refrigerators for conservation and marketing. This fund has been decisive in improving the working conditions of the beneficiaries. However, obtaining it requires many guarantees and lengthy bureaucratic and administrative procedures which have discouraged some structures from applying, especially in a context where literacy rates are very low. Some interviewees also express doubts and mistrust regarding the management of the funds.

Meanwhile, the city of Kamsar is a place of industrial organisation, which has tried to regulate the lives of the workers to the point of taking care of their social time, off-work and leisure. The outlying districts of Kamsar village are the site of an informal economy and offer products and services to CBG workers who have a much higher purchasing power compared to the rest of the Guinean population. For example, the markets where all the women go to buy food, and artisans such as tailors, carpenters and mechanics work, are located in Kamsar village. Nowadays, the district is mainly inhabited by shopkeepers, workers in the informal sector and by precarious workers, occasionally hired for the CBG's sub-contracting companies, by retired people and their families. Due to the very rapid expansion of the city, these inhabitants of the outlying districts have become much more numerous than those of the City of Kamsar itself.

Since the late 1990s, some of the tasks of Compagnie Bauxite de Guinée have been carried out by several subcontracting companies and cooperatives that offer their workers very precarious and poorly paid jobs. This increase in labour supply, which goes hand in hand with precarious employment, attracts more and more jobseekers from rural areas who settle in outlying neighbourhoods. The youth of these neighbourhoods express frustration with their difficulties, often through violent demonstrations, and there is a feeling that the benefits of mining do not accrue to the local population.

Meanwhile in Kolaboui, there is a strong demand for employment from the CBG, but also from new Chinese companies exploiting bauxite in the vicinity of the village. These are poorly integrated into the local economy, have a negative impact on the health of the population and the environment and offer only a few low-skilled jobs, such as drivers. Hence the recent violent demonstrations by young people, who are demanding more jobs and development for their region from companies and the state. Since the 1990s, Peul and Diakhanké migration networks have encouraged the departure of migrants from these ethnic groups, who appear to be a model of success because they have built very luxurious houses. Since the opening of the Libyan border in 2011, young people from all ethnic groups and origins have seized the opportunity to migrate.

All these problems and the resulting manifestations lead the CBG to engage in community development projects, which enable it to build the image of a company that cares about its environment. On its official Facebook page, CBG says it has invested US\$40 million in development projects between 1987 and 2010, mainly aimed at building roads, schools and health infrastructures. Since the recent strikes, CBG has begun to finance directly, or through NGOs such as CECI, projects in the fields of dyeing, soap making, market gardening, environment and fishing. We should also note the presence of the FODEL fund, which we have studied in a comparative perspective with Siguiri.



## 4.2

# MOBILE LIVES AND URBAN YOUTH

Drawing together insights from across our five case studies, first of all it is important to note that the lives of people in all the sites studied are often highly mobile. Mobility to the cities and, above all, to the capital, is mainly due to the lack of infrastructure and services in rural areas. This explains the itineraries of young people who attend primary school in their village, junior and senior high school in a small town and university in the capital. Such mobility is facilitated by the presence of extended family members in places of residence who can take in schoolchildren or apprentices from rural areas. In these cases, the decision to change residence depends on the family, but it can also be an individual choice, for example to escape family conflicts, forced marriage or to pursue a personal aspiration, such as becoming an artist or football player, by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by a big city. Sometimes young people who are in the care of a guardian who does not provide them with good living conditions decide to return home or move on at a later date.

Often, these trips to the capital are seen as stages in a mobile journey that could continue abroad (in neighbouring countries or in Europe), and then return to the regions of their birth. Outside the capital, interviews with some gold panners in Siguiri show that their mobility is limited in time and that they accumulate funds to be reinvested in agricultural activities once they have returned to the village. In rural Malinke, the movements of young men to neighbouring countries are often seen as adventures, the wanderings of youth in search of experience and money, before returning to assume their responsibilities with the big family. All these movements generate a feeling of 'knowing how to circulate', of having migratory skills and the ability to adapt to new environments, which can encourage them to continue their mobile journey.

The idea of return is also present in many international migration projects, where migrants insist that they would like to contribute to Guinea's development. Their way of talking shows that their objective is therefore not to move out permanently, but rather to look elsewhere for what they think they cannot find there. So, finally 'becoming someone' outside, but with the idea of coming back and bringing back sooner or later what we found, what we got, what we became 'over there'.

It should be noted, however, that return is not always possible: migration, especially international but also internal migration, raises hopes of success among those around them, which translates into strong pressure on migrants. This explains the stigmatisation of certain return migrants who are accused of being 'cursed' because they have been repatriated and return without resources, but also the situation of young people from rural areas who have travelled to gold mining sites and mining towns. If the expected success is not there, if they do not manage to find gold or employment with the mining companies, the return to the village becomes difficult, even if it is desired. These young people then find themselves either 'stuck' in the mining towns, where they do precarious work while waiting interminably for a job (the case of Kamsar) or, if they are gold panners, they think of moving to other sites or to neighbouring countries, hoping to find their chance.

It should also be noted that mobility does not only concern the new generations, but is often part of the family history or migration culture of an entire community. In Conakry, we met young people whose parents had just moved to Conakry just before they were born. Some of the parents had returned to Guinea after the end of the Sekou Touré regime, while others were from rural areas, particularly the villages of Fouta Djallon, whose inhabitants spilled over into the new neighbourhoods of Ratoma and Matoto in the 1990s. Many of the young people we met in these neighbourhoods of Conakry have never left the capital, but mobility is very much in their imaginations, whether they dream of going to visit their native village, going to a neighbouring country for training, or to Europe. It is the stories of family mobility in the past, combined with news of the departures of their friends and acquaintances in the present, multiplied and embellished on social networks such as Facebook, that create a general aspiration for mobility. The willingness to want to leave rather than to stay should also be seen, in Ratoma, as the result of a context where young people face social, political and economic difficulties. They also experience a feeling of abandonment, segregation and stigmatisation in their neighbourhood, where state services and infrastructure, in terms of roads, schools and health centres, are often absent.

In our interviews in Ratoma we also found that many young people are attracted by the idea of leaving, whatever their background: this is true for small traders, for apprentices in workshops and for students or young graduates. This is true for small traders, apprentices in workshops and students or young graduates. However, for the latter, the possibility of realising their migratory project in the context of further training is more important. They can, for example, apply for scholarships or student visas from institutions such as Campus France, but also from various agencies that offer to facilitate studies in China, Russia or other countries. It should also be noted that difficulties in finding work, together with family demands, can lead students to take up employment or to retrain for courses that are not related to their university education. We met a young woman graduate who, because she could not find a job, is training to become a midwife, students who, in the afternoons, help their uncle tradesmen in their shops, graduates who work as waiters, hairdressers etc... This shows us to what extent urban youth are aware of the fact that university education no longer automatically leads to a job as a manager, as was the case before. Somehow this blurs the once clear social boundary between 'intellectuals' and 'tradesmen' by leading some to say:



Photo credit: Michelle Engeler, Conakry 2020



**IN THIS COUNTRY, IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU HAVE STUDIED OR IF YOU ARE IN A WORKSHOP: IT'S THE SAME YOUTH THAT SUFFERS!**

#### POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- It is important that development interventions are aware of the mobile life courses of their (young) beneficiaries. This poses problems for the sustainability of projects, since when young people train in a project, to improve their skills, but also to contribute to the development of their neighbourhood, they often move elsewhere.
- Beneficiaries, especially when they are expected to transfer skills, should therefore be chosen from among young people who are rooted in their neighbourhood, even better if they are influential and listened to by their peers.
- Development interventions, which are not well known in the Ratoma neighbourhood, could benefit from better dissemination by using means of communication that are popular among young people, such as SMS or social networks like Facebook.
- The migratory aspirations of young people in these neighbourhoods are often fuelled by frustration with their living conditions, as well as by feelings of disappointment and neglect on the part of the state. Most young people in the disadvantaged neighbourhood of Ratoma have attended schools and community health facilities. It is important to build enough public services, including schools and health centres, as well as public spaces for young people (playgrounds, football pitches, libraries) to integrate these young people. This will promote their urban integration while at the same time reducing their frustration, which is often expressed through violence.
- Work integration projects bringing together young people from different neighbourhoods and ethnic communities could go in the same direction.

## 4.3

# VOCATIONAL TRAINING, APPRENTICESHIP AND MIGRATION PROJECTS



In a context where at least 60% of higher education graduates are unemployed 5 years after completing their studies, a solid vocational training, favouring integration into the labour market, is potentially a bulwark against irregular migration. In urban areas, graduates then adapt to small jobs (motorcycle-taxi, mobile telephony), which take them away from a trajectory of professional integration that could lead to a job related to their training. Others, who try to integrate into the various services of the public administration, remain unpaid trainees for many years, receiving only a few bonuses and suffering from the exploitation of their superiors/seniors. The importance of unemployment and the over-motivation of young people to find work is illustrated by the fact that the demand for entry into the army far exceeds the available places.

In the Guinean education system, referral to vocational training is usually a default choice, following failure of examinations at the end of primary, middle or high school. Out-of-school pupils, who have only attended a few years of primary school, or young peasants who have not attended school, learn trades in informal workshops. Moreover, one of the main reasons for the mobility of young people from rural areas is to learn a trade in the city. However, as our interviews show us, especially on the sites of Siguiri and Kamsar, informal apprenticeships can last around ten years, during which the apprentices are generally exploited, as they constitute a workforce in the workshops, but also in the master's domestic group. Here, they perform chores, such as domestic chores and work in their master's yard, which are not directly related to learning a trade. The apprenticeship time is therefore often deferred. Apprentices have to earn their master's baraka: it is by working hard for him that they will be able to obtain his blessing, a guarantee of professional and social success. This is what makes apprentices a docile and hard-working workforce. Even at the end of a long and arduous apprenticeship, apprentices remain dependent on their master, as they cannot afford to become self-employed by buying work tools. They therefore remain in the workshop, where the master continues to pocket most of the income.

In our interviews in the working class areas of Siguiri and Kamsar, it emerges that the inclusion of such dependent relationships within the workshops is one of the reasons that pushes young apprentices to formulate migration projects, because what they earn does not allow them to become independent, build a house or help their family in any significant way. Another reason why young workers want to leave is the precariousness of the work, as they are not salaried, but they earn money

only during the periods when their clients entrust them with construction or repair tasks. Thus, a worker could stay 3 to 6 months without finding work: hence the precarious nature of informal sector jobs. Moreover, unfavourable prices are often imposed on them by their clients, whom they call 'bosses'. In order to maintain the customers in a logic of survival, most workers enter into relations of subordination and dependence maintained by real or fictitious kinship ties, which hide a production relationship unfavourable to the workers.

Therefore, the prospect of working in Europe, for these socio-professional categories, is attractive because of the possibility of access to stable and well-paid salaried work in a factory. Some young workers imagine that such work could represent an opportunity to earn enough money to open a modern workshop on their own account once they have returned to Guinea. On the contrary, the Don Bosco carpentry cooperative has set up a cash management system that allows the workers to always count on a basic salary, to which bonuses are added according to the orders received.

As for vocational schools, such as the large Ho Chi Min training centre in Kankan, they often suffer from a lack of equipment, which leads students to have to do internships in informal workshops. Most of the students in these schools in Guinea come out with more theoretical than practical training. Don Bosco, on the contrary, offers both. Interviews reveal that the Don Bosco students consider themselves to be members of a working class elite, better trained than the apprentices in the informal workshops, which fuels their optimism and confidence in finding good jobs in their country. They dream of either becoming entrepreneurs, either on their own or in cooperatives, working with their peers and teachers, or of being recruited into mining companies as skilled workers. Moreover, the received socialisation, which insists on the duty to put their technical skills at the service of Guinea's development, seems to limit their migration projects. They learn an ethic inspired by the values of hard work, honesty in relations with clients or bosses, humility, frugality and the ability to accept initial difficulties for a long-term result. The choice to embark on a long journey to become skilled craftsmen and workers, acquiring solid skills that will accompany them throughout their lives, is presented to students as opposed to the quest for immediate, but ephemeral and uncertain enrichment through gold panning or irregular migration.

This is why, when questioned about migration projects, these young people express the desire to stay in Guinea. The same observation is valid for graduates from ENAE, who express a deep conviction that the skills and know-how acquired at the vocational school open up more interesting work prospects in Guinea than elsewhere, particularly with regard to entrepreneurship. It should also be noted that these vocational schools appear to be attractive in Kankan to higher education graduates who, often after several years of unemployment, return to learn a trade to give themselves a chance to find employment.



Photo credit: Michelle Engeler, Conakry 2020



Photo credit: Michelle Engeler, Conakry 2020

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- There would be value in the strengthening of the capacity of vocational training centres in terms of equipment and the introduction of a module on professional ethics and civic instruction, following the example of Don Bosco. This module could convey the same values that we encountered in Don Bosco, notably the desire to make oneself useful for one's family and country, but also the conviction that one can succeed in Guinea through work and perseverance. The increase in the number of vocational training centres will make the process of professional integration faster, as the students learn very quickly and within a time frame known in advance, while at the same time protecting the young apprentices from very degrading working conditions for a very long time in informal workshops.
- It seems important to us to give priority, in the field of agriculture and handicrafts, to the financing of projects developed by young people from these vocational schools. This would involve launching calls for projects and providing assistance (even in the form of a loan, as we see in Siguiri in the framework of the FODEL Fund) for young people or groups for whom the main difficulty is to obtain start-up capital in order to set up a profitable activity. The success of young entrepreneurs in handicrafts or agriculture is a model for younger people who engage in these activities and prove that it is possible to succeed in Guinea.
- The workers in informal workshops could also be helped to organise themselves by pooling their technical and financial resources. To do this, they need technical and financial support to form a cooperative, like the carpenter-teachers at the Don Bosco training centre. They would also need to be trained in management in order to be able to guarantee a basic salary for the members of the cooperative, which represents a regular income.

## 4.4

# INEQUALITIES BASED ON AGE, GENDER AND SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL CATEGORIES IN AGRICULTURE



During our research, we noted that actors who are active in agricultural groups are not, from the point of view of their sociological profile, potential candidates for migration. Most of them are older women in their fifties and over, whereas the candidates for migration are often young men. However, market gardening, especially when supported by development projects, succeeds in giving a 'boost' to farmers, contributes to reducing household poverty and alleviates the hardships of older women. It could therefore have an impact in reducing economic migration, motivated by the desire to help the family leave poverty behind. However, young people's migration plans are often determined by the desire to take care of their ageing mothers, in the context of polygamous marriages where the husband is unable to provide for them. Further to our questions, it seems that older women do not use their income to finance their children's migration projects, which are excessively expensive.

Market gardening is traditionally a women's activity, aimed at supplementing the family diet derived from rural activities. The women active in the groups use the income for the maintenance and reproduction of the domestic group, helping their husbands with daily expenses and contributing to the financing of schooling and the marriage of their children. The women market gardeners use their activity to cultivate autonomy from their husbands, to provide for their needs (clothing, medicines etc.) in a context where the husbands are poor or tend to neglect some wives in favour of others (polygamy, since 1966 officially prohibited, is still widespread in Guinea<sup>14</sup>). It is an activity that gives women, especially older women, a certain amount of power: they take charge of certain family expenses, contribute actively to ceremonies and, in groups, they take on roles of responsibility such as chairperson or conflict resolution officer. While women are very involved in market gardening, they are almost excluded in yam industry groups, where they play very secondary roles, such as selling small tubers and preparing meals for the farmers. The inequality suffered by women in this sector is perpetuated by men, in order to avoid giving women purchasing power, which would lead to more autonomy from their husbands. By conferring on certain stages of production a sacred and secret character, reserved for the adult men of the locality, through the use of notions of pure and impure, women benefit less from the financial spin-offs of these activities.

In a socio-economic context characterized by unemployment in precarious and low-wage jobs, workers accumulate several activities. The professionalisation of market gardening, as advocated by the peasant confederations, constitutes an alternative of stability and a bulwark against clandestine migration. We speak of professionalisation when the workers of a sector devote themselves essentially to this activity, with which they can feed themselves, take care of themselves and carry out certain socio-economic projects, such as building a house. Market gardening is capable of generating significant and regular income, as explained to us by the leaders of the peasant confederations. This is what leads men to become more involved in this activity, which was previously reserved for women as part of the gender division of labour. Hence the process of masculinisation that we observed in most of the market gardening groups, which favours the professional integration of men while contributing to the improvement of the quality of production.

The men who participate in these groups are often graduates of vocational schools or, in any case, literate men. Because of their schooling, when they join the groups, they become secretaries, treasurers, supervisors and intermediaries between development institutions and women farmers. The intervention of development projects therefore gives men a position of power. In addition, graduates in agriculture are bearers of knowledge and know-how that contribute to innovation by introducing new agricultural techniques that are less tiring and more profitable. We noticed that, unlike women, all the men we met were bearers of a social promotion project, because they aspired to become great entrepreneurs capable of carrying out certain socio-economic projects (creation of houses or businesses, where they want to hire other employees).

When these young people are asked about their migration plans, they say that they do not even plan to leave, as their involvement in market gardening or 'fixed and guarded' livestock farming means that they have to look after their crops or animals on a daily basis. This favours the sedentarisation of young people, fuelled by a hope of success which may lead them to give up any attempt at migration. For these young people, entrepreneurship is not just a slogan, as is the case for many university students who say they want to become job creators, but lack the concrete skills to do so. It is a realistic project, especially when they are supported by projects at the end of their training.

<sup>14</sup> Camara, M. S. (2014). Political history of Guinea since World War Two.



Photo credit: Michelle Engeler, Conakry 2020

However, the very strong gerontocracy of rural Malinke society in Upper Guinea, where the elders have a lot of power over the younger generation, prevents young people from benefiting sufficiently from the spin-offs of agricultural activities, which are managed by the heads of household. Unlike the youth involved in peri-urban market gardening in Kankan, young farmers in rural areas, even if they are married and fathers, are forced to devote more working time to the family field, run by the father or elder brother, to the detriment of the individual fields of the nuclear family. Such a traditional family organisation encloses and keeps the younger children and their wives in the great paternal concession, in a relationship of subordination and dependence. It is in search of autonomy and purchasing power that young people envisage a migratory project, abroad or especially in mining areas as gold panners.

As far as yams are concerned, those who devote more effort and time, especially farmers, earn less than transporters and wholesale traders, who benefit more from the spin-offs of this production. Hence the latent and sometimes open conflicts between farmers and traders, which undermine and weaken this sector.

Despite gender and age inequalities among those relying on agriculture, there is a process of emergence of civil society, as an association of individuals interlinked by duties, rights and interests. By focusing on problems of production and marketing, regardless of community and ethnic affiliations, the peasantry of Upper Guinea, under the supervision of federations and unions, is participating in the emergence of a civil society and a social class.

In the face of these challenges, access to and control of water is one the main demands made by farmers in order to increase their productivity and to be able to work all year round. Meanwhile, to facilitate investment in market gardening, it would be useful to encourage the transfer of skills from young people leaving training centres such as ENAE to the women in the groups. As market gardening is an activity capable of generating significant and regular income, projects could be set up to attract young men, potential candidates for migration, to this sector. It should be stressed that this activity is less tiring and more profitable compared to other precarious work, such as driving motorbike taxis. As one farmer commented:



**FOR ME, MARKET GARDENING IS LIKE THE TONTINE. AS SOON AS I CULTIVATE, I HARVEST AND I REGULARLY EARN MONEY, WITHOUT GETTING TOO TIRED, LIKE A MOTORBIKE TAXI, WHICH WORKS ALL DAY LONG TO EARN ONLY 50,000 FG**

#### POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

- Urban agriculture and market gardening can help to support vulnerable groups in societies; development interventions might further support these initiatives
- It would also make sense to target especially young women and men who are likely to benefit less from agricultural production but who are very likely to migrate, eg, to gold panning sites
- It is key, that the development interventions also support local populations in the conservation, transformation and marketing of products, as in the case of certain projects initiated by CESVI in Balandou



# CONCLUSION

This report is based on qualitative research carried out in five different sites in Guinea and aimed at better understanding migration decision making in relation to diverse development interventions. Although people living in Guinea represent a very mobile population – becoming (geographically) mobile along the life course is, for instance, nothing special – they have a strong social anchoring in their country, their home region and their place of birth and the idea of 'return' forms part of many (realized or imagined) migratory projects. Integrating Guinea's (young) population in a prosperous and sustainable working life both in rural and urban areas is, however, key to minimize irregular migration and to boost economic development and socio-political stability/creativity.

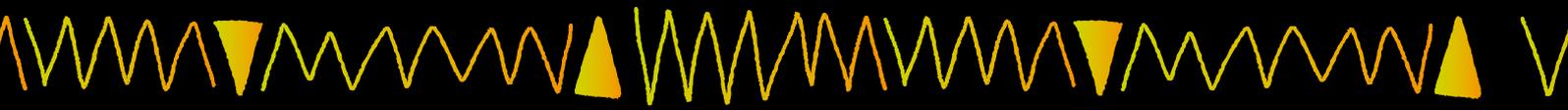


Photo credit: Michelle Engeler, Conakry 2020

We perceive development interventions that further promote education, in particularly institutionalized vocational training, in the capital and in the hinterland as particularly promising. Projects aiming at supporting agricultural initiatives and associations are similarly important as are interventions focusing on (young) men and women in defavored neighbourhoods or regions such as the underprivileged areas of Conakry or the settlements in the mining regions.

Finally and more generally, development interventions in Guinea can represent a strong integrative force that encourages networks and coalitions based on common interests and shared working and living conditions, thus going beyond ethnic affinity or affiliation, in Guinea often instrumentalised by political parties. Moreover, a gender- and generational-relations-sensitive approach can ameliorate and strengthen the social position of young women and young men and therewith further back up the key pillars of society.





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