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FY 2009 saw Guinea traversing a critical period of political transition. With the end of the Lansana Conte regime and the subsequent military coup in December 2008, the people of Guinea hoped for a chance to break from a half-century of corrupt autocratic rule, and move toward good governance and democratic reform. Until reversed by a transitional government in early 2010, a ruling military junta abolished democratic institutions; its increasingly rapacious members' abuses culminated with the September 28 massacre of more than 150 peaceful protestors. In the interim, the Guinean people suffer unrelieved poverty, food insecurity, and severely inadequate social services.

FY 2009 FOREIGN ASSISTANCE GOALS

In response to the December 2008 coup, the United States Government (USG) suspended assistance to Guinea, except for humanitarian and democracy-promotion assistance. As a result, planned security assistance (primarily military and law enforcement training) did not occur. In addition, a planned launch of a new economic growth program focused on agriculture did not materialize. In this time of uncertainty, the U.S. priority has been to engage fully with Guinean and international efforts to achieve a transition to civilian, democratic rule through credible legislative and presidential elections. Assistance to the electoral process has been a key part of this effort.

U.S. assistance to Guinea uses a strategy of improving governance and supporting civil society across sectors, with the goal of both strengthening democratic institutions and achieving sector-specific improvements, such as in health and agriculture. The U.S. assistance portfolio includes programs to improve local governance and support decentralization; a health program focused on HIV/AIDS prevention, improving maternal and child health, and supporting access to quality family planning and reproductive health services; and a Food for Peace program to improve food security and nutrition in selected areas. Fighting corruption, building institutional and human capacity, and empowering marginalized youth and women are approaches that cut across all assistance programs.

Overall, during FY 2009, U.S. assistance achieved significant results at the local level, as well as on the technical side of elections preparations, despite the deteriorating political and security environment. However, assistance fell short of meeting a number of targets in all sectors. The main reasons for this are the suspension of some planned assistance, such as in security and agriculture;

sporadic civil unrest; and the postponement of the elections, which delayed certain elections-assistance activities designed to take place once elections are imminent.

Governing Justly and Democratically

In FY 2009, the electoral process in Guinea faced many challenges due to the uncertain political situation. Several postponements of the elections and ambiguity over the potential candidacy of the head of the ruling junta, Captain Dadis Camara, have prevented Guinea from returning to civilian rule. Even so, U.S. assistance helped Guinea make notable progress in preparing for elections and also supported significant improvements in local governance, strengthened civil society and the media, and increased citizens' participation in governance and political processes. In FY 2009, USG assistance:

- In coordination with other donors and Guinean elections authorities, enabled the registration of more than four million eligible voters using a biometrics system. Guinea now has one of the best, most fraud-proof voter registries in all of West Africa. Thanks to U.S. training, elections officials, political parties, civil society, and the media acquired skills and knowledge effectively to manage or participate in all aspects of the electoral process.
- Trained 1,325 political party representatives and helped 47 political parties to agree on a code of conduct. This helped the political parties prepare for the elections and unify to demand a lifting of the junta's one-time ban on political activities.
- Trained thousands of local government officials, elected council members, and members of civil society groups on decentralization law, participatory budgeting, and anticorruption methods; disseminated anticorruption messages and information about decentralization that reached thousands of citizens; and helped 83 local governments to raise their own revenue, and 55 local governments to publish budgets and accounts. As a result, citizen participation in local governance increased significantly, leading in some cases to corrupt councilors being voted out of office and corrupt practices sanctioned.
- Supported civil society at both the national and local levels to advocate more effectively for both improved local government performance and a national democratic transition. The USG strengthened civil society organizations (CSO) active in health, education, agriculture, and women's empowerment, training 10,558 civic leaders from 860 CSOs. One result is that CSO members successfully advocated for health centers to display service fees and local governments to publish budgets and accounts – something that had rarely happened before.
- Trained journalists in covering many topics including investigating corruption, and provided training, technical assistance, and equipment to private media outlets. The USG helped establish two new private radio stations. Private radio has proved to be a vital source of uncensored, independent information for Guineans, especially since the 2008 coup.

Investing in People – Health

The USG's long-term goal for Guinea is to improve governance and transparency to build Guinea's capacity to deliver better health care services. Guinea's health sector continued to face many challenges during FY 2009, including a low government budget for health, rampant corruption, and poor governance, which have resulted in a scarcity in essential drugs and a decline in access to quality health services. The ability and willingness of the national government to address these problems has fallen into greater doubt since the military seized power in December 2008. Faced

with this reality, the USG increasingly shifted its focus to improving healthcare at the community level during FY 2009 where substantial progress was made. In FY 2009, USG assistance:

- Helped health facilities and laboratories provide voluntary counseling and testing (VTC) services for HIV/AIDS, significantly increasing their availability. The USG also supported community-based health co-management committees to oversee VTC centers and other health facilities, bolstering transparency and accountability in their operations and improving service delivery. This helped Guinea to maintain its current low HIV/AIDS prevalence rate, estimated at 1.5 percent in 2009.
- Supported Guinean initiatives aimed at preventing and treating parasites and vitamin A deficiency in children and postnatal women, as well as providing vaccinations for children and booster shots for pregnant women. The USG-supported governance improvements at Guinea's only midwifery school also set the stage for educating more midwives to provide maternal and child health services. USG assistance also included the distribution of birth kits and 10,000 bed nets to reduce incidence of maternal and child malaria.
- Made advances in increasing contraceptive prevalence, which is estimated at 13 percent in locations where the USG is active (versus the national average of 6 percent). The USG assisted the Guinean Ministry of Health to update policies, curricula, and tools for standardized family planning and reproductive health services. The USG helped the National Faculty of Medicine to develop an emergency neonatal and obstetric care curriculum, revise the existing family planning curriculum, and train health professionals in maternal and newborn health care and other critical health care issues.
- Provided life-restoring treatment for more than 300 fistula patients, and made progress in addressing the problem of female genital mutilation through education and supporting communities to make declarations to end this traditional practice.

Economic Growth – Agriculture

The USG's agricultural assistance to Guinea is principally through the Food For Peace-funded "Food Security and Livelihoods" project. Using the proceeds of monetized vegetable oil, this program improved food security and promoted agricultural enterprise development in Pita and Telemele, two of the most impoverished areas in Guinea. In addition, the USG also supported several regional environmental programs focused on promoting sustainable agro-forestry and forest conservation. In FY 2009, U.S. assistance:

- Supported grassroots-level agriculture and forestry institutions, increasing their organizational capacity to manage staff and provide resource users with useful technical information and inputs. This included supporting over 75 community-based farmer organizations with training and technical assistance, resulting in more than 2,000 farmers adopting new farming technologies, and over 7,700 rural households having more food and income.
- Increased local community participation in the planning and decision-making process associated with agriculture and land management. As a result, in FY 2009, an additional 250 hectares of community forests were placed under improved management.