



# Strategies that Succeed

## Stories from the SAGE Project

### 3. Cultivating Philanthropy: Guinea's National Fund for Girls' Education (FONSEF)

**M**onths after its official formation, the National Fund for Girls' Education in Guinea, known as FONSEF (Fonds National pour le Soutien de l'Education des Filles), donated 400 uniforms for school girls from very poor families who had achieved well academically. The local communities together with the school authorities chose the girls to whom these uniforms were given. The importance of this contribution by FONSEF is that it represents an important strategy for sustainable development of girls' education programs.

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SAGE Guinea is providing ongoing technical assistance and support to enable an institution supporting girls' education to survive long after project funds run out.

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*A deserving student from a local alliance receives a new uniform donated by FONSEF.*



*Students examine books made available through FONSEF's fundraising efforts.*

In Guinea, the Strategies for Advancing Girls Education (SAGE) project is providing ongoing technical assistance and support to the strengthening the capacity of FONSEF's fundraising activities, so that an institution supporting girls' education will survive long after project funds run out.

Implemented by the Academy for Educational Development, SAGE has been working in five countries (Guinea, Mali, Ghana, El Salvador, and the Democratic Republic of Congo) to develop multisectoral partnerships in support of girls' education. Since 1999, SAGE Guinea has been building partnerships at the national and community levels; training leaders

(religious and media) in girls' education; and mobilizing organizations, NGOs, PVOs, and CBOs, in support of girls' access, retention and completion of school.

Even though the gender gap is decreasing, there are still inequities in girls' access to, retention in, and completion of school. To confront these challenges, one of SAGE Guinea's activities has been the creation of FONSEF, the National Fund for Girls' Education. The importance of FONSEF is that it is designed to draw upon Guinea's local and national resources.

### **The Creation of FONSEF**

One of the resolutions of the

1999 National Forum on Approaches and Strategies for Girls' Education held in Conakry, Guinea, was the development of a national fund to support girls' education. The resolution of the National Forum provided legitimacy for the creation of a new institution. After initial organization meetings, the formation of a Board of Directors, and the election of an Executive Committee, the members of FONSEF felt the fund should have legal status in order to function as an institution. This was granted by the Ministry of Security and Decentralization in May 2001, just six months after the First General Assembly of FONSEF was held in December of 2000.

The goal of FONSEF is "to assist in the implementation of sustainable girls' education activities by communities and their partners, for an equitable education". The purpose is to (1) finance activities for girls' education initiated by community organizations, and (2) develop fundraising activities. The First General Assembly of FONSEF included representatives from the public and private sectors, international donors and partners in development,

religious leaders, and the media. Participation by high level ministers, including the Prime Minister, lent credibility to the organization.

The most important initial task of FONSEF was fundraising. At the First General Assembly, it was agreed to set annual financial targets and to cap the proportion of funds given out in the form of an award at any time at 30 %. For 2001, the target was to raise \$10,000. Over \$10,500 was raised. In addition, Plan International contributed \$5,500 which was earmarked for the completion of a junior secondary school in the city of Lelouma.

FONSEF was also successful in raising in kind contributions from local businesses. Teaching-learning materials were also donated by BONAGUI, a soft drink distribution company, by a trade union of educators, and by an association of women lawyers.

At the second General Assembly held in January 2002, which was opened by the Prime Minister of Guinea, feedback was given on the first years' activities. The participants reflected on the lessons learned from the



*A schoolgirl makes a speech during her village's celebration of National Girls' Education Day.*

first year and agreed to look for new opportunities in fundraising. A number of creative new suggestions were put forward. For example, an association of painters agreed to commission a number of paintings to

be sold with proceeds going to FONSEF. The association of designers and tailors offered to organize a fashion show with proceeds going to FONSEF. In addition, participants supported the idea of marketing products

with the FONSEF logo, to generate revenue for FONSEF.

Since then FONSEF has drafted a strategic plan and broadened its attempts to contact important industry such as the Bauxite Mining Company of Guinea (CBG) and others in order to build upon the funds already raised. SAGE continues to lend its support by informing potential donors (Canadian Cooperation, French Cooperation, Japanese Cooperation, UNICEF) of FONSEF's successes and its credibility as a local fund raising mechanism.

## Conclusion

As a result of FONSEF's work a culture of philanthropy is being cultivated in Guinea. Even after the SAGE project ends, a locally-owned institution will continue to generate much needed financial support and raise awareness of the importance of girls' education.

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