



**GUINEA SOLIDARITY MISSION**  
\*\*\*\*\*  
**CONDUCTED BY**  
**WEST AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY**  
\*\*\*\*\*  
**COORDINATED BY FAS**  
\*\*\*\*\*  
**SUPPORTED BY**  
**UNIFEM, UNOWA, THE URGENT ACTION FUND AND**  
**THE AWDF**  
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**CONCEPT NOTE**



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## **Introduction**

On 28 September 2009 the international community was shocked and horrified to learn of the Guinean military's bloody repression of a protest at the Conakry stadium. The protest, which was organised by Forces Vives, consisted of members of opposition parties, civil society organisations and Guinean trade unions.

Captain Dadis Camara's government has put the death toll at 50, however human rights organisations say that over 150 people died and 1200 were injured. Some have called the incident a massacre.

Condemnations have rung out from all sides. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) called on the President of Burkina Faso to mediate before declaring an arms embargo on Guinea. The African Union has demanded that Dadis Camara state in writing that he will not put himself forward for the presidency. The United Nations has decided to send an investigative committee, and the International Criminal Court has stated its intention to take charge of the situation.

The incident was especially traumatic for women, who suffered rapes and abuse. According to eyewitnesses many women were victims of barbaric acts perpetrated by soldiers.

Many African women's and human rights organisations and have joined in the international community's condemnations and have demanded that sanctions be put in place against the military regime.

West African women's civil society organisations have decided to conduct a solidarity mission to show their support for Guinean women. This mission will be coordinated by Femmes Africa Solidarity (FAS) and supported by the United Nations Women's Fund (UNIFEM), the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the Urgent Action Fund (UAF) and the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF).

At both the 8<sup>th</sup> African regional meeting on women (Beijing +15) and the meeting of the African Union's Women, Gender and Development Directorate in Banjul, a consensus emerged among the African women's organisations in favour of sending a solidarity mission to Guinea as quickly as possible.

This call was reiterated at the 54<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women which took place from 1<sup>st</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> March 2010. The involvement of the High Level Panel, chaired by Bineta Diop, Executive Director of FAS and Mary Robinson, former High Commissioner for UN Human Rights, established by the Secretary General of the United Nations is desired. The Minister of Women of the Republic of Guinea, Madame Nanfa Dima Mangassouba supports this mission it will host in Guinea.

This solidarity mission is made possible by the fact that UNIFEM has decided to support the initiative of the Guinean National Coalition on the Rights and Citizenship of Women to organise a sub-regional meeting in Guinea. This meeting aims to integrate the concerns of West African women into the mediator's agenda, in keeping with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

That is the subject of this concept note.

## **1. Context**

Theoretically Guinean has shown a desire to make progress on women's rights. The penal code has been revised, and discriminatory dispositions changed. The National Assembly has ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, although the tools to implement the Protocol have yet to be put in place.

The country has also ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) but has not yet submitted its report on the implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA).

The Kouyaté's Minister's Council considered a proposal to implement a law on gender equality, however this process was interrupted by the military coup.

The principle of equality between men and women is asserted in the Guinean constitution, in which article 18 states that no person shall be the object of prejudice because of their sex, race, ethnicity or opinions. In spite of this legal framework, however, the country will not be able to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, in particular Goal 3: to promote gender equality and empower women.

Numerous challenges remain in this area, notably the 'persistence of socio-cultural factors that work against the amelioration of the status of women, the lack of support for girls' education, and the need for more recognition of women's social realities by decision-makers' says a United Nations Development Programme report. The report emphasises that 'Guinea must meet its major challenges, especially concerning better governance and more efficient public action to setting up a strong and durable coalition in support of the Millennium Development Goals in Guinea.

In terms of peace and security, Guinean women have played an important role in the stabilisation of the sub-region, with the creation of the Manu River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), which received the United Nations General Assembly Prize in 2003.

This network played an important part in the peace negotiations following the outbreak of war in Sierra Leone and Liberia, which resulted in a massive influx of refugees into Guinea. It also helped to resolve numerous problems through its collaboration with the Manu River Union, an international association which brings together Guinea, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Many Guinean women suffer from domestic violence, female genital mutilation and forced early marriage. According to the Guinean Human Rights Organisation these practices are widespread in rural areas. Female circumcision also occurs in cities, however, and even in certain hospitals.

A law banning female circumcision has been passed and NGOs continue to raise awareness about this issue, however the practice continues, especially among the forest dwelling populations. Similarly, the official legal age of marriage is 18, however forced premature or arranged marriages are still common for almost all ethnicities.

The events of 28 September were traumatic for the Guinean population, and the ordeal suffered by Guinean women who were raped and physically abused has been reported by numerous witnesses. As well as being an expression of solidarity, the mission will clear the way for Guinean women to play their part in the resolution of the conflict by helping them to become actors rather than simply victims.

## **2. Organisers**

The Solidarity Mission is an initiative of West African civil society organisations members of the Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. It is coordinated by FAS. It is made possible by a partnership between civil society women's organisations and the support of UNIFEM, UNOWA, the Urgent Action Fund and the AWDF. The participating organisations are:

- WANEP (West Africa Network for Peace Building) ;
- WIPNET (Women's Peace Activism in West Africa) ;
- Manu River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET),
- The West African Women's Association Renaissance (WAWA)
- Women's Peace and Security Network (WIPSEN)
- Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), coordinator of the mission.

## **3. Objectives**

The general objective of the Solidarity Mission is:

- *Assess the situation and establish a framework for women's contribution to the peace process and define a strategy for the participation of women in peace negotiation and democratic processes*

The specific objectives of the Solidarity Mission are:

- *Show solidarity for Guinean women;*
- *Evaluate the situation and the impact of the conflict on women ;*

- *Propose follow-up activities and mechanisms to include the participation of women in crisis resolution and democratisation.*

#### **4. Activities of the Solidarity Mission**

The Solidarity Mission will try its best to carry out the following activities on the ground:

- *Meet with actors on the ground, particularly local authorities, civilians, military members, religious leaders, political parties, civil society organisations, and international organisations based in Guinea ;*
- *Collect evidence in order to make an assessment ;*
- *Organise a consultative meeting with women's organisations.*

#### **5. Expected Results**

- *Promote dialogue between women themselves and between women and other stake-holders ;*
- *Raise awareness of the situation of women and the need to recognise gender issues in the resolution of the conflict among local authorities, military and religious leaders, political parties, civil society organisations, and international organisations;*

#### **6. Members**

The members of the Solidarity Mission are sponsored by the organisations which initiated the Mission. A high level delegate will be in charge of the Mission. The members of the Mission are known for their neutral stance, their commitment to peace and their respect for human rights. The missions will be comprised of people having different skills in the area of peace negotiation and gender mainstreaming. These people are key figures of African and West African civil society.

The Mission will include a lawyer and a communications director, and will appoint one of its members to report on the Mission.

#### **7. Duration**

The duration of the Mission will be defined in the TORs. The members will need to be briefed before the Mission and to have contacts on the ground in order to arrange meetings. The Mission may also hold a press conference at an appropriate time.

The duration of the Mission's trip to Guinea will be determined by the TORs.

#### **8. Follow up**

The Mission will choose one of its members to present a report to its partners, UNIFEM and UNOWA.

At the end of the Mission a report will be submitted, in accordance with the deadline in the TORs. In addition to the diagnosis of the situation of women in

Guinea, the report should also indicate the way in which the organisers of the Mission, in collaboration with sub-regional, regional, and international organisations and mechanisms, can nominate a Gender Advisor to work with the crisis mediators.

The members of the Mission could also indicate the ways in which women's concerns can be addressed on the ground and the gender perspective integrated into the resolution of the crisis.