

# A YEAR IN GUINEA-BISSAU

## SUMMARY REPORT 2011



### About Guinea-Bissau

Guinea-Bissau is one of the world's poorest countries. Plan works in the eastern regions of Bafata and Gabu, in partnership with the government, NGOs and community organisations.

### Problems affecting the children of Guinea-Bissau

- 46 percent of children don't go to primary school
- Poor healthcare. Nearly one in five children die before reaching five.
- Half of people in rural areas have no clean drinking water, and three-quarters do not have adequate sanitation.



Child Groups discuss issues at meeting.

## PLAN'S PRIORITIES IN GUINEA-BISSAU

### 1 Helping more children go to school

- Increasing primary school enrolment and reducing drop-out and repetition rates, especially for girls
- Constructing, renovating and equipping schools
- Training teachers

### 2 Helping children grow up healthy and promoting safe motherhood

- Helping to prevent HIV and AIDS
- Vaccinating children and pregnant women
- Constructing and renovating health centres and supplying medicines and medical equipment

### 3 Improving water and sanitation facilities

- Constructing boreholes, wells and hand-pumps to provide safe drinking water
- Constructing latrines in homes and schools
- Raising awareness of hygiene
- Involving communities in water management

### 4 Promoting children's rights

- Lobbying the government to protect women's and children's rights
- Involving children in decisions that affect their lives
- Supporting children's parliaments
- Promoting birth registration

By being a child sponsor, you have directly supported projects like the ones below. Your ongoing support sustains our long-term development work which impacts the lives of children, their families and communities for generations to come.

Together we are making an invaluable difference to the lives of people in Guinea-Bissau.

To learn more about Plan's work in Guinea-Bissau visit:

[www.plan.org.au/ourwork/westafrika/guineabissau](http://www.plan.org.au/ourwork/westafrika/guineabissau)



Children at a Plan supported pre-school.

## CASE STUDY: ONE GIRL'S STORY OF SUCCESS

Sixteen-year-old Sona lives in Gatauda, one of Guinea-Bissau's poorest villages.

She lost her parents at a very young age and has been brought up by relatives. Despite this difficult start, Sona has achieved great things in her community. She has overcome considerable barriers to continue her education, and is now a nursery school teacher.

### Enormous challenges

In remote villages like Gatauda, girls find it hard to get an education. Many are expected to leave school and get married as young as 13 years old. Those who don't marry early often stay at home to do housework or look after younger siblings. Traditional values give them very little say in household and community decision-making.

Plan helps create an environment where children's rights to education, safety and other basics are respected, and supports children to get involved in issues that affect them. Through Child Participation Groups, we help them express their concerns, and raise awareness about children's rights. There are 70 such groups in Plan communities, each made up of 15 boys and 15 girls aged 12 to 18.

Sona has been involved in Gatauda's Child Participation Group since it began in 2006. She is now secretary, in charge of organising activities and keeping a record of developments in her village.

Plan trains groups on children's rights, conflict resolution, hygiene and health. They are given the skills and confidence to work together to find solutions to the challenges they face in their own environment. Parents and relatives also get involved and often come to understand the advantages of respecting their children's rights.

### Impressive results

These children's rights groups have had an enormous impact. Children become aware of not only their rights, but also their responsibilities. Many become leaders, encouraging development through changing people's attitudes about health, hygiene, nutrition and education, and their behaviour.

Sona has seen changes in her own village since her group began. "Before then, parents didn't allow their daughters to go to school," she says. "For example, a classmate who grew up with me was forced by her parents to leave school and get married at a young age. Nowadays, after a lot of awareness work, the number of parents who resist allowing their daughters to go to school has drastically decreased."

Sona herself faced challenges in continuing her education. At first, her family weren't supportive. However, with her enthusiasm, persistence, and confidence, she convinced them: "After long discussions with my family about the importance of education, they understood and allowed me to pursue my studies." She succeeded in finishing primary school and is in Year 6. Now, her family encourage her: "Sometimes when I'm too tired to walk to school, they tell me I cannot miss my classes!"

### Making a difference

With her drive to help make her village a better place for children, Sona decided to become a nursery teacher. In the mornings, she teaches 32 young children, aged between three and six, at Gatauda nursery. Every afternoon, she carries on with her own education, walking for an hour to get to the nearest primary school, in Bafata.

Sona's story shows how one girl who benefited from Plan's support used this to not only improve her own life, but to also encourage positive change in her village.

Sona is proud of what she has already accomplished and has plans for a bright future: "When I finish studying, I want to become a nurse. I want to help the sick children I see at the hospital when I walk to school."

Some names have been changed for child protection and privacy reasons.

**"When I finish studying,  
I want to become a nurse."**

## HIGHLIGHTS IN 2010

- Worked with the ministry of health to vaccinate 81,476 under-fives, and provided treatment for malnutrition for 2,074 children and 285 pregnant or breastfeeding women
- Constructed and equipped 23 classrooms, and renovated 20 more; provided school materials for 202 schools, benefiting 29,716 pupils
- Reduced waterborne diseases by drilling seven boreholes, which provide clean water for 7,223 families
- The national census showed that Bafata region (where Plan works) now has the best access to education, health, and water, compared to other regions.



Boys tend to plants in their school garden.