

Understanding the Differences, Acting on the Commonalities

SEARCH FOR
COMMON GROUND
IN GUINEA

Guinea Update



Guinean women line up to vote on election day

For the first time in its history, Guinea held a free and fair democratic election. Despite concerns about the rushed preparations and possible tensions, the elections conducted were overwhelmingly peaceful, with a very large voter turnout. According to figures released by CENI (the National Independent Electoral Commission), 80% of the four million Guinean voters went to the polls on Sunday to vote for a new President. Polling stations opened at 7am local time and stayed packed until 6:30pm or later. Women and youth played a large role in determining the election outcome, as large numbers of each participated. Polling stations also served as forums for gender dynamics to play out; at some polling stations, separate lines emerged for men and women, on the premise that women could return home more quickly, while at others, women insisted on waiting in the same because the voting procedure was the same for both genders. The presidential election of June 27, 2010 marks not only a major milestone in the long and courageous struggle of the people of Guinea for good governance, but even more significantly, a decisive moment in the march toward building a pluralistic democracy that expects accountability from its officials.

While challenges have been raised about the election results and credibility in certain precincts, the candidates are following proper legal procedures by raising their disputes with the Supreme Court. Tensions have risen among their partisans over claims of fraud, with some demonstrations and concerns about violence. Overall, however, the country is excited about what it achieved, and is looking forward to the run-off election between the two finalists, former Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo and long-time opposition leader Alpha Condé.

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JULY 2010

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Media Synergy During Elections

SFCG's Media Synergy is an initiative aimed at building a national media coalition to ensure accurate and professional coverage of elections. The project aims to reduce misinformation, and contribute to the participatory and credible nature of the election process and its outcomes. SFCG has used Media Synergy as a tool for supporting peaceful and credible elections in different countries across Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2002, in neighbouring Sierra Leone, SFCG launched the Independent Radio Network (IRN), a coalition of ten stations that has since grown to a membership of 21 strong. IRN has monitored and reported on all four of the country's elections since that time. Most recently in Burundi, SFCG has spear-headed a Media Synergy of 14 media actors to report on the May 2010 communal and June 2010 presidential elections. The SFCG team in Guinea has drawn on these experiences, and formed a Synergy of 16 local radio stations to cover the historic presidential election.

The Synergy of local, rural, regional and independent media allowed real-time, nation-wide coverage of the Guinean elections. In partnership with the Electoral Commission, USAID, RFI and a network of 16 radio stations, SFCG trained and sent

more than 83

journalists across the country. They also created an information centre to receive and deploy the journalists' information on the electoral process to the population. The reports of these journalists were compiled and produced into a unique radio programme, Guinea FM 2010, which was distributed through a radio station hub and broadcast through all of the 16 participating stations. Guinea FM 2010 reports informed voters on the progress of elections in the capital and in the various provinces of the country, as well as on the voting process, how to acquire a map of voters, and how to work with the authorities of the CENI.

In the lead-up to the elections, SFCG has produced numerous hours of civic education spots, jingles, and drama programming to prepare voters for this monumental event. Media Synergy culminates more than two years of planning and preparation for free and fair elections.



Interview with Boubacar Diallo Yassin, President of the Union des Radio et Télévision Libres de Guinée and Advisor to the President of the Republic of Guinea

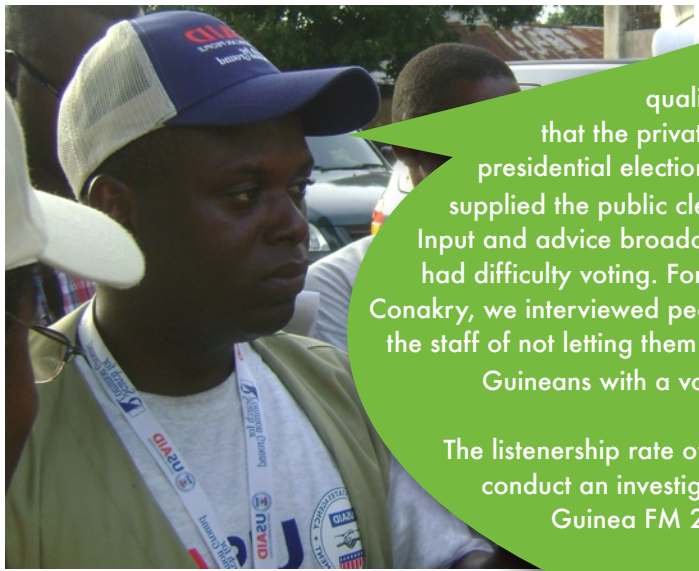
"This is the first time that private radio stations broadcast the election process on the Election Day in the country. I think that it is an asset for local radio stations and listeners. Thanks to the existence of Guinea FM 2010, which serves as a link to local radio, and allowed many to access information is accessible to all."

"For Sierra Leoneans, peace and security in Guinea is peace and security for Sierra Leone. They really appreciate the peaceful voting in Guinea because so many have relatives in Guinea, so must of them were glued to their radio listening to us. For that I say many thanks to SFCG Guinea, for making it possible for Sierra Leoneans."

~ Sierra Leonean Journalist Ibrahim Mansaray.

"With all the problems experienced by Guinea, to now see people scrambling to get out and vote shows how much people want things to change."

~ Ivoirian Journalist Joël Kangha



"Frankly, my team and I are amazed at the quality of work produced by the Guinea FM 2010 project. We found that the private radio and managers were very enthusiastic to cover their country's first presidential election. They felt they were acting on behalf of the nation. Most correspondents supplied the public clear information about the elections in places where they were happening. Input and advice broadcast by Guinea FM 2010 journalists allowed the CENI to help people who had difficulty voting. For example, during our observation tour of the various polling stations in Conakry, we interviewed people who complained about the work of polling station staff. They accused the staff of not letting them vote with their voter cards, despite instructions from CENI that invited all Guineans with a voter card to vote. The situation was finally resolved by CENI itself.

The listenership rate of Guinea FM 2010 reached a record Sunday, June 27, 2010. We did not conduct an investigation, but my team and I think that most Guineans we met listened to the Guinea FM 2010 through local radio stations directly connected to the station hub."

~ Karno Ouattara, SFCG Studio Coordinator in Cote d'Ivoire.

Guinean Elections: Under the Watchful Eyes of Journalists

As Guinea's elections have implications on the sub-region outside of its borders, SFCG invited several journalists from neighbouring countries to come to Guinea and join the Synergy. Invited journalists came from Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Liberia, and included both SFCG studio staff and representatives from partner radio stations. Cote d'Ivoire was represented by Karno About Ouattara, SFCG's Studio Coordinator, and by Kpan Doua Jean from Radio Man, from along the northwest border with Guinea. Participants from Liberia included William Quire from the Association of Liberian Community Radios and Nyan Flomo from Radio Ghergemah. Sierra Leone sent Ibrahima Mansaray from Radio Democracy, Ibrahima Conteh, and Samy Hassner. These journalists were deployed in three key regions of the country, reporting back to their home stations as well as into Guinea FM 2010.

In Cote d'Ivoire, most journalists have already attended training focused on election coverage. However, the knowledge gained by its journalists has never been used because of the consecutive postponements of the elections in Côte d'Ivoire. Observing the election was an opportunity for the Ivorian journalists to see the Media Synergy in action. The Ivorian journalists returned home having learned new journalistic methods, and anxious to apply them in their own context.

In 2007, a radio team from Sierra Leone successfully covered its own presidential election with an organization called New Election Watch (NEW). SFCG invited journalists from Sierra Leone, who sent three journalists, to cover the Guinean election so that they share their expertise and their knowledge with local journalists.

Liberia will soon experience its own election in 2012. The two Liberian journalists who attended the Synergy were based in the N'zerekore region of Guinea, near Liberia, and developments in Guinea prove relevant to their own security in Liberia. The journalists' presence ensures that there is a credible flow of information at the regional and national level to prevent fraud and reinforce the legitimacy of the elections and their results. SFCG has undertaken similar efforts in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and will build on these successful examples.

SFCG in Guinea thanks the following donors for their support:

