



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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07 March 2007

### GIN102432.E

Guinea: Domestic child abuse; state protection available to victims (2005 - February 2007)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information on domestic child abuse in Guinea and state protection available to victims was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In Guinea, the Ministry of Youth as well as the Ministry of Social Affairs are mandated with the defence of women's and children's rights, as is a national committee on the rights of the child, which is comprised of government officials from different ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other actors (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5).

The United States (US) Department of State reports that child abuse is a cause for concern in Guinea, especially sexual assault, and notes that girls aged 11 to 15 account for 55 percent of the victims (ibid.). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) sounds a similar note, reporting that girls and adolescent boys are the principal victims of sexual violence, exploitative practices and abuse (UN 2007).

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) maintains that child marriage increases the likelihood of young girls being "beaten, slapped or threatened" by their husbands (ICRW 2006). In Guinea, the legal age of marriage is 21 years for men (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5) and 17 years for women (ibid.; ICRW 2006). However, the ICRW reports that the percentage of girls who are younger than 18 when married in Guinea is 64.5 percent, which ranks Guinea as the country with the fifth highest rate of child marriage in the world (ibid.); half of all girls in Guinea, according to the study, give birth before they turn 18 (ibid.). The US State Department notes that parents have reportedly arranged marriages for children as young as 11 years old in the Forest Region (8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5) of Southern Guinea (UN 10 Jan. 2005), where traditional religions are most common (US 8 Nov. 2005). The Coordinating Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting Women's and Children's Health (Cellule de Coordination sur les Pratiques Traditionnelles Affectant la Santé des Femmes et des Enfants, CPTAFE) continued its educational campaign to "discourage underage marriage" with the assistance of the government, the media and international NGOs (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). According to the CPTAFE, the campaign had resulted in lower rates of child marriage than in previous years (ibid.).

Information on protection services available to the children victims of domestic abuse could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate; however, UNICEF highlights the government's "continued inability ... to provide basic social services" (UN 2007). In a background factsheet on Guinea, the children's agency notes that one third of Guinean children are stunted due to malnutrition (ibid. n.d.), while the US State Department, referring to reports by UNICEF and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), notes that foster families do not provide adequate food, lodging or clothing to children in their care (8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). As a result, children are forced to engage in street work, including prostitution, in order to survive (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). In addition to foster children, thousands of Guinean children are reportedly orphaned because their parents have died of human immune deficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (UN n.d.), forcing many to work in order to survive (ibid.). UNICEF points out that children who become separated from their parents are vulnerable to "violence, abuse, exploitation or trafficking" and could be recruited by militias (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). 2006. *Too Young to Wed: Education and Action Toward Ending Child Marriage - Advocacy Toolkit*. <[http://www.icrw.org/docs/2006\\_cmtoolkit/cm\\_all.pdf](http://www.icrw.org/docs/2006_cmtoolkit/cm_all.pdf)> [Accessed 15 Feb. 2007]

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#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** The Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) did not provide information to the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sources, including:** Afrol News; AllAfrica; Amnesty International (AI); British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC); Child Rights Information Network (CRIN); European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net); Freedom House; Guinea Development Foundation; *Guineenews*; Guinée Solidarité; Human Rights Watch (HRW); Newfield Foundation; Save the Children; SOS Children's Villages; United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN); UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); World Health Organization (WHO).

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