

SCS Guinea: Citizen Involvement in Health Governance

Overview

The Citizen Involvement in Health Governance (CIHG) project (2017 – 2020, \$12 million) is a USAID-funded initiative to improve citizens' understanding of and participation in Guinea's health system reforms. By expanding meaningful opportunities for Guineans to engage in their country's health reforms and see the impact of their participation, CIHG is contributing to strengthening public trust in Guinea's health sector and improving health governance.

Guinean Context

Improving public health remains a critical challenge in Guinea. The outbreak of the Ebola virus in 2014-2015 underscored Guinea's development challenges, a country that ranks near the bottom of the human development index. Public trust in government institutions was low and health institutions were ill-prepared to respond to a public health crisis of such a magnitude. Stakeholders inside government and outside determined that significant reform was needed, and USAID created CIHG to help.

Major Program Components

Constructive dialogue expanded between elected and appointed officials and citizens through:

- A diversity of fora to bring Guineans together to advance health reform nationally and locally
- Improved communications and messaging on health reform through joint planning among government officials, the press and civil society
- Training for stakeholders at the national and local level so that champions of health reform have the know-how to improve health governance within their sphere of influence
- Technical and financial assistance to journalists, media outlets and community theatre troupes to improve citizen understanding of health reform and health issues

Increased citizen participation in health reform by:

- Civil society organizations (CSOs) conducting research to use evidence to identify further health reform priorities

- CSOs educating and mobilizing communities to dynamize citizen engagement in health governance
- Civil society organizing community leaders to use the Good Governance Barometer, a social accountability methodology, to monitor local health governance and advocate for reforms based on locally identified priorities
- CSO capacity across a range of competencies, including evidenced-based research and advocacy, strategic planning, management, and monitoring and evaluation.

Achievements

- **Guinea's 2019 health budget was increased by 25% and now constitutes 8.2% of the national budget**, following CIHG initiatives.
- Twenty-nine legislators, National Assembly (NA) staff and representatives of the Ministry of Health (MOH) traveled to 47 locations to meet with Guineans from all walks of life to solicit citizen feedback and recommendations for improving health governance. **Key findings from these field visits made their way into the 2019 budget**, including funding for urgent facility repairs, eliminating undisclosed line items and increased funding for decentralized services.
- The NA and MOH applied CIHG budget training to collaborate and identify specific actions to further improve the 2019 budget, and the NA Health Commission now has a multi-year action plan informed by an array of voices.
- **Over 32,000 Guineans have participated in health-reform-focused community theater performances**, learning about key reforms and discussing persisting issues, thanks to 110 CIHG-trained actors from 17 theater groups.
- **Enhanced the reporting skills of more than 160 journalists from 33 radio and television stations**, especially on health governance, leading to the airing of 36 radio programs on health reforms and health governance.

Updated January 2020



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