

GUINEA

AN INTRODUCTION FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

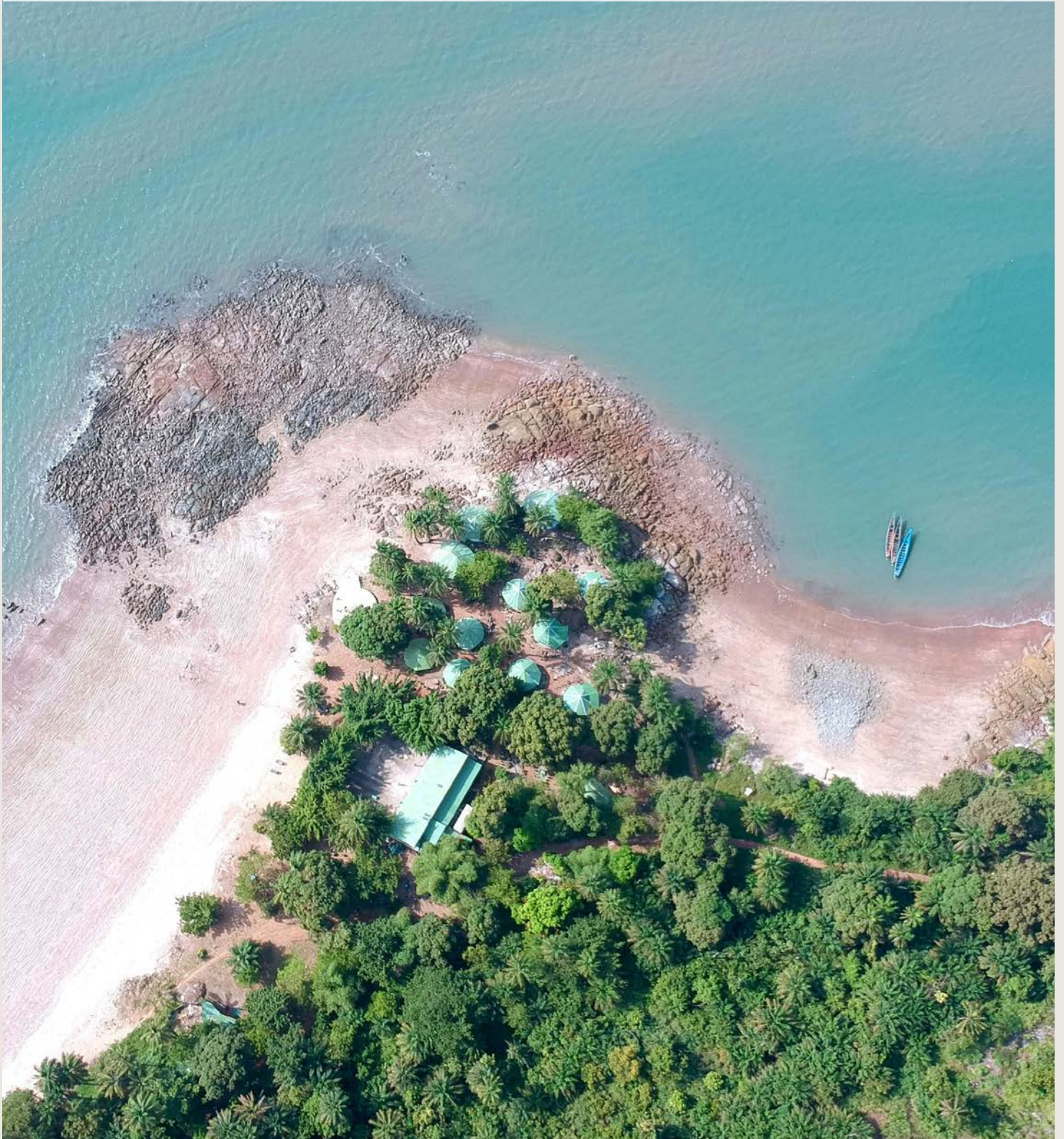


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This backgrounder contains historical, political, and cultural information intended to cultivate a general understanding of newcomers from the Republic of Guinea who have arrived in the U.S. as asylum seekers and who have become eligible for Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) programs and services as Unaccompanied Refugee Minors or asylees.

This backgrounder was designed to aid U.S. initial resettlement providers (including resettlement agencies) and their local affiliates to serve Guinean newcomers. This information does not represent the needs and challenges of all Guinean arrivals. Resettlement staff should adapt their services to the individual needs of their clients.

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BRIEF PROFILE

The Republic of Guinea is a country in West Africa that borders the Atlantic Ocean. Guinea is bordered by Senegal to the north, Guinea-Bissau to the northwest, the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Sierra Leone and Liberia to the south, Côte d'Ivoire to the east, and Mali to the northeast. Guinea has significant hydroelectric resources, as well as reserves of bauxite, iron, gold, and diamonds.

Guinea has had a growing population since the 1950s, and, as of 2025, approximately 17.5 million people live in the country. The Guinean population is young, with more than 43% under age 15 and over 79% under age thirty; the median age is 22.2. Though the recent increase in population has been accompanied by a shift toward urban centers, particularly capital Conakry, about 61.3% of the country lives in rural areas. Women make up 51.8% of the population, while men account for 48.2%.¹

Agriculture is the most prominent industry in Guinea, though the specific crops produced vary between the country's four geographic regions: Lower Guinea, the Fouta Djallon, Upper Guinea, and the Forest Region. Guinea's climate is tropical with a dry season that lasts from November to March and a wet season that lasts April to October. Forest Guinea, the country's southeastern region, located inland, experiences a longer rainy season and is a mountainous, forested area. This region is home to Mount Nimba (1,752 meters), Guinea's highest peak, which lies along the border with Liberia.



OVERVIEW OF CRISIS

Guinea obtained its independence from French colonial rule on October 2, 1958. Ahmed Sekou Touré was the first president of the Republic of Guinea, ruling from 1958 until his death in 1984. After Touré died, an interim government took control before being displaced by Lansana Conté, who led the Military Committee for National Recovery (CMRN). Under pressure from international donors, Conte introduced a multiparty political system in 1993 and organized elections, which confirmed him as president in both 1993 and 1998.

After more than half a century of poor governance under the country's first two regimes, civil society groups organized a peaceful demonstration on September 28, 2009. The protest was violently suppressed by security forces, resulting in many deaths and injuries, as well as the widespread sexual assault of many Guinean women.



POLITICAL HISTORY AND DISPLACEMENT

Since gaining independence in 1958, Guinea has experienced periods of political instability, including military coups, changes in government, and governance crises. These events have had a profound impact on the population, resulting in political violence, human rights violations, loss of life, and widespread displacement. For many Guineans, these experiences have left lasting social, emotional, and psychological effects that continue to shape communities today.

Migration and displacement in Guinea have shifted dramatically in the past several decades. From 1989–2003, Guinea welcomed approximately 650,000 refugees fleeing conflict between neighbors Sierra Leone and Liberia.² In the early 1990s, a guerilla group called the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) formed in Sierra Leone. As the decade progressed, the RUF began conducting raids across the border in Guinea, displacing Guineans and Sierra Leonean refugees alike.³ Though the conflict was resolved before civil war could erupt, Guinea has been subject to considerable political unrest in the decades since. A military coup in 2007 led to years of violence by the government against its own citizens. In 2014 and 2015, an Ebola outbreak led to the deaths of approximately 2,500 Guineans.⁴

In September 2021, Mamady Doumbouya led a military coup and seized control of the government. International organizations including the United Nations, the European Union, and the African Union denounced the coup and the violence perpetuated by Doumbouya's regime against anti-government protestors. Despite increasing political pressure, Doumbouya delayed his promise to hold presidential elections until December 2025. Doumbouya won with 86.7% of the vote, though civil rights groups questioned the legitimacy of the election.⁵

Under the military regime, Guinea's economy suffered, leading to widespread food insecurity, inadequate access to water and sanitation, and diminished education and health care access.⁶ Rates of food insecurity are high in Guinea; approximately 20% of households suffer from food insecurity, and about 30% of children have insufficient weight for their age due to lack of adequate nutrition.^{7,8}

The government has also restricted media and internet access to stop dissent against the ruling party. In 2024, 107 political parties were dissolved, and 67 additional parties were placed under observation.⁹ As of June 2025, UNHCR reported approximately 2,500 refugees and asylum seekers in Guinea.¹⁰ Widespread displacement in West African countries leads other displaced persons to seek refuge in Guinea.¹¹ Approximately 80% of refugees in Guinea come from Sierra Leone. Refugees from Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire may also migrate to Guinea.¹²

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Guinean citizens face significant human rights issues in their home country. Protests have been banned since 2022, and government security has reportedly used excessive force to dispel protestors who gathered despite the ban, including the use of tear gas and live ammunition. At least 59 protestors have been killed, including several children.¹³ Members of political opposition parties may be charged with "political intimidation" and arrested, often by authorities who use excessive force.¹⁴ The military junta has jammed radio stations, arresting journalists on unclear or arbitrary charges, and revoked the licenses of media outlets, which has been widely understood as a method to silence dissent.

Women and girls in Guinea face high rates of domestic or intimate partner violence, and UNHCR reports an estimated 95% of girls and women ages 15–49 have undergone female genital mutilation, even though the procedure has been illegal in Guinea since 2019.¹⁵ Women and girls

who have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), particularly more severe forms, may experience significant physical and psychological complications throughout their lives. Some face additional health challenges when they marry or engage in sexual intercourse for the first time, as they may undergo a painful procedure to reopen the vaginal opening (deinfibulation). This procedure is often performed in settings with limited access to safe medical care, increasing the risk of complications, infection, and long-term physical and emotional distress.¹⁶

Approximately 46% of girls are married before age 18, 17% before age 15.¹⁷ In some communities, girls who undergo FGM may also be at increased risk of early marriage, which can contribute to school dropout and early pregnancy. In these communities, marriage arrangements may include the payment of a bride price or dowry, such as money, livestock, or agricultural goods, to the bride's family.¹⁸ However, these practices vary across ethnic groups, regions, and individual families and should not be viewed as representative of all Guineans.

Gay and lesbian relationships are illegal in Guinea, and people in gay or lesbian relationships are targets of violence or threats of violence.¹⁹ Some individuals who attempt to flee the country due to persecution based on their relationships may face significant risks during their journey, including violence, exploitation, and other human rights abuses. Many migrants traveling through neighboring countries or transit routes toward destinations such as Morocco or Tunisia may encounter additional challenges, as gay and lesbian individuals continue to face stigma, discrimination, and, in some places, legal and social barriers across parts of Africa.

Prisons in Guinea are severely overcrowded and face poor sanitation. A significant portion of those in prison are pre-trial detainees. Though arbitrary arrest and detention is illegal in Guinea, the government reportedly flouts this prohibition, and the process to challenge an arrest is slow and prohibitively expensive in legal costs. Detainees may also fear retribution, as violence between prisoners and violence committed by wardens is common. Guards have been reported to abuse detainees, including children, and women detainees are coerced into sex for better treatment. Medical attention is scarce in Guinean prisons, and malnutrition and disease widely affect detainees.²⁰

Traffickers exploit Guinean adults and children, subjecting them to forced labor, including in commercial sex. The U.S. Department of State reports that the Government of Guinea is undertaking efforts to curtail trafficking in persons, but further found that the government did not take significant steps to identify or punish government workers, including security forces, who may have committed human rights violations.^{21, 22}

GUINEAN CULTURE

LANGUAGES AND ETHNICITIES

Guinea contains four major geographic regions: Lower Guinea, near the coast; the Fouta Djallon highlands in the north; Upper Guinea, which contains the Niger Plains approaching the Sahara Desert; and the Forest Region, or Guinea Highlands, in the southeast. Though the official language of Guinea is French, different languages are prominent in the different regions. Susu is most prominently spoken in Lower Guinea, and the majority language in the Fouta Djallon region is Pulaar. Malinke is the most common language in Upper Guinea; Kpelle, Loma, and Kisi are spoken in the Forest Region. These languages are most prominently represented in Guinea, but approximately thirty languages are used across the country.

There are numerous ethnic groups in Guinea. Per a 2012 survey, the Fulani make up about one third of the country's population, while the Malinke make up another third. Approximately twenty percent of the country is from the Susu ethnic group.²³



RELIGIONS

Nearly 90% of Guineans identify as Muslim, predominantly Sunni. Most of the remaining population identifies as Christian (mostly Roman Catholic) or follows local traditional religious practices. A very small minority follows other religions or does not identify with a religion.²⁴



FAMILY DYNAMICS

Family structures in Guinea are typically patriarchal; the eldest man is generally considered the head of the household, and men's role involves working outside the home to provide for their family. Women more frequently work inside the home, including in child-rearing, cooking, and cleaning. For families who live on farms, women are often involved in agricultural labor. Women join their husbands' families upon their marriages. Guinean arrivals may place high importance on duty to their extended families, though the specific values, customs, and attitudes toward extended family systems will vary based on their ethnic group's culture and traditions.



HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

Guinea celebrates a combination of national, religious, and commemorative holidays. Secular holidays include: New Year's Day, Second Republic Day (April 3), Labour Day (May 1), Africa Day (May 25), and Independence Day (October 2). Independence Day, which celebrates Guinea's 1958 independence from France, is celebrated nationwide, with official ceremonies, cultural events, and community activities.



There are four Muslim holidays on Guinea's national calendar. The dates of Islamic holidays vary each year as they are based on the lunar calendar. Laylat al-Qadr is observed during the last ten days of Ramadan. Korité (Eid al-Fitr) marks the end of Ramadan while Tabaski (Eid al-Adha) commemorates the willingness of the Prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice his son. Mawlid celebrates the Prophet Muhammad's birthday.

Tabaski and Korité are among the most significant celebrations. Families gather for prayer, share meals, visit relatives, and often travel to be with extended family. The prevalence of Islam in Guinea means that many Guineans will also observe Ramadan and other religious celebrations. During Ramadan, many Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. Service providers should be aware that clients may adjust their schedules, appointments, and eating habits during this period.

The majority of Guineans are Muslim, but the Guinean calendar also recognizes Easter Monday, Assumption Day (August 15) and Christmas Day (December 25) from the Christian tradition. Religious observances are an important part of daily life for many Guineans. When scheduling appointments or group activities, providers should be mindful of major religious holidays and the month of Ramadan, as clients may be fasting, attending prayers, traveling to visit family, or unavailable during these times.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESETTLEMENT SERVICES

New arrivals from Guinea will likely have faced violence or the threat of violence in their home country. Resettlement providers should use principles of trauma-informed supervision to avoid re-traumatizing clients. For more information, see Switchboard's guide [Trauma Informed Care: A Primer for Refugee Service Providers](#). The complexity of current legal considerations for asylum seekers from Guinea mean that service providers should set reasonable expectations surrounding the asylum process, including the understanding that legal timelines are presently unclear.



IMMIGRATION LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Note: Information in this backgrounder is accurate as of August 2026 but is subject to change.

Newcomers from Guinea will often be asylum seekers who fear persecution if they return to Guinea. Some may be journalists or political dissidents who fear incarceration for criticizing President Doumbouya's government, while others may have left Guinea due to their relationships, as gay and lesbian relationships are illegal in Guinea.²⁵ Other asylum seekers may include those who are opposed to female genital mutilation; survivors of domestic violence or intimate partner violence; and survivors of human trafficking or those who are at risk of being trafficked.²⁶ Approved asylees are eligible for Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) benefits and may, after one year in the U.S., apply for lawful permanent residency. Asylum seekers whose claims are denied may face removal back to Guinea or to a third country.

Prior to January 2025, some Guinean newcomers were admitted to the United States as refugees through the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). Under a current USCIS policy, all refugees, including Guinean refugees, who were admitted to the U.S. between January 20, 2021 and February 20, 2025, and who apply for adjustment of status (green cards) are subject to interview and possible review of their underlying refugee claim. Guineans who have questions about their immigration status or options should be referred to a qualified immigration attorney or DOJ-accredited representative for assistance.²⁷

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Like other newcomer populations, Guinean new arrivals need support as they adjust to U.S. cultural norms. Some adjustments are easy to support while others may take time, patience, and repetition. Useful client-facing resources are available on the [Settle In website](#). Provider-facing resources can be found on [SwitchboardTA.org](#).



TIPS

- **Discuss the importance of timeliness.** Focus on U.S. norms about arriving to appointments and work on time. Make connections between developing time management skills and the role this plays in building respect and trust with others.
- **Facilitate discussions about changes in family dynamics** and how these changes may impact children. Discuss ways to navigate family conflict that may arise while adjusting to U.S. culture. For example, Congolese children often learn English more quickly than their parents, which can cause a power shift from the parents to the children.
- **Involve cultural brokers** as case managers whenever possible. Many new arrivals from Guinea have limited formal education and may face significant language and literacy concerns when accessing services.
- **Recognize that many Guineans have limited English proficiency.** Because Guinea is a French-speaking country, most Guinean clients communicate primarily in French, while others may speak local languages such as Fulani (Pular), Malinké, or Susu. Having culturally and linguistically appropriate staff helps build trust, improves communication, and aids clients to better understand and navigate available services.
- **Review the cultural adjustment process** and discuss healthy ways to cope with possible challenges that may arise, including changes in family roles, possible substance use, and concerns related to mental health.

HOUSING

In Guinea, demand for housing far outstrips supply due to the rapid population growth of the past several decades combined with the economic challenges that have limited growth in the housing sector. Demand has led to an informal housing market, which may lead young people in particular to live in crowded, inadequate homes.²⁸ Urban homes are commonly large, concrete multi-dwelling buildings, while rural homes see more frequent informal structures made from mud, concrete, or metal, depending on access and a family's finances.²⁹



For these reasons, multiple generations of a family may live together in Guinea, and new arrivals may not initially understand that U.S. housing laws prohibit, for example, many people living in a one- or two-bedroom apartment. Rural homes in Guinea may be built on informal agreements, in which inhabitants build their homes on lands they do not own, so formal lease agreements may be unfamiliar to some Guineans. Depending on their region of origin in Guinea, newcomers may have variable experience with household amenities that are standard in the United States. Direct Guinean newcomers to resources related to housing on [Settle In](#). To account for these differences, resettlement staff should:

TIPS

- **Discuss how clients cared for their homes previously.** Identify which habits they may need to change to keep their new home clean, and how new appliances or household items can assist them in doing certain daily tasks.
- **Use repetitive demonstrations** to assist Guinean clients with appliances and other household amenities that are new to them. At the end of such demonstrations, provide visual aids for clients to reference. Using volunteers or interns to conduct in-home demonstrations can be an effective strategy.
- **Review household maintenance.** Clearly outline which upkeep and repair responsibilities belong to the occupant and which fall to the landlord. Review tasks related to home cleanliness.
- **Discuss housing regulations,** specifically occupancy laws, tenant rights and responsibilities, and leases as legal agreements.

BUILDING TRUST

Due to both local and federal government corruption in Guinea, along with violence by state-sponsored security forces, Guinean clients may distrust government-funded organizations like initial resettlement providers. Resettlement staff, volunteers and interns, and community partners should take time to build trust and rapport with Guinean clients. This process may take time. To encourage trust, resettlement staff should:

TIPS

- **Build partnerships** with local Guineans or, as appropriate, religious communities. Former clients can share their resettlement journey and community leaders can reinforce key CO messages about resettlement in the U.S.
- **Apply a trauma-informed** lens when addressing questions and challenges. For instance, if a client refuses to participate in a service, rather than becoming frustrated or forcing the issue, consider if the choice is a product of trauma. If appropriate, ask what other resettlement staff or other resources might be available to assist the client or address the challenge.
- **Refer clients to resources or services** in a timely manner and conduct follow-up with the client to confirm they were able to access them.
- **Clearly explain how policies and benefits are affected** if a client doesn't fulfill a program's requirements. Emphasize that services are not provided directly by the agency, but instead by local and federal government. Keep clients informed of what they need to do in order to continue benefits, and, if benefits discontinue, explain why. This can diminish tension between clients, service providers, and case managers.



EMPLOYMENT

Guinea's employment sector is overwhelmingly accounted for by the informal economy, which leaves workers' jobs highly unstable; income may vary widely from month to month, and most workers lack formal contracts or legal labor protections. As Guinea has a young population, each year more young people enter the workforce, only to find that the labor market is not increasing at the same rate.



As a result, many Guinean newcomers may rely more on informal skills and work history than formal experiences. Others may have a professional background, including in journalism or politics; these experiences and the resultant persecution they may have faced in Guinea if they opposed the current government may be their primary reason for seeking asylum. Despite this varying experience in formal workplaces, Guinean clients have significant strengths, such as entrepreneurial resourcefulness and a strong work ethic, that they bring to their employment search in the United States. To help Guinean newcomers achieve self-sufficiency, resettlement staff should:

TIPS

- **Set clear expectations and timelines.** Identify the types of entry-level jobs that are available, *work to mitigate child care barriers*, and emphasize the need for all employable adults to work to achieve self-sufficiency. Leverage long-term goals, such as starting a business or returning to school, when discussing early employment and building language proficiency.
- **Use a strengths-based approach.** Discuss clients' transferrable skills that will help them find a job in the U.S. For example, experiences in agricultural work translate to management of crops and food preparation.
- **Facilitate an open and honest dialogue** on traditional *gender roles* in the context of employment. Emphasize the need for all employable adults to work to achieve self-sufficiency. Create and refer to a resettlement plan and household budget to assist refugees in understanding the importance of full employment.
- Many Guinean women and girls are interested in careers in cosmetology, particularly hairdressing, as well as healthcare professions such as nursing. These career paths are often viewed as accessible and offer opportunities for financial stability and entrepreneurship. However, employment interests vary by individual, and service providers should **explore each client's unique skills, goals, and aspirations**.
- As relevant, **emphasize the need for continuing English Language Learning** even after obtaining employment in order to gain the skills needed for job upgrades and overall integration.

EDUCATION

Though education in Guinea is compulsory from ages 7 to 13, as of 2024 only slightly more than half of Guinean children ages 5 to 14 attend school.³⁰ Education access varies by region, as rural children face higher obstacles, including difficulty accessing required legal documents. Families may prioritize boys' education over girls', and school fees and other costs may prevent children from impoverished families from attending school.³¹ UNESCO estimates that 70% of boys and 56% of girls complete primary school, but only 40% of boys and 30% of girls complete secondary school.³² Recent economic issues in Guinea and resulting widespread job insecurity may lead some Guineans to question the value of higher education against that of working full time.³³



Service providers should encourage Guinean youth to enroll in school as appropriate for their age. Older arrivals whose education was interrupted may benefit from General Education Development (GED) or other adult education classes beyond English Language Learning courses. Encourage clients to consider how their long-term earning potential will increase with their completion of formal education.

To assist newcomers in navigating the U.S. education system, resettlement staff can share [Settle In's](#) resources and should:

TIPS

- **Use picture-based materials** for key messages. This strategy increases client understanding and information retention.
- **Discuss the fundamental differences between school systems** in Guinea and the United States. Talk about educational rights and responsibilities, expectations of parental involvement, daily attendance requirements, role of digital literacy and device access, and opportunities/activities available through the local school system.
- When possible and relevant, **introduce Guinean clients to other community-based education programs** beyond those designed to teach English. Discuss literacy and digital literacy programs or programs that assist with obtaining General Educational Development (GED) diplomas for older youth.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

While French is the language of instruction in Guinea's high schools and universities, and some Guinean clients will be able to communicate in French, very few Guineans consider French to be their first or even second language. Fula and Malinké are each spoken by approximately 30% of Guineans, though their prominence varies widely by region.

Whenever possible, find interpreters who speak a Guinean client's primary language. When an interpreter is not available in the client's primary language, resettlement staff should work with interpreters in advance for topics that will be discussed with individuals communicating in their second or third language. If a professional interpreter is unavailable, reach out to community partners for contacts. Avoid using family members, especially children who may learn English more quickly than their parents, as interpreters, and inform clients of their rights pertaining to language interpretation. Inform clients how to access an interpreter and stress the importance of prioritizing their own English language learning. Service providers can gain best practices for working with interpreters by taking Switchboard's [*Introduction to Working with Interpreters*](#) self-paced eLearning Course.

U.S. LAWS

Many Guinean new arrivals will have had negative experiences with the widespread corruption of the government in their home country. They may have significant distrust in police forces, public services, and judicial systems. Therefore, when discussing U.S. laws, resettlement staff should:



TIPS

- **Discuss housing regulations**, specifically occupancy laws, tenant rights and responsibilities, and leases as legal agreements. Some clients may not understand why, for example, large families cannot reside in one- or two-bedroom dwellings due to occupancy laws.
- **Use community partnerships** and guests, such as police officers, firefighters, and landlords to emphasize information and build community trust. These guests should discuss topics such as U.S. laws specific to battery and assault, legal ages for marriage, and overall child protection. Highlight the consequences of breaking U.S. laws, particularly those regarding domestic or intimate partner violence. To help Guineans understand the role of law enforcement in the U.S., share resources such as Settle In's [*How to Interact with Police in the United States*](#).
- Particularly in areas with limited public transportation, **advise clients on driving laws**. Emphasize that clients who purchase cars will need to pay for car insurance and follow road laws to avoid breaking the law, which can interfere with obtaining permanent resident status or moving through the citizenship process. Remind clients that failure to follow all traffic laws may also lead to accidents or license suspension.

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

The health care system in Guinea is under-resourced, even in urban centers like Conakry. In rural areas, hospitals are frequently difficult to access, and Guinean newcomers may be most familiar with using community health centers for their health care needs, as opposed to larger hospitals. The 2014 Ebola epidemic posed severe challenges for the Guinean health care system, and the country still faces major public health concerns due to HIV-AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.³⁴ Some newcomers, especially those who did not live close to medical facilities, may need to be encouraged to seek preventative care before they feel sick.

Asylum seekers are not required to undergo the same medical screenings as refugees, though approved asylees will be required to have a medical examination as part of their application for permanent residency or change of status.³⁵ Service providers should encourage Guinean newcomers to undergo all appropriate medical screenings, particularly as they may not have comprehensive medical care in Guinea or in any countries in which they resided prior to arriving in the United States. Whenever possible, provide cultural orientation on what newcomers can expect from the U.S. health care system, how they can access requisite care, and the importance of routine and preventative medicine.



As most Guinean arrivals are asylum seekers, they are likely to have faced considerable trauma in their home country, including political violence, incarceration, and sexual or domestic violence. Clients may have experienced instances of sexual violence. The psychological impact of witnessing or experiencing extreme violence can lead to effects including insomnia, alcohol or drug abuse, high stress, anxiety, anger, and depression.

Specialized mental health care is extremely limited in Guinea, and Guinean newcomers may possess stigma surrounding mental health care. They may believe that only those who are “crazy” need mental health services such as therapy, and may consider it shameful to access these services. Faith leaders can be powerful allies in promoting emotional well-being.

Reproductive health and rights are important topics to address, as they may be considered taboo in many Guinean families, particularly for newly arrived youth. Due to limited information or cultural norms, some parents may feel uncomfortable discussing these topics with their children. Providing culturally sensitive education and creating safe, respectful spaces for these conversations can help youth access accurate information and make informed decisions about their health and well-being. Encourage Guineans to review health related resources offered by [*Settle In*](#).

TIPS

- **Support Guinean clients in understanding the complex U.S. health care system.** Health care navigators or volunteers can help accompany Guinean newcomers to appointments or to the pharmacy and assist in understanding health insurance and medical bills.
- **Demystify and destigmatize mental health services** when discussing health and cultural adjustment. For example, ask interpreters to replace the term “mental health” with “emotional health” or “services to address emotional well-being.” Replacing “therapy” with “counseling” may also be helpful. Consider partnering with a local mental health service provider to train resettlement staff in destigmatizing mental health services and linking Guinean clients to needed services.
- **Utilize community partnerships to address health concerns.** Build strong relationships with and train leaders of the Guinean community on the importance of accessing mental health services.
- **Discuss health concerns,** including those related to mental health, with Guinean clients. Unfamiliarity with the signs of mental health distress can lead Guinean clients to inaccurately complete mental health screenings.

HYGIENE

Though the Government of Guinea has engaged in efforts to increase access to clean water to its citizens, particularly since the 2014–2016 Ebola crisis, access to clean drinking water remains a serious concern across Guinea. Both urban and rural areas may have contamination in main local water sources, though this issue is more severe for those living in rural regions.³⁶

Because of the high incidence of contamination in drinking water in Guinea, many Guinean arrivals may be unfamiliar with having clean, reliable, running water inside their homes. Those who lived in urban centers are more likely to have had running water, though supply was likely variable. Those who lived in rural areas are more likely to have relied on wells, rivers, or shared facilities. Due to these differences, some clients will have familiarity with home cleaning and hygiene products, and bathroom fixtures, while others will need demonstrations and guidance on how to use and maintain them.

Resettlement staff should be prepared to engage with clients directly and respectfully around expectations of hygiene practices in the U.S., including personal hygiene and household cleaning and maintenance. Share Settle In's resource on *Hygiene in the United States*.

TIPS

- **Make connections between proper hygiene practices and workplace and social norms.** For clients who are parents of young children, highlight how these expectations apply to children.
- **Conduct in-home demonstrations** of various bathroom fixtures as lack of running water in some locations may make sinks, toilets, showers, and bathtubs unfamiliar.
- **Discuss using the actual cleaning and/or hygiene products.** Offer take-home visual materials to assist clients in identifying the appropriate use of products and amenities. Provide opportunities for clients to discuss the topic one-on-one.



BUDGETING AND PERSONAL FINANCE

The primary bank in Guinea is the Central Bank of the Republic of Guinea, or BCRG, which oversees the banking sector and operates the government's treasury. Banks in Guinea are concentrated in the capital, Conakry, and credit is extremely expensive compared to other West African and Sub-Saharan countries. Cash is the most common method of payment in Guinea, though there has been a recent increase in mobile money transactions.

Depending on their region of origin, Guineans may be more or less comfortable with formal banking systems, microfinance, or relying on cash to make all payments. Clients may need cultural orientation on the reliability of U.S. banks, and the fact that some U.S.-based institutions will require payment through a bank, rather than cash. Service providers can reference Switchboard's [*Resource Collection: Financial Empowerment for Refugees and Newcomers*](#).



TIPS

- **Work with clients to identify long-term financial goals** and lay out realistic timeframes to achieve them.
- **Consider a field trip to a bank** and involve a community guest speaker to explain the U.S. banking system. This will assist Guinean clients in understanding and navigating a new, unfamiliar financial system.
- Be mindful that budgeting tools can be overwhelming, leading clients to disengage. To increase understanding of the U.S. banking system and budgeting, **use images and pictures that help mitigate challenges** clients may face due to low literacy or limited English proficiency.
- **Encourage clients to prioritize their own health, well-being, and stability** as they adjust to life in the United States. Some Guinean communities may emphasize a strong responsibility to financially support extended family members in their country of origin, often at the expense of their own basic needs. Providing culturally sensitive financial wellness education can help clients balance these family obligations while ensuring they are able to meet their own essential needs and build long-term stability.

GROCERY LIST

Grains

- Grains:
- Cassava flour
- Couscous
- Maize
- Rice

Produce

- Carrot
- Cassava leaves
- Eggplant
- Garlic
- Mango
- Okra
- Onions
- Plantain
- Sweet potatoes
- Taro
- Tomato
- Yams

Meat

- Beef
- Chicken
- Fish (fresh, dried, or smoked)
- Shrimp

Other/Kitchen Staples

- Chili
- Palm oil
- Tomato paste

Beverages

- Ginger drink
- Bissap tea (dried hibiscus flower tea)
- Coffee



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