



# Guinea

## Guinea: Introduction

Blessing Chipanda

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Chart 1: Political map of Guinea

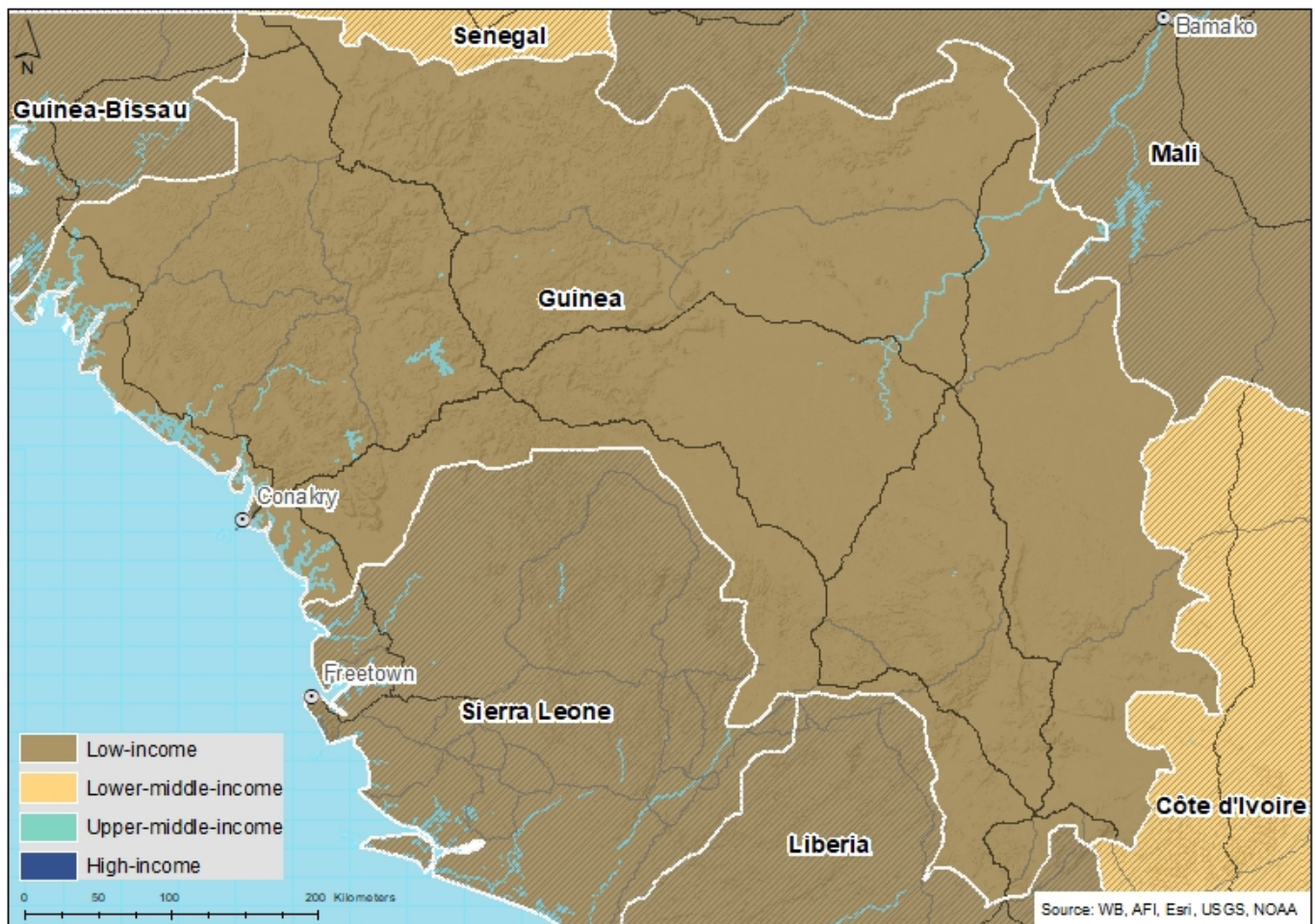


Chart 1 is a political map of Guinea.

Previously low-income, in 2023, the World Bank classified Guinea as one of Africa's 23 lower-middle-income countries. It is located in West Africa, and it is not to be confused with the other Guinea nations of Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Papua New Guinea. Guinea is bordered by six different countries, namely Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Liberia, as well as the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The country is divided into eight administrative regions which are subdivided into 33 prefectures.

Guinea was the first French colony in Africa to gain independence. It officially achieved independence in October 1958 following a referendum on the Constitution of the Fifth Republic in France held in September 1958, with Sekou Toure becoming its first African president. The country became the 82nd member of the United Nations (UN) in December 1958 and is one of the founding members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in June 1975.

President Sekou Toure was the president of Guinea until his death in March 1984, when Louis Lansana Beavogui (Prime Minister at the time) became the interim president. President Beuvogui was succeeded by Colonel Lansana Conte, who formed the Military Committee for National Recovery in 1984. The MCNR banned political parties and dissolved the parliament. Nearly six years after the coup, a new constitution was approved in a referendum in December 1990.

In December 1993, Lansana Conte was elected as the 3rd president of Guinea, in contested elections. Conte moved Guinea toward a market-based economy, opening the country to foreign investment, particularly in mining. However, his government was characterised by widespread corruption, nepotism and a lack of infrastructure development.

Lansana Conte was the president of Guinea until his death in December 2008 when Captain Moise Dadis Camara assumed leadership and announced the suspension of the constitution. The leadership change in 2008 prompted international responses, including from the AU and EU. The AU subsequently imposed diplomatic sanctions (suspension of membership) and the EU suspended economic assistance. In 2009, the AU further imposed travel restrictions and an assets freeze, targeting the military junta. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) also suspended Guinea's membership, while the United States (US) government imposed economic sanctions against the military junta.

In November 2010, Alpha Conde was elected president of Guinea with 53% of the vote in the second round of presidential elections following which the AU and ECOWAS lifted diplomatic and economic sanctions against the Guinean government.

In 2021, Guinea underwent a leadership transition under the National Committee of Reconciliation and Development (CNRD), leading to its suspension from ECOWAS and the AU.

The coup was preceded by a series of demonstrations against constitutional amendments that enabled Conde to contest the elections for a third term and subsequently win amidst allegations of fraud. Colonel Mamady Doumbouya was sworn in as the President of the Transition in October 2021.

The transition to civilian governance, initially targeted for December 2024, has faced delays, raising concerns domestically and internationally.

Guinea is known for its diverse landscape including coastal plains, mountains and savannas. Its geography is divided into four regions: Maritime Guinea on the low-lying Atlantic coast, the Fouta Djallon or Middle Guinea highlands, the Upper Guinea savanna region in the northeast, and the Guinée forestière region of tropical forests. The climate is tropical, with a dry harmattan season in the winter and a rainy season in the summer.

Conakry is Guinea's capital and its largest city, with a population of over two million people. Nzérékoré, located in the Guinée forestière region in Southern Guinea, is the second-largest city.

Guinea's total population was 14.4 million people in 2023. Approximately 84% of the country's population are Muslim, 11% are Christian, and 5% follow indigenous religions or other belief systems.

Endowed with abundant natural resources, Guinea has the potential to be an economic leader in the extractives sector. The country has the largest reserves of bauxite (aluminium ore) and the largest untapped deposits of highgrade of iron ore in the world. Guinea also has diamonds, gold, uranium, alumina and some oil deposits. The Simandou iron ore mine is located in the Simandou mountain range of southern Guinea's Nzérékoré Region. It is known for its high-grade iron ore deposits and has been the subject of numerous mining disputes given its potential of becoming a significant source of iron ore globally.

The country's hilly and mountain landscape provides excellent conditions for hydroelectric dam construction. Guinea also experiences heavy rainfall, particularly in its tropical and forested regions, which ensures water supply to its rivers and dams for most of the year. Hydroelectric power offers a clean and renewable energy source, which aligns with global efforts to reduce carbon emissions and combat climate change.

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## About the authors

**Dr Blessing Chipanda** joined the African Futures and Innovation (AFI) programme in January 2023. Before joining the ISS he worked as an assistant lecturer/research assistant at the University of Pretoria, Department of Economics. He is particularly interested in tasks within the wider realm of international trade, development economics, public policy, monetary policy, and econometric modelling. Equally interested in economic and socio-economic activities that impact social welfare. Blessing has a PhD in economics from the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

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