

URBOND CHILD EDUCATION



Volunteers Trip

Highlights & Impact 2025



ABOUT US

URBOND is a charity committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion by building strong, cohesive communities in Portsmouth.

Through our Youth Development strand of work in Portsmouth we strive to furnish young individuals with opportunities for growth, wellness and success, thereby securing a brighter future for them.

In the Republic of Guinea, our Child Education initiative continues to support children from underprivileged communities by providing vital learning resources, community led educational workshops and long-term development programmes.



Many children in the Republic of Guinea dream of going to school, but countless obstacles stand in their way. Despite their desire to learn, the reality is that access to education remains limited for far too many. Some of the most significant challenges we have identified and are working to address include:

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

Koutaya is a village in Dubreka, Republic of Guinea. With a population of around 3,000 people in Koutaya and surrounding villages, they had no available schools situated locally. To attend the nearest schools, children must walk distances of 5km-10km each day, with many of those also having to make a dangerous water crossing to be educated. Due to these unnecessary journeys to get to school, most children do not go to school and they are used for child labour and some have been moving out of the village as young as seven to find a better life.

MENSTRUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Girls in Guinea will miss school during their menstruation cycle or drop out once they start menstruating. For the past five years we have identified the lack of sanitary kits, appropriate toilet facilities, and lack of knowledge to be the key factors to be addressed for increasing school attendance and reducing childhood pregnancy.

Guinea is one of the poorest countries in the world and is listed among the top ten countries with the lowest literacy rates, with girls being the most affected by this educational challenge (Coleman, 2017). According to UNICEF reports, the adjusted net attendance rate for girls declines from 66% in primary school to 29% in lower secondary school and drops further to just 11% in upper secondary school (UNICEF, 2021).

DENTAL HYGIENE EDUCATION

Many regions in the Republic of Guinea have very few trained dentists, often 1 dentist per tens of thousands of people. Rural areas may have no dental clinics at all, forcing families to travel long distances. Most available providers are in urban areas, leaving rural children underserved. Even basic dental care is unaffordable for many families. With a high percentage of the population living in poverty, dental care is often seen as a luxury, not a necessity.

The majority of the population are not taught about:

- The importance of brushing teeth daily
- Sugar's impact on cavities
- The need for preventative check-ups, not only emergency care

Misconceptions and cultural beliefs sometimes lead to delayed treatment. Another issue people face in Guinea is limited access to hygiene supplies. Toothbrushes and toothpaste are too expensive or unavailable in remote areas. Some families rely on traditional tools (e.g., chewing sticks), which may not provide adequate hygiene.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)/CUT (C)? AWARENESS

FGM/C; is all the procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the genital organs for non medical reasons.

Types of FGM

Type 1: Clitoridectomy; This is where all or part of the clitoris is removed

Type 2: Excision; This is where all or part of the clitoris is removed and part or all of the labia minora are removed.

Type 3: Infibulations; This is where all or part of the clitoris is removed , part or all of the labia minora are removed and the labia majora are brought together to cover the urethra and vaginal opening.

Type 4: Miscellaneous/Others; Other practices which may involve pricking, elongating and or scraping of the genital organs.

The Republic of Guinea has the second-highest prevalence of FGM in the world, with an estimated 97% of women and girls having undergone the practice.

The ethnic group with the highest prevalence among women aged 15–49 is the Soussou (97.9%). The Soussou predominantly reside in the Dubréka area, where URBOND Child Education is based.

SPORTS COACHING DEVELOPMENT

Basketball has strong potential in Guinea, youth interest is high and athletic talent is abundant but the sport faces major structural challenges. These challenges slow down the development of coaches and athletes.

Most courts are outdoor, uneven, or damaged by weather. There is only one indoor court which is shared with other sporting activities like judo, volleyball, boxing and handball.

Lack of lighting for outdoor courts means no evening practice. Many coaches rely on personal experience instead of formal education. There is no structured certification, people are left to figure it out on their own.

Kids cannot afford shoes, balls, or transportation to training. Coaches often try to fund programmes from their own pockets which makes them unsustainable.

CHILD EDUCATION AWARENESS

Child education awareness initiatives are vital in Guinea because they address long-standing social, economic, and infrastructural challenges that affect children's access to quality schooling.

Many children in Guinea, especially in rural areas, do not attend school consistently due to poverty, early marriage, child labour or cultural norms.

Child education awareness events in Guinea are essential because they help mobilise communities, promote access to education, protect children's rights, and strengthen the foundation for long-term development.

Throughout the trip, our volunteers demonstrated compassion, dedication and resilience, bringing hope and meaningful change to children and families across the region.

2025 VOLUNTEERS TRIP – RECAP

From 29th October to 9th November 2025, nine volunteers from Portsmouth, Southampton and Wales travelled to the Republic of Guinea to support a series of impactful campaigns centred on education, community empowerment and health awareness. The campaigns included:

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN GUINEA

The trip began with a long journey from the UK to Conakry, where the team arrived with 48 bags of supplies filled with educational materials, hygiene kits and sports equipment. The drive to Dubreka was an adventure, made memorable by heavy rain, challenging road conditions and a shared sense of excitement. After settling in late at night, the volunteers rested and prepared for the busy days ahead.

DAY 2 – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION SUPPORT

The volunteers began their day at the URBOND Training Centre, where they met students and educators committed to improving children's futures. They also met with the Local Authority and Education Board to discuss ways to strengthen access to education. Later in the day, the team visited the URBOND Sewing Centre, where menstrual health kits are produced for young girls so they stay in education. The day concluded with a dental hygiene session that benefited over 270 children, each receiving a toothbrush and toothpaste and learning positive oral care habits.

DAY 3 – INTERNATIONAL GIRLS DAY

To mark International Girls Day, URBOND joined local communities to celebrate and promote girls' right to education. The event drew attendees from across the region and encouraged girls to pursue their dreams through learning. Alongside the celebration, volunteers delivered dental hygiene education to children and hosted a basketball event aimed at raising awareness about the importance of child education. The day brought communities together in a powerful message of unity and empowerment.

DAY 4 – SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT AND FGM AWARENESS

The focus shifted to Koutaya, where URBOND is building a new school intended to serve between 500 and 600 children. While part of the team assisted with construction efforts, others taught dental hygiene lessons to local children. An FGM awareness session was also held, initiating essential conversations around safety, health and empowerment within the community. The day was filled with meaningful interaction, learning and enthusiasm from the people of Koutaya.

DAY 5 – CULTURAL DISCOVERY AND SPORTS

The volunteers travelled to Conakry, where they spent the day visiting three nearby islands and learning about the cultural and historical ties between Guinea and countries such as the United Kingdom, France and Portugal. After walking more than 15 kilometres, the team enjoyed lunch and a swim on Kassa Island before returning for a basketball game in Conakry. The day blended cultural immersion with community engagement.

DAY 6 – LARGE SCALE WORKSHOPS AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

This was one of the most impactful days of the trip. Volunteers led a menstrual health workshop for 98 girls and distributed more than 400 sanitary kits. They also visited several schools, reaching over 1,000 children with dental hygiene education and distributing more than 1,000 toothbrushes and toothpastes. A workshop on the long-term effects of FGM was also well received by local residents. Meanwhile, one of our volunteers worked with the Guinean Basketball Federation to provide coaching development. The day concluded with a visit from the DPE of Dubreka, who toured the new school and praised it as a life-changing addition to the region. The team then gathered to celebrate volunteer Patrycja's birthday.

DAY 7 – URBOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE AT THE BRITISH EMBASSY

An early start took the team to Conakry for the URBOND Annual Conference, hosted by the British Embassy. Despite a difficult three-hour journey through traffic, the team received a warm welcome from British Ambassador Daniel Shepherd, First Councillor Mark Kelly and embassy staff. Representatives from the Guinean government, local charities and beneficiaries attended the conference, which highlighted URBOND's achievements and future plans. After the event, the volunteers returned to Dubreka for a meeting with the local authorities to discuss the school inauguration and the upcoming semi-marathon.

DAY 8 – PREPARING THE NEW SCHOOL

The entire day was spent preparing the newly constructed school in Koutaya for its grand opening. Volunteers worked alongside local residents from morning until nearly 9pm, cleaning classrooms, organising materials and assembling learning spaces. The atmosphere was uplifting, filled with shared purpose, music and laughter. By the end of the day, the school was ready to welcome its first students.

DAY 9 – INAUGURATION OF KOUTAYA'S FIRST-EVER SCHOOL

This marked one of the most significant moments of the trip. The village of Koutaya came alive with music, cooking and celebration as families gathered for the historic inauguration of their first school. Local authorities, government officials and the British Ambassador joined URBOND in cutting the ribbon and officially opening the school. The project is expected to transform the lives of thousands of children across Koutaya and surrounding communities.

DAY 10 – WORKSHOPS AND CHILD EDUCATION AWARENESS

The team returned to the URBOND Training Centre to deliver a dental hygiene workshop to 500 children and a menstrual health session to 100 girls. Meetings with local authorities helped strengthen plans for future partnership projects. Later in the day, URBOND hosted a basketball exhibition match that attracted a large crowd and spread awareness about the importance of sport in child education.

DAY 11 – URBOND SEMI-MARATHON

The volunteers began their day at 5:30am to support the fourth edition of the URBOND Child Education Semi-Marathon in Dubreka. Hundreds of people—including local officials, media representatives and residents from nearby towns—joined the event to advocate for accessible, quality education for every child. The semi-marathon concluded late in the morning, leaving participants energised and inspired. Planning has already begun for next year's expanded fifth edition.

DAY 12 – FAREWELL AND FINAL REFLECTIONS

On the final day, the volunteers were joined by one of the Minister's advisors, who expressed gratitude for URBOND's work in Guinea. At the URBOND Training Centre, the team spent time connecting with beneficiaries, partners and community members as they reflected on the trip's achievements. After emotional farewells, the team prepared for their journey home, closing a trip marked by collaboration, impact and heartfelt community support.



VOLUNTEERS TRIP IMPACT

NEW SCHOOL IN KOUTAYA

Up until October 2025, Koutaya, a small village in Dubreka in the Republic of Guinea with a population of around 3,000 people, had no schools located locally. To attend the nearest schools, children had to walk distances of 5–10 km each day, with many also having to make a dangerous water crossing.

URBOND Child Education identified the significant educational shortfall within the region and moved to secure land on which a new school could be built to help overcome these challenges. The new school cost around £500,000 and took four years to complete. Thanks to our sponsors GRP Solutions, Richmond Motor Group as well as our dedicated volunteers and supporters, this life-changing opportunity for the children and residents of Koutaya has become a reality.

On the 8th November 2025, this incredible piece of infrastructure was inaugurated in the presence of the British Ambassador, His Excellency Mr. Daniel Shepherd, members of the Guinean government, the local authority, URBOND Child Education partners, children and the people of Koutaya. The completion of this new school will vastly improve educational opportunities for the community and make learning accessible to all children.

This new school also means that children no longer need to walk 5–10 km daily to attend classes, no longer need to make a dangerous water crossing and that local residents will benefit from new employment opportunities, helping them cover the costs of raising their children and providing them with better futures.

BENEFICIARY CASE STUDY

In the village of Koutaya, where education had always been out of reach, URBOND's construction of the first ever school has transformed the future of its children. For 9 year-old Rama, who once walked many kilometres, risking her life daily to receive the education she deserves, the new school has opened a world of possibility for her and many children in Koutaya. Now learning in proper classrooms, locally, with trained teachers, her confidence has soared and she dreams of becoming a nurse something she never imagined before.

For her father, Amadou, the change feels almost unreal. He shared: "I was born and raised in this village and we had never imagined this kind of infrastructure would happen in our lifetime. To see my daughter walk into a real school every morning is something I never thought I would witness."

URBOND's school has not only reshaped Rama's future but has given the entire community renewed hope, proof that transformative change can reach even the most overlooked places.



MENSTRUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

To address one of the biggest obstacles young girls face in accessing education, period poverty, we established a local sewing team dedicated to producing reusable sanitary kits. Five women have been trained and certified with our partner, Days for Girls UK, and are able to produce around 1,000 kits per month. These kits are provided free of charge to girls from underprivileged communities so they can stay supported and remain in school.

During the volunteers' trip, 12 workshops were delivered between Monday 29 October and Sunday 9 November. A total of 503 girls and 32 teachers received training on menstrual health, sexual violence and self-defence. In addition, over 2,000 sanitary kits were distributed to girls from underprivileged communities in Koutaya and Dubreka to help ensure they remain in education.

We will continue to provide ongoing training and equipment to support young girls in staying in school. A working group made up of students, teachers and parents is already in place. Its goal is to collaborate and prevent girls from missing or dropping out of school due to menstruation.

BENEFICIARY CASE STUDY

Mamadama Sylla, a 14-year-old student from Dubréka, the Republic of Guinea, struggled with period poverty before benefiting from URBOND Child Education Girls Programme. Her family could not afford sanitary pads and her school lacked private toilets for girls, forcing her to use improvised cloths and miss several days of school each month. The shame and fear of leakage affected her confidence and academic performance, putting her at risk of dropping out.

Through URBOND's Girls Education and Menstrual Health initiative, Mamadama attended a menstrual health workshop that taught her how to manage her period safely and helped break the stigma she felt. She received a reusable hygiene kit made by local women trained by URBOND, giving her reliable, long-term menstrual supplies. At the same time, URBOND supported her school with improved girls' toilet facilities, providing privacy and proper hygiene conditions.

These interventions transformed Mamadama's school experience. Her attendance improved significantly, she became more confident and her academic performance began to rise. She now encourages other girls to stay in school and manage their periods with dignity. Mamadama's story shows how URBOND's community driven approach to menstrual health can remove barriers to education and empower girls to thrive.

DENTAL HYGIENE EDUCATION

The dental hygiene project has been going from strength to strength since its launch. This year, we reached 2,000 children with dental care education and distributed 2,000 toothbrushes and toothpaste tubes. This initiative empowers children with habits that will improve their health for years to come.

To ensure the project's long-term sustainability, we also trained local community members to deliver the dental hygiene sessions themselves, allowing the project to continue even after our team leaves. This work addresses a critical yet often overlooked need in Guinea.



FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)/CUT (C)? AWARENESS

In 2021, in partnership with the British Embassy in Guinea, URBOND launched its FGM project to educate parents and local communities about the harmful effects of the practice. Since then, URBOND has trained certified facilitators on the ground and regularly hosts community dialogues and workshops that engage parents and their families in open, honest conversations. These initiatives aim to break the silence, challenge stigma and foster a supportive, well-informed environment.

During the volunteers' trip this year, we hosted workshops that reached a total of 312 participants. Before the end of the year, our goal is to educate 500 parents and girls about the harmful practice.

URBOND Strongly Believes

- Silence must be broken through village forums, storytelling sessions and school clubs.
- Fear should be replaced with facts. Women must be empowered to question harmful norms.
- While Guinean laws against FGM exist, local leadership must act to ensure girls are protected. Change must come from within.
- Mothers should be engaged in small women's circles where they can learn and unlearn together
- Knowledge alone is not enough, we need empathy driven campaigns that reach the heart not just the mind.
- Religious leaders must be engaged to publicly denounce FGM during religious gatherings and use their influence to shift cultural attitudes.

SPORTS COACHING DEVELOPMENT

This year was a continuation of last year's work. However, to increase our impact, we devoted more time to building strong relationships with the Guinea Basketball Federation. During the trip, we partnered with the Federation and delivered a coaching clinic at the Guinean Basketball headquarters for 12 local coaches, focusing on how to teach basketball to young people under 12 and under 16.

Guinea Basketball Technical Director Souleymane Camara shared the following feedback: "I have benefited from many certified basketball courses, but I have never seen anything like the way Coach Rob delivered his clinic. It was simple, clear and easy to understand. I loved it very much. After speaking with the coaches who participated, they all said they found the clinic extremely useful."



CHILD EDUCATION AWARENESS

The activities we organise during our volunteer trips are not ordinary events, they are purposefully designed catalysts for change. Every initiative is strategically deployed to spark conversations; challenge long held beliefs and raise awareness about the life-changing value of education. In regions where child labour persists, these moments become turning points, helping communities rethink what is possible for their children.

During the trip, we hosted five major community events: International Girls' Day, new school inauguration, an education focused conference at the British Embassy, a series of sporting activities and a semi-marathon. These events brought together more than 2,000 people, children, parents, educators and both national and local leaders. Through collective dialogue, celebration, and community engagement, we reinforced a simple but powerful message: education is the pathway to empowerment, opportunity and a brighter future for every child.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

URBOND Child Education extends its heartfelt gratitude to all sponsors and supporters whose generosity made this mission possible. The invaluable contributions of GRP Solutions Ltd, Richmond Motor Group, Neon Numbers, POOW Media, Portsmouth Force Basketball Club and the British Embassy in Guinea were instrumental to the success of this year's trip.

A special thank you goes to our Class of 2025 volunteers, their families and everyone who supported them along the way.

We also extend our deepest appreciation to our dedicated team and volunteers in the UK and on the ground in the Republic of Guinea, your commitment, resilience and passion are truly outstanding. None of this would be possible without you.

Together, we continue to build brighter futures for children and families across the Republic of Guinea.

2025 VOLUNTEERS



Rob Milner reflection – Year Two in Guinea



Returning to Guinea for my second year felt a bit like coming home, familiar faces, familiar courts and a community that had clearly taken huge strides since my first visit. Seeing the coaches we trained last year thriving and using basketball as a tool for community development was genuinely inspiring. You could feel the momentum: more children taking part, more structure and a growing sense that sport can spark real social change.

One of the standout moments was our trip to the capital, Conakry, to visit the national basketball centre. The traffic was absolutely wild, gridlocked to the point we had to abandon the car and jump on motorbikes just to make it in time. It turned the day into a proper adventure, but it was worth every second. Teaching coaches at a federation level how to build sessions that help children enjoy, learn and fall in love with the game was a real privilege. Their hunger to grow the sport nationally was infectious.

What's most exciting is seeing charity and community giving start to take root within Guinea itself. The idea that local people can be part of something bigger, helping each other, building projects, creating opportunities, is becoming real. And we're only scratching the surface.

I can't wait to get back and push forward with more national-level projects, more participation and more chances for young people, many of whom have so little to find purpose, pride and joy through basketball.

Andrew & Dreen Chestnutt Volunteer Reflection, Guinea trip 2025



When I said “I’m going to have a chat with this Drame chap to see if I can help” at a charity ball in Portsmouth, it resulted a bit of an eye roll from Dreen, however off I went and accosted him. A week later Dreen and I had agreed to swap our usual October holiday for the volunteers’ trip to Guinea.

The next few weeks were a whirlwind of fundraising and trying to source dental materials and shoes to take with us to support the projects. We were blown away by the interest, donations and support from friends, family and local organisations (I’ve never seen so many shoes and toothbrushes!). However, throughout this there was a voice at the back of our minds saying “Guinea...? what on earth have signed up for”

When we talked to the rest of the team at our meetings before the trip, they reassured us that it would be fantastic and there was nothing to worry about, which helped remove the doubts, but not completely. However, it seemed no time at all before we were gathering at URBOND’s headquarters with an unfeasibly large number of very heavy bags, and we were off!

Guinea is a country like no other we have visited from the poverty, the roads, the traffic, the scenery, the people. On day one we went to the school in Dubreka and what a welcome. We walked into the first class, everything stopped, and we were greeted by a raucous chant from excited kids. This was repeated in every class we entered. It wasn’t just the schools and pupils, we got such a friendly greeting from pretty much everyone we met.

Very quickly we began to understand what URBOND has achieved in the country in the 5 years it has been working there. For such a small charity the impact is astonishing. Developing existing schools by building new classrooms and toilets. Running programmes on IT and English education. Distributing much needed supplies of shoes, books and stationery. Providing dental health workshops along with toothbrushes and toothpaste. Creating a multi-sports court and running a development programme in volleyball and basketball to improve kids confidence and empowerment. Helping young girls with awareness on menstruation and FGM and providing them with kits to ensure they can keep attending school. Providing new local jobs for teachers. This is a very well thought through and executed programme that is really having a positive impact on local communities and changing the lives of children.

Then there is the new school in Koutaya built by URBOND. The kids in the village had to cross a river to get to school, which was dangerous and sometimes they couldn’t get home because of the swollen river, sleeping rough on the other side. Drame’s solution (of course) was to just build a new school. It was day 3 of the trip before we got to the new school. We had already been impressed with the work at the existing schools, but this was another level entirely! Walking into the school was quite an experience and this time when we entered the classroom the greeting was special because it was from “our kids”, there wasn’t a dry eye in the team. Then the official opening day was a joyous riot of colour, laughter, balloons and music (and a few official speeches).

The existing construction is fantastic; however, the future plans are even more ambitious, a community area, a multi-sport court and a medical clinic are all included. We are very excited to see how the project develops.

Ultimately it was one of the best experiences of our lives, hard work, emotional, bonkers, life affirming and uplifting. The team bonded almost instantly, we laughed (a lot) and yes, we cried, but we now have some fabulous new friends in the volunteer team and locally in Guinea. We all left the country with the knowledge that we did our bit to make an impact, giving kids a chance of a better life through education, sport, addressing health issues and helping communities develop by providing better facilities.

So, I’m pretty glad that I went and had a chat with the “Drame chap” to see if I could help (and so is Dreen) and yes there is a Guinea sized hole in our diary next year, so we’ll see!!

TRIP IMPACT IN NUMBERS

3,500+ locals from Koutaya and neighbouring villages benefiting from a brand-new school.

3,000+ sanitary kits distributed to young girls in underprivileged communities.

500+ girls educated on menstrual health.

60+ parents educated on menstrual health.

2,000+ school children educated on dental care.

2,000+ toothbrushes and tubes of toothpaste distributed to children in need.

3,000+ community members including children, parents and the local authority sensitised on the need for and significance of educating children.

500+ pairs of shoes and clothing items distributed to children and parents in underprivileged communities.

300+ parents benefited from a Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) awareness workshop.

12 youth sports coaches benefited from the coaching clinics.

