

**MANIFESTO DISTRIBUTED ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF THE AFRICAN YOUTH – IDAY – 16 JUNE 2006**

On 16th June 1976, around 200 students peacefully demonstrating in Soweto, South Africa, for access to better education, were killed by the Apartheid army. This unfortunate event is at the origin of the creation of the international youth of Africa day, this year celebrating its 30th anniversary.

“Excellencies, Messrs. members and officials of Europe”,

Thus, twenty three years later, Yaguine and Fodé, two young Guineans discovered dead in the landing gear of a Sabena aircraft, addressed a desperate message reminding us that the education conditions in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa remained unacceptable: “we want to study, and we ask you to help us to study so we in Africa can be like you.”^[1]

Although education is a basic right guaranteed in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10th December 1948 and confirmed in articles 28 and 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20th November 1989, the figures show that this issue is still unresolved in Africa.

Around 46 million^[2] Africans of 6 to 12 years (45%) still do not have access to a complete cycle of primary education; the number of illiterate 15 to 24 year-olds is increasing, although it is falling on all other continents. As a percentage of GDP, sub-Saharan African countries on average spend less on education than on health or defence. Two thirds of young people have no access to secondary education, a proportion which is worse for girls than for boys.

Depriving a child of primary education means depriving him or her of the basic means to choose a way of life best suited to his or her potential. This makes the child vulnerable to competition in a globalized world, keeping him or her in a state of inferiority. This situation in the 21st century is just as intolerable as slavery was in the 19th and 20th centuries. Twice already, in 2000 and 2005, all States, including European states, with a “rule of law”, were faced with the failure of the second Millennium Development Goal: ensuring a complete cycle of primary education for all. To this day, however, they have all signed the Declaration and the Convention and are thus bound to recognize, respect and ensure compliance with these rights in their own countries and elsewhere.

Today, support for education lies both in humanitarian aid and in an approach of development cooperation. We spare a thought for the AIDS orphans, the child soldiers, the child servants, and the poverty which forces these children into work, prostitution, trade in humans and forced displacement. Although maldevelopment is a phenomenon with complex causes and solutions, education remains a key element in development. We know that educated women live longer, have more balanced family planning and promote the education of their own children. It is also the best way available today to prevent AIDS: in Ugandan rural areas, a survey showed that on average in 1990, 16% of the population suffered from AIDS. Following an awareness campaign, this figure dropped to 12% in the illiterate population, to 6.5% for those with a primary education and to 2% for those who had received a secondary education.

^[1] The complete letter from Yaguine and Fodé can be found annexed to this document.

^[2] Sources of figures: latest reports from UNICEF, UNESCO and the UNDP.

Education lies at the base of economic development in all continents. It contributes to increased political awareness and thus to the development of democracy and the ability of citizens to impose improved governance of their country, leading to more efficient use of international aid. Improving education in an economically retarded country is thus a necessary condition for its development.

Africa needs a quality education network to enable its population to choose its own mode of development and express its own requirements. For this goal to have its full meaning, the primary cycle must be designed and organized with all its possible further paths in mind: other study cycles, vocational training and, for example, protection and support for child workers, whatever their age, including parental literacy. As young people are especially vulnerable, only school can offer a privileged space from which normal life can grow. It is illusory to hope to see these goals reached before the end of the century in Africa, if at the very least the second MDG is not achieved as planned by the new deadline of 2015.

We are delighted to note that the Organization of African Union has decreed education as a priority, and that the Nobel Prize winner Nelson Mandela, has demanded of the most powerful nations on the planet that they commit themselves to achieving the second Millennium Development Goal.

To this effect, we ask that:

- **Aid for primary education becomes a priority for all governments and that special attention be paid to its quality. Lapsing into mass schooling without the adequate material and human resources must be avoided, mass schooling which would not enable the literacy goal equivalent to the primary education cycle to be attained.**
- **that programmes be launched to provide a basic education to all young people, girls and boys, from 15 to 24 years old who did not receive a complete primary education;**
- **that NEPAD's assessments of the governance of African countries include efforts made by the countries concerned to reach the MDGs and all those concerning primary education.**
- **that in relations with the International Monetary Fund, public funding of education be considered as an investment and not spending and that it not be affected by budgetary or political restrictions.**
- **that governments taking the necessary measures to achieve the second Millennium Development Goal (complete primary education cycle for all by 2015), have their aid budget increased accordingly;**
- **that the governments of sub-Saharan Africa be encouraged to take responsibility for all primary education budgets by 2015, in order to enable international aid to increase its support for secondary and third-level education.**

LIST OF SIGNATORY NGOs

Africa

Bénin : Femme Espoir Bénin (FEB) : succeservices@hotmail.com
Burkina-Faso, Yako: Association le Paysannat – ASSO-PA : lepaysannat@yahoo.fr
Burundi, Bujumbura: FVSAMADE : fvsamade@cbinf.com
Guinée, Conakry : le Club des Amis du Livre (CAL) clubdesamisdulivre@yahoo.fr
Guinée, Conakry : Fraternité Médicale Guinée : samo.gui@biasy.net
Ouganda, Kampala : Uganda Children center & Alliance française : kakembofred@yahoo.com
R.D Congo, Kinshasa : AEDAF/CONGO : aedaf@hotmail.com
R.D.Congo, Shatshikumba-Kananga : Petits Pas : www.petitspas.be
Rwanda, Kigali : CLADHO : www.collectif.org.rw/CLADHO/HOME.HTM
Togo, Tsevie : ETCHRI AJA/JHAT-AJEGAT : ajegat56@yahoo.fr

Belgium

Action Développement Parrainages Mondiaux (ADPM)
Actions Femmes et Enfance Heureuses
Aide à l'Education pour l'Afrique AEDAF
Afrikaansplatform
Afrique au Cœur asbl
AMADE Belgium:
Amis des Enfants (ADE)
Association Belgique Madagascar
Centre d'études africaines & de recherches interculturelles (CEAF & RI)
Dynamo International
Fonds Message de Yaguine et Fodé
Hygiène et Assainissement
MA'CHAKA. S.I.
KWASKWASA
La Maison des Enfants du Monde
Le Monde Selon Les Femmes
Oser la Vie
Petits Pas

Germany:

Jugendhilfe Afrika e.v

France

Avenir NEPAD International
Organisation pour la Cohésion du Droit et du Développement (OCD)

Annex 1: Performance indicators for sub-Saharan African countries with a view to achieving the second Millennium Development Goal by 2015.

This manifest was presented at the international seminar that took place at the European Parliament on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of IDAY and was sent to all embassies of sub-Saharan African countries and Member States of the European Union in Brussels and to the Presidency of the European Union during the European Council of Ministers on 15th and 16th June 2006

This is the text of the letter found on the body of Yaguine in an envelope tucked under his shirt. The bodies of the two Guinean kids of 14 and 15 years old were found in the landing gear of a Sabena plane returning from a flight from Conakry. The authenticity of the letter was confirmed by the discovery of the draft of the letter in one of Yaguine's school books.

“Help us, we are suffering terribly”

“Excellencies, members and responsible authorities of Europe,

We have the honour and pleasure of writing you this letter to tell you about the purpose of our journey and the sufferings, which we, the children and young people of Africa, experience.

But first may we offer you our most exquisite, adorable and respectful greetings in life. To that effect, be our support and our help. For us in Africa, you are the ones to whom we must turn for help. We beg you to listen to us, for the love of your continent, for the feeling that you have for your people and above all for the attachment and love that you feel for your children, whom you love for life; and also for the love and graciousness of our creator God Almighty, who gave you all the good experiences, wealth and power to develop and organise your continent to be the most beautiful and admirable of them all.

Esteemed members and leaders of Europe, we in Africa appeal to your solidarity and your kindness. Help us, we are suffering terribly in Africa, we have problems and there are gaps in children's rights.

Among the problems we face are war, disease and malnutrition. As for children's rights, in Africa and especially in Guinea we have too many schools but not enough education and teaching - except in private schools where you can get a good education and good teaching, but only at great cost. But our parents are poor and they have to feed us. Furthermore, we have no sports schools where we can play soccer, basketball or tennis.

This is why we, the children and young people of Africa, ask you to embark on a large-scale, efficient organisation for Africa so that our countries can develop.

Hence, if you see that we risk our lives and sacrifice ourselves, it is because there is too much suffering in Africa and because we need you to fight against poverty and to end war there. Nevertheless, we want to study and ask you to help us study to become like you, in Africa.

Finally, we beg you to forgive us for daring to write this letter to you, the great persons to whom we owe respect. Please realise that we have no one else to turn to in order to show how weak we in Africa are.

(Signature) Written by two Guinean children Yaguine Koita and Fodé Tounkara.”