

# Çava?



## The Newsletter of Friends of Guinea

Advocacy, Information, and Networking for Guinea and Peace Corps Guinea

20 May 2009 • No.27

### Officers Approve Donation to STS

In early May, FOG officers approved a \$500 donation to School-to-School International, an organization that helps Guinean girls stay in school. Excerpts from the STS press release are below.

Dear Friends of School-to-School International,

Fewer than half of all girls in Guinea make it to middle school. Girls who drop out of school are more vulnerable to poverty, maternal mortality, hunger, violence, abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and illness. To break this cycle, STS is launching a Mother's Day Fundraising Campaign to support 300 girls through scholarships, community training, school supplies and latrines – all proven methods of improving girls' chances of educational success.[...]



Please visit our GlobalGiving website, Help 300 Girls Stay in School in Guinea, West Africa.

Please forward this e-mail to your friends to help spread the word about School-to-School International's Mother's Day Fundraiser. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,  
Mark Lynd,  
President of School-to-School International  
PO Box 371056  
Montara, CA 94037 – USA

Visit their web-site for more information:

<http://www.sts-international.org/approach.html>

### Welcome New FOG Officers

Friends of Guinea elections were held in early May, and the organization is pleased to announce its new officers. Please read on for contact information as well as a brief biography of each officer and new member-at-large.

#### Projects director: Donald Parker

Donald was a volunteer in Kaalan from '01-'02. He currently works for a petroleum distributor in Leesville, SC. He says "I'm still trying to figure out how Guinea and PC shaped my current life, not sure if it had bearing on any previous lives. If anything I am much more concise when talking about myself."

Contact Donald with any project ideas at

[projects@friendsofguinea.org](mailto:projects@friendsofguinea.org).

#### Secretary: Katalina Estrada

Kat was a volunteer in Guinea from 2007 to 2009, serving for only a year and half due to complications. She was a Small Enterprise Development Volunteer. Kat is currently working as a caseworker for Ulster County, NY, through the federal grant program NY Connects. She says, "PC affected me in every way possible. It taught me about the different lifestyles and cultures around the world. It allowed me to form great life long bonds with Guineans and West Africans alike. I also had the privilege of learning some Malinke and French!"

Contact Kat at [secretary@friendsofguinea.org](mailto:secretary@friendsofguinea.org).

#### Communications director: Rosemarie Rose



Rose (with her husband and President Obama) is a PCV parent; her son, David Reinermann, was recently in Guinea

with the Peace Corps and is now home. She is a Development Director who has retired and mainly does volunteer work for several organizations. When asked how her contact with Guinea has changed her outlook, she writes "wow...biggest thing - is realizing how lucky

we are here - running water - indoor plumbing - 24/7 electricity..." Contact Rose at [communications@friendsofguinea.org](mailto:communications@friendsofguinea.org).

**Financial officer: Shad Engkilterra**



Shad, who continues as FOG's Financial Officer, was a Public Health and Community Development volunteer in Banko, Guinea, from 1998 to 2000. His current full time job is with the Red Cross at The Arc of Anchorage, an organization for people with developmental disabilities. He says, "I still teach CPR,

though. Alaska rocks!"

When asked how being a Guinea RPCV shaped his current life, he writes "Uhhhhh... That is a question best left for a dinner with friends and a biographer." Contact Shad at [finances@friendsofguinea.org](mailto:finances@friendsofguinea.org).

**Membership director: Brian Clappier**



Brian, a PCV from '04 to '06, writes: "Hi everybody, my name is Brian Clappier and I'm the returning Membership Coordinator for FOG. I like to think my home away from home is Hafia, in the Labe prefecture, where I was a physics teacher for the local *college*.

I'm currently a law

student in Chicago, where I am fortunate to live near several volunteers and a small restaurant named "Le Conakry." I took the membership position last year, and I'm always looking for new ways to recruit members, so please don't be shy if you want to help! Each of our members can have a large impact on our organization's activities and I welcome any and all input." Contact Brian at [membership@friendsofguinea.org](mailto:membership@friendsofguinea.org).

**Web admin: Jessamyn Miller & Karen Star**



Jessamyn was a public health volunteer in Labe, 2002-2004. She writes: "I loved the markets, jogging on the runway of the airport, visiting villages and eating peanut sauce. Since I finished my service, I have moved around a lot (Arizona, Mexico, Angola) but now I am settled happily in Richmond, VA where I work as a graphic designer

for a law firm. I have a sweet boyfriend named Chad and a car named Big Whitey. I bought a tiny condo in the historic district, where I like to sit on the balcony and have drinks. Being a PCV completely changed my life. I learned to let go, get crazy and have fun. Travelling opened me up to the rest of the world. Guinea taught me to love walking, cooking and life in general. I was able to see myself as an artist for the first time. In the photo attached are me and Big Whitey."

Karen is a PCV mom of Jason Myer who is currently in Guinea as part of the G17 group. Jason is presently in the village of Gongoret near Mamou working on forestry projects. Karen lives in L.A. and does freelance graphic and web design. She writes: "I

think being a PCV is making Jason more resourceful and independent. What a unique opportunity, to live and work in Africa, to learn the language and culture of a region. How can that not change a person's life?" Karen sent a



photo of the G17 swearing in. Jason is leaning on the stair rail in front. Contact: [web@friendsofguinea.org](mailto:web@friendsofguinea.org).

**Guinea Parent Support (GPS):**

**Diane Carlson & Meghan Greeley**

Diane's daughter was a PCV in Diamona, outside Kankan, from Jan 2005 to March 2007. She is a publications editor at General Mills. Diane writes about visiting Guinea: "It has given me a completely different perspective on the world. The people of Guinea were so warm and welcoming to my daughter and to my family when we visited. It is something I will never forget. I would like to find a small way to help support the volunteers and their families during their Peace Corps service."



The photo is from her family's visit to see her daughter, outside the Conakry house—Diane is second from left.

Meghan, co-GPS chair, was a health volunteer in Koundian, Mandiana, from 2002 to 2004.





Meghan says: "Since leaving Guinea, I worked in maternal and child public health based in DC for a couple of years, and then I went back to school. I did a degree in nursing and now work as a community

health nurse in Baltimore, MD while getting my masters in nursing and public health and becoming a family nurse practitioner. My time in Guinea very much shaped who I am today. I became further dedicated to working internationally and figured out that the combination of nursing and public health was the way to do that. No matter where I go, Guinea always has a special place in my heart. Plus, my stage-mates are some of the greatest people I know, and I am lucky to have them all in my life!" Contact: [gps@friendsofguinea.org](mailto:gps@friendsofguinea.org).

FOG is an organization run purely by volunteers. Thank to everyone for committing to helping FOG for the next year!

## Notes from Membership Director

*Brian Clappier, Hafia '04-'06*

We face one simple and brutal truth in FOG: without continuous growth in our membership, we can't continue reaching out to new and exciting projects in Guinea. You might consider this a call to action! There are a number of ways you can get involved and help us increase our membership and funding:

1) If you're a PCV-parent in FOG, tell your fellow PCV-parents to join FOG! Explain that many FOG-funded projects, like the gender conferences, are a fundamental portion of a volunteer's service. Without parental support, family membership, and member fundraising in FOG, we cannot continue to fund these programs.

2) If you're an RPCV, tell your stage-mates and other Guinea friends that FOG still needs their support. Think back to the quarterly newsletters on the mail run, the FOG website you referenced before departing the United States, and the FOG-sponsored projects. We need to build and expand this resource for future volunteers. It's the least we can do to return the favor, so don't forget to re-enroll in FOG and then get involved.

3.) If you care about Guinea, the Peace Corps program, and the objectives of FOG, seek other ways to inform your friends and family: have a Guinea fundraising dinner with some rice & peanut sauce, West African music, and some shared stories; give a presentation at a local school; raise money through Peace Corps calendar sales; or even be a FOG sponsor in your next race or marathon! There are plenty of possibilities for lending a hand, but first we need you to express your interest and tell us you want to get involved.

Don't forget about the third goal of Peace Corps! If you have any questions about our current membership and fundraising efforts or you want to help us in any way, please do not hesitate to contact the FOG membership coordinator at: [bjclappier@hotmail.com](mailto:bjclappier@hotmail.com).

## Guinean radio on the internet

Ever feel like hearing some Guinean tunes, but those old cassettes you brought back with you don't work any more? Want to practice your local language skills years after you left Peace Corps? After years of only state sponsored radio, Guinea now boasts more than a dozen private radio stations, many of which broadcast live on the internet. Here's a quick review of some of them by Amara Dabo, Guinean music lover living in the US.

**Djiguii** ([www.djiguii.com](http://www.djiguii.com)) is one of our reviewer's favorites. This station broadcasts live, playing contemporary Guinean and West African music. Djiguii also has news in French, Malinke, Pular, Susu, and Kissi. In the evenings, they broadcast traditional Guinean legends.

**Familia FM** ([www.familiafm.com](http://www.familiafm.com)) is similar to Djiguii and is our reviewer's other favorite station. In addition to contemporary music from Guinea and the sub-region, Familia broadcasts in many local languages. They have live news broadcasts, covering state events and government functions from the field. Live sporting events are also covered direct.

**Espace FM** ([www.espacefmguinee.info](http://www.espacefmguinee.info)) broadcasts 24 hours a day from their Conakry office. They have various programs during the day, and tend to play lots of American hip hop interspersed with Guinean tunes in case you want the feel of a real Guinean taxi.

**Radio Kankan** ([www.radio-kankan.com](http://www.radio-kankan.com)) was the first radio from Guinea to broadcast on the internet. It plays music 24 hours a day, mixing in old with the new.

**Radio Liberte** ([www.radiolibertefm.com](http://www.radiolibertefm.com)) is currently off-line after being ransacked by military in the days following the December coup. Rumor is that they will begin broadcasting on the internet again shortly.

Although not a radio station, [www.ramatoulaye.com](http://www.ramatoulaye.com) also plays a mix of music in all local languages from all regions.

You can also access RTG state-sponsored news TV broadcasts 24 hours after they originally play at [www.telediaspora.net](http://www.telediaspora.net).

Happy listening!

# The Most Dangerous Man in Guinea

*Hunter Dreidame, PCV Sandenia and Cissela '08-'10*

A few weeks ago, I was talking to my mom on the phone and she mentioned something she'd heard on NPR about West Africa: the number one killer of small children is car accidents – not car on car accidents, rather, car on child accidents. Although I'm fairly confident malaria is actually the number one killer (supposedly one West African child dies from malaria every thirty seconds), I have to agree that roadside accidents are all too common. Three kids have been struck and killed in my village since I move there in September. Not long ago, a one year old boy ran after a ball behind a reversing taxi. Unaware of this, the driver backed over the boy and crushed his head. Yes, this kind of thing happens all too often around here.

As I cycled home from the phone tree following this conversation, I couldn't help but think about all the close



calls I've had with hitting pedestrians while riding in bush taxis. My thoughts strayed from the potential taxi accidents to potential bicycle accidents as a group of goats

scooted out of my way on the road. What would happen if, just once, the goat changed his mind and ran right into my bike? Would the impact kill the goat? Would it bring my bike to a halt as I sailed over the handlebars to the demise of my left wrist, repeating my feat of the seventh grade? Trying to brush these morbid thoughts aside, I double checked the strap on my helmet and pedaled on.

Arriving in my village, I was making great time – with the wind at my back, this had probably been my fastest return trip yet. I rode past the “Marche le Lundi” sign and thought, “Only about a quarter mile left! Step on it!” Just then, a little boy shot out across the road, right in front of me. I slowed down a little, but, seeing he was clear of my path, I continued. As I was about to pass him, a man who I can only assume was his father, yelled at him in Dialonke, telling him to look out for the bike. The boy, never having seen me, spun around and ran headfirst into my handlebars.

The poor kid never stood a chance. His head smacked off my handlebars and then smacked off the ground. Surprisingly, I didn't go down. I did, however, stop, and was immediately shaken by the incident, even before I'd turned around to see him crumpled on the road. My first thought was that he was dead. He wasn't moving and I couldn't stop visualizing the impact as his head hit the asphalt. But then he stood up. He screamed for about a half second, but he must've stopped when he saw the blood.

As he turned to face me, he held his hand to his eye, but that did little to allay the blood pouring from all over his head. I tried to move towards him, but his instant recoil reminded me that little African boys are absolutely terrified

of big white men. His father came over, yelling at me in words I will never understand, and I simply said I would go get the doctor. The father, not wanting blood on his clean white shirt, told the boy he had to walk to the clinic. I rode ahead, wanting to tell Dr. Toure what was on the way, hoping he could help, but not sure what to expect from a village hospital, with no electricity or running water, in the middle of the bush.

At this point, I was visibly shaken. Toure could see that, and told me to go home; he'd take care of everything. To me, though, that was the easy way out and I wasn't taking it – I needed to stay and do whatever I could; I needed to stay and suffer the consequences. The boy arrived shortly after, followed by a crowd of thirty or forty angry villagers. Shouting and finger-pointing ensued, but I'll never really be sure what was said, but I'll never forget how uncomfortable I was, as though I were on trial in front of a firing squad, as far as could be from a jury of my peers. The boy stood there, blood still dripping from all over his face and from a deep gash on the top of his head. He stared at me fixedly, blinking as the blood dripped over his eyes. Weeks later, I can still see the fear in his eyes when I close my own.

Toure, ever the hero, took the boy back in his office and proceeded to fix everything. In the meantime, I went home and raided my care packages for candy to give to my victim – what else could I do? When I arrived back at the clinic, Toure had already shaved his head and started putting in stitches. I handed the candy to the father, apologized profusely, and went back to my hut, where I put my head in my hands and wept for about two hours.

Eventually, Toure came over to tell me head taken care of everything, that the boy would be fine... but I still couldn't shake the thought that, between the complete lack of teaching I've done due to poor school organization and hitting the boy, I'd effectively done more damage than good to my community. That was probably about as close as I've ever come to throwing in the towel and going home. I didn't stop shaking until the next day. Even then, I was scared – the child never cried – what if he'd been in shock? What if he'd had a concussion? Did Toure check for these things? What if he died??

All I wanted to do was go call someone, but that meant getting back on the bike and riding back past all the people that had poured out their wrath just hours before, so I stayed put and waited. For what? I don't know. But, by the next day, I'd started to feel a bit better. That is, until I started to hear a “THUMP! BANG! THUMP!” on my roof. I ran outside, having to immediately dodge a huge rock headed right towards my head as I came out the front door. People were stoning my hut!!!

But then I heard them shout, “Mamadou! Mamadou! Serpent!” At once, I realized the rocks weren't aimed at me, and my hut was simply the unfortunate innocent recipient of the rocks intended for the green snake coiled in the tree overhanging my hut. Guineans hate snakes, and understandably so, because most of them, including the one in the tree, are extremely deadly.

Before long, one of the rocks struck its target and knocked the snake free of the tree, sending it flying onto



the roof of my hut (can you imagine how happy I would have been if I were still sitting in my hut and this sucker came in seeking refuge?!). The snake slithered off the roof and into a large patch of tall grass, but the neighbors weren't deterred. They immediately set to work, lighting the grass on fire, trying to smoke out the snake or burn it to death trying.

About five minutes later, the snake emerged, only to have its head beaten in by a stick. The snake, as it turns out, was a green mamba – or, as they call it here, a three step snake. Three step snake? That means, once it's bitten you, you can take three more steps before you'll never take any more. Yeah, the only snake around here that's more deadly is the black mamba. Although it was a little frightening that this snake was so close to the door of my hut, the entire situation was quite exciting and I capped it off by taking several photos of the boys with their kill.



The next day, as I prepared to leave home, another snake was killed just outside of my front door. This one was a belt snake, aka a five step snake, so no big deal, right? Actually, the more I thought about it, it WAS a big deal!

Only two days before, I'd hit one of the local children and messed him up badly, resulting in what may have been a mass cursing by the thirty or forty locals who'd been

yelling at me. Maybe somebody was trying to send a message? Maybe it wasn't a coincidence that the first snakes I'd seen in the village came in the two days following the accident! A big part of me thought the boy must have died and somebody wanted me to pay the price.

So I got out of town. Kind of. I went and visited the Andersons a few miles away. Upon my return, I was expecting to be stoned (or worse), so you can imagine my relief when I spotted the boy sitting on a bench by one of the boutiques. I went over to check on him. Aside from cuts on his nose, forehead and cheek, and the stitches on his head, he seemed okay. Talk about your sighs of relief! Buying him some candy and oranges, I considered the case closed. I guess my fear of sorcerers and snake charmers coming for me must've all just been my imagination.

There is, however, a lesson to be learned from all of this: children here do not know how to cross a street. It could not be more evident that they have never seen "The Mickey Mouse Club" and therefore never learned the valuable lesson on stopping, looking, and listening. What does this mean for me? It means I've found a secondary project to pursue! Somehow, I'm going to set up a system

to educate children about safely crossing the road and to educate parents about the importance of watching their children. After all, as guilty as I felt about my accident, it wasn't my fault; if the boy had looked first, he never would've run out into the street (or so I like to think), and if the father had been paying attention, he would've told his son to look out BEFORE he was already in the middle of the road.

Does anybody know how to say "Stop, look and listen" in Dialonke?

## FOG 2008 Year-End Report (excerpts)

In Communications, we continued to update our Friends of Guinea blog (<http://friendsofguinea.blogspot.com/>) and our newsletter was produced quarterly. Our website is undergoing major updates, and we installed a spam-blocker to keep unwanted entries out of the online registry.

Our Guinea Parent Support (GPS) groups are flourishing. The G16 (July '08) listserv has 48 participants and the G17 (December '08) listserv has 59 participants.

In Projects, we completed the four tasks:

1. FOG provided a new LCD projector and 2 gently used laptops to a private school in Conakry. The total cost of the donation was \$846. A FOG member brought all the items to the school in December.
  2. We also helped fund PCV Samantha Levin's school roofing project. FOG donated \$400 to this project and is waiting for feedback from the PCV.
  3. We also donated \$1000 to PCV Katy Murtaugh's development of an eco-tourism site in the Fouta. We are waiting for feedback.
  4. Finally, we gave the Volunteers in Guinea 14 new DVDs for the Conakry house, as per request of the PCVs, at a total cost of \$206. These were delivered in December.
- In fundraising, we sold Peace Corps calendars this year for a profit of \$554.

We learned that the PCPP donating process has been simplified, and that the new "Country Fund" will leave any surplus funds donated for Guinea projects in a fund designated for Guinean projects, ensuring that monies donated by our members go towards Guinean projects.

In Membership, we currently have 92 paid members, 33 family members, 10 Guinean members, 25 members lost since 1/1/08, and 51 members joined since 1/1/08. As this suggests, recruitment needs to be actively addressed in 2009. Ideas for future recruitment include the use of member-to-member outreach and personal email communication in addition to standardized emails from the membership officer; further communication of news, photos, and events on the web with blogs, Facebook, and FOG homepage; additional product offers for new members, such as a FOG t-shirt; and regional RPCV dinner rallies to solicit membership recruitment and donations.

Our financial statement shows that we had a total revenue of \$2,443 and expenses of \$6,572 (\$6,199 on projects), for a net loss this year. Our year-end closing balance was \$8,728. Membership revenues have decreased as have direct donations. FOG will need to increase membership and donation revenues or reduce our funding of projects. (continued on page 6)

(Year-End Report continued from page 5)

FOG's income is sufficient to cover our operating expenses but not much more.

Plans for 2009 include:

1. Revamping the website;
2. Holding officer elections in March;
3. Sponsoring a writing contest from members on the occasion of FOG's 10th anniversary;
4. Increasing the postings on our blog and maintaining the website more regularly;
5. Increasing FOG membership through promotion to parents, PCVs, and lapsed members;
6. Considering incorporation as a 501(c)(3), a task which requires a willing volunteer to follow through on this process;
7. Increasing membership recruitment as described above.

## Read Current and Past PC-Guinea blogs on PeaceCorpsJournals

[PeaceCorpsJournals](http://peacecorpsjournals.com/) is a free online service that gives you instant update of and access to Peace Corps Volunteers' blogs all over the world. You can search by country of service and look for photos or video updates. The direct link to PC Guinea blogs is: <http://peacecorpsjournals.com/?showcountry,gv>.

## Le Griot Nous Dit...

A daughter, Amira Marie, was born to RPCV Aaron Sharghi (Tiro and Kankan '98-'01) and his wife Jeanne on May 5, 2009 at 1:16 pm in Dakar, Senegal. The happy family is planning a move to Rome, Italy in the coming months. Congratulations!



## Facebook for RPCVs

Come join the Friends of Guinea group on the new Peace Corps Connect site!

Powered by Ning, this is a kind of "Facebook" for connecting with other RPCVs, posting photos, having discussions, and more. You can search for other RPCVs by country of service -- how handy! Visit the FOG group at:

<http://community.peacecorpsconnect.org/group/friendsofguinea>.

And "friend" me, OK?

## FOG Re-Vamps Website

Visit the Friends of Guinea website, [www.friendsofguinea.org](http://www.friendsofguinea.org), to see the new organization and find links to all things Guinean. Thanks to outgoing web administrator Nathan Shepard for his hard work!

## Submit to ÇaVa?

The FOG newsletter is always looking for any stories, travel journals, photos and articles about Peace Corps, Guinea and PC Guinea. Send any ideas or articles to Editor Mackenzie Dabo at [newsletter@friendsofguinea.org](mailto:newsletter@friendsofguinea.org)



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