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The Newsletter of Friends of Guinea

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

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Peace Corps Guinea Update

Daniel Evans, PC Guinea Director

Hello to all Friends of Guinea,

We've had lots of changes here in Guinea and with Peace Corps/Guinea over the past year. Let's start with the most important – the Volunteers. As I write this we have 82 Volunteers serving in Guinea and another 17 due to arrive on July 8th. For those of you who follow the different groups, we currently have two Extension groups, G15 and 17, and one education group G16, with G18 arriving in July. The next Extension group, G19, will arrive in December with an anticipated 39 trainees, which will raise our numbers to over 130 volunteers. We'll drop back to about 100 in February 2010 when G15 COSs. They will be our first group to complete their full two years since we reopened our program in July 2007.

I am also happy to say that Peace Corps/Guinea is one of the countries targeted for considerable growth over the next two years. We'll expand back into the forest region in September with a few Education Volunteers. To support our expansion in the forest region, we will open a new regional office in Nzerekore. The office should open by November; well before the extension volunteers start there in February 2010. Over the next two years Washington has approved a full expansion into the forest region and an overall growth to 120 to 140 Volunteers by the end of 2010.

Washington has also been very supportive of rebuilding our staff. We have recently hired a new APCD for our Agro Forestry Program. His name is Abdoul Diallo, and he has worked as an AgFo trainer for several years, so he knows our overall program, as well as many of the volunteers. Dioulde Barry, who was previously the Program Assistant for Education or *PA sans Frontiers* as he called himself to reflect the fact he really supported all the programs, is now our APCD for Education. Mohamed Fofana decided to move on from Peace Corps, and with all his experience, Dioulde has stepped right in to take over the Education Program. Yvonne McCarthy is the APCD for Public Health. She took over for Annaliese Limb. And Kristine Schantz is our new APCD for Small Enterprise Development, taking over after Josh Romalis left last fall.

Other staff changes include Ousmane Diallo moving from our Safety and Security Coordinator to Training Manager. And Yama Diabate, previously our Regional Coordinator for Boke, replaced Ousmane as our new SSC. She is only the second female SSC in the region. Oh, and I've just completed my first year with Peace Corps as well! I arrived here in Guinea on June 30th of last year.

With our approved growth trajectory, Washington has approved hiring a new Program Assistant. In addition we have also submitted requests for a second Program Assistant and a second PCMO. Both of those positions are still under review in Washington, but we are hopeful they will be filled. We will continue to fill additional staff positions over the next year as the number of Volunteers continues to grow.

For the longer term, we are analyzing how we might expand certain programs further, or add entirely new cross-cutting activities, such as girls' empowerment and education. With our current new staff and the expansion of all our programs, we have plenty to keep us busy, but we also know there are still many needs and opportunities for Peace Corps here in Guinea.

On the political front a lot has also changed. Since the death of President Conte and the coup d'état last December, we continue to work closely with government agencies at all levels. The official U.S. Government position will not recognize the new government until a democratic election occurs, but Peace Corps, as an apolitical organization, has continued all its operations. We continue to watch Guinea's political and economic situation very closely, with the hope that elections will be held soon.

On behalf of our Volunteers I would like to thank all Friends of Guinea for your generous support of Volunteer projects. Your support helps Volunteers do many things with their communities, from girls' conferences to rebuilding schools and other community projects. We greatly appreciate your continued interest in Guinea and your assistance.

Sincerely,
Daniel Evans
Country Director/Guinea

“Are You Disappointed?”

Susanna Fioratta, RPCV G5, Diountou, Lelouma '02-'04

PhD Candidate, Department of Anthropology, Yale University

I arrived in Conakry in mid-July for my third visit to Guinea since I COSed in 2004. After summer research stints here in 2007 and 2008, I'm now in Guinea for a year of ethnographic fieldwork. Conakry, viewed from above as the plane descended, looked the same as always, despite the dramatic change in government since my visit last summer. With some nervousness and a lot of curiosity, I wondered how I would find things, and what would be in store both for me and for Guinea over the next year.

“Are you disappointed?” asked the man next to me (in French), after our plane had landed and we were taxiing to the terminal. He had observed me looking out the window at views of Conakry--shacks, metal roofs, rain, etc.

I looked at him, unsure what I was expected to respond.

“First time in Conakry?” he asked.

“Oh, no,” I answered. “Not my first time. I lived in Guinea, in the Fouta Djallon, for over two years.”

“Ahhh,” he said. “Not your first time. I only say this because often you, the Europeans, are disappointed when you come to Conakry.”

“Are you Guinean?” I asked.

“Yes, but I'm in France now. I've only come to Conakry for three weeks to visit my brothers and sisters.” Then he returned to his theme. “Even when those Guineans who have left here and gone away, when they return again, even they are often disappointed here.”

“Disappointed how?” I asked.

“In their affairs. They come back to Guinea thinking that they will do some business, but it doesn't work. I had a friend who was doubly disappointed. He left his wife in France to return to Guinea for business, and in the end he was disappointed in his business, and also his wife left him while he was absent, so he was disappointed in his wife as well. Doubly disappointed.” He shook his head ominously. “This is why I caution you to be very careful, and not to be disappointed.”

We both amassed all our belongings and lined up with the other passengers to exit the plane. Once we were crowded onto the bus to be taken to the terminal, I found that he was still next to me. He addressed me again. “It is important that you not come here expecting to succeed. That is the mistake that people make. They arrive here thinking that they will do something, and then they fail and they are disappointed. You must not invest everything you have, thinking that you will succeed. You must be prepared to fail. I only tell you this so that you will not be disappointed.”

I nodded and thanked him for the ominous, yet perhaps pragmatic, advice.

What will happen—both in my research, and in Guinea—of course remains to be seen. Over the past few weeks, I've been trying to get a sense of things here. In many ways, the vibe seems the same as last year and the year before. People are still waiting for water and electricity, still talking about maybe having elections

sometime soon, still making long speeches about how too many people are making speeches and not enough people are getting things done. Most Guineans I've talked to so far seem neither especially optimistic nor pessimistic about the outcome of this phase of “transition.” Meanwhile, a few changes stick out: only one passenger is now permitted to sit up front in Conakry taxis, there is virtually no small change to be had in Conakry (though there seems to be rather more available up country), numerous military roadblocks have sprung up again along the main road, and large red X's mark the walls of houses and buildings supposedly slated for demolition for having been built on illegally sold government land. Over the course of the next year, I'm hoping to find out more about how people here perceive and are dealing with the many political and economic uncertainties they face in their daily lives. Regardless of what happens, or doesn't happen (I will refrain from holding specific expectations, so as not to be disappointed!), it should be an interesting time to be back in Guinea.

Guinea Briefs

- Excessive rain in Conakry this wet season took away at least one house in the Dabondy section of town (Commune of Matoto) and the lack of drainage left stagnating water throughout the area.
- Recent raids in Guinea (in the Port I, Port II, Gbessia, Dixin, and Tombolia sections Conakry and the neighboring town of Moussaya, Dubreka, home of former President Lansana Conte) have uncovered numerous drug “factories” that authorities say are implicated in the international drug trade.
- Prices of staple foods are already increasing in anticipation of the upcoming month of Ramadan. Fasting starts on August 22, and Eid Al Fitr will fall on or around September 20.
- Guinea's Syli National soccer team played to a 3-3 tie against the six-time African Nations Cup champion Pharaohs in Egypt. The friendly match was played August 12 without Guinean captain Camille Zayette and star striker Pascal Feindouno, who both were sidelined with medical concerns.

For up-to-date news and information, visit www.guineenews.org (in French) or <http://friendsofguinea.blogspot.com/>

Girls Conference Update

Basse Cote and Fouta Girls Conferences were held in the past two months. Many current PCVs have blogged about the successful conferences. Find a list of the most recently updated PC Guinea blogs, as well as a link to all PC Guinea blogs, at : <http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/Guinea> .

Also, check out Guinea PC Director Daniel Evan's photos from Guinea (including past Girls Conferences') at: www.flickr.com/photos/27636181@N05 .

What is... ÇaVa?

Ca Va is the quarterly newsletter of Friends of Guinea and seeks to maintain contact and community among members as well as inform them of the official activities of the organization. We welcome submissions!



Edited by: Mackenzie Dabo
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Who are we?

FOG is run by a small group of volunteers. Consider joining our ranks!

 Email us @friendsofguinea.org
(eg., "projects@friendsofguinea.org")

Katalina Estrada	secretary
Mackenzie Dabo. . . .	newsletter
Brian Clappier	membership
Shad Engilterra	finances
Donald Parker.	projects
Rosemarie Rose.	communications
Rita Gerlach	newsletter2
Karen Star & Jessamyn Miller . . .	web
Urska Manners	listserv
Lance Constien	registry
Diane Carlson.	gps (parents)
Meghan Greeley.	mentor (parents)

Friends of Guinea

Friends of Guinea is a non-profit organization made up of former and currently serving Guinea Peace Corps Volunteers, Guineans inside and outside of Guinea, and others interested in promoting the cause of Guinean development in the world at large. We are a country-of-service affiliate of the National Peace Corps Association. Dues are \$15 annually for individuals, and \$23 for families.

email: info@friendsofguinea.org
website: <http://friendsofguinea.org>



Visit us on Peace Corps Connect
<http://tinyurl.com/pcguinea>

Eco-Tourism Project in Dalaba PCPP Project Follow Up

Katy Murtaugh, G15 PCV Dalaba '07-'09

In February 2009, the Association Environment Action and I were able to begin work on a new eco-tourism site/reforestation park in Dalaba, in the Fouta region of Guinea, thanks to the generosity of FOG and other donors. Since then, the association has completed the park and is planning a grand opening for the month of October (a time that starts to see less rain and more tourists).

Working almost everyday, the seven members of the association and some of their friends cleared out the area of dead brush and garbage; they created two walking paths on either side of the stream; they constructed and installed six benches and a shed for guarding their tools; they installed a tree nursery and a reservoir; they enclosed the site with fencing and are planting flowering vines along the fence to help it blend in; they installed a garbage can and five signs along the main roads. The neighborhood is thrilled because the reservoir doubles as a pool and is asking the association to install more benches, so more people can enjoy the park. The tree nursery is coming along despite a few hailstorms early on and its plants will be ready for sale next rainy season. The members of the association are always eager to talk with visitors about their reforestation work and the importance of it, and seek out local charcoal burners for sensitizations.

The funds raised through PCPP, including FOG's donation, went towards buying the materials necessary for the benches, shed, tree nursery, reservoir, garbage can and signs, as well as some equipment for the association (like wheelbarrows, spades, hatchets, and hoes). Despite some unforeseen costs (the benches and the shed needed reinforcements given the steep grade of the hillside, the materials budgeted for the reservoir were not sufficient for its dimensions), the President of the association and I were always able to find reasonable solutions and were able to complete the project within budget.

I've been continuously impressed by the fortitude of the members of Environment Action and their steadfast commitment to bringing this site to reality. They've been getting a lot of kudos from the community and they deserve every bit of it!

Thanks so much to all the donors you made this project possible!

Last fall, Friends of Guinea donated \$1000 to PCV Katy Murtaugh's project via the Peace Corps Partnership Program. To see current PCV projects in Guinea, go to www.peacecorps.gov and click on "Donate Now." You can then search by country to see tasks that need funding.

The Girls Can Kick It Too!

Teale Walheim, G-15 PCV Mankountan, Boke '07-'09

If you ask me, Guinea could really use a graceful kick of some balls. Now, I know you weren't asking, but hear me out. If your village is anything like mine the football field is a powerhouse for young men hopped up on sugary *attaya*. As a sports fanatic myself, I have seen my fair share of games in my village, Mankountan. However, being well into my second year of service I've grown weary of watching a bunch of adolescent boys with bloated egos play football (that is if you consider crying in the dirt mimicking their professional heroes on TV part of the game). Seeing all the girls on the sidelines ardently supporting their male classmates, I grew curious as to why the roles were never reversed. During one game I asked the official next to me (who was important enough to receive a distinguished plastic throne) why the girls never play ball? He shrugged and with an infuriating chuckle he enlightened me, saying: "The girls don't want to play." HUMPH! Rolling my valley girl eyes (that's right, I'm from the valley) I thought to myself, "I'll believe that when the men start preparing the daily rice!"



After that I took it upon myself to ask a few of my girlfriends around the village if they were interested in playing football. Not surprisingly they said yes. So off to the *College* I went with a vague mission in mind. I asked the Principal if there was a way we could allow the girls to play football *comme les garçons*. Being the motivated, jolly man that he is, Princy (as we call him) was *d'accord avec ca!* BUT (there's always a "but") there was one small problem; they didn't have a ball for the girls. Luckily I remember GAAD coordinator Kim spouting about some donated soccer balls. I eagerly responded, and she replied "I can promise you a ball if you organize the teams!" And unlike most of the ideas I conjure up in my hut, this one hit a cord that turned out to have quite a bass.

So Kim sent me the beautiful Nike soccer ball (pump included) and Princy organized a tournament placing the different classes against each other. I was so excited I blurted out that I would play to help support the girls. If you know anything about me, you know that I am relentlessly competitive (with no apologies) but a footballer I am not. Knowing I lacked the necessary foot skills to succeed at this game I tried to strategically place myself on the strongest team. I thought this would be 10emes...Well we've lost our first two games 3-0 and 3-1. We resembled a 4th grade AYSO team in which every player follows the ball like a swarm of bees on honey. However seeing the confidence grow with every successful kick of the ball is a reward so sweet it's worth my wounded pride.

Plus, there are many girls whose eye-foot coordination is far more developed than that of a five-year-old (*pas comme moi*) and are receiving the props they deserve. Not to mention the undeniable fact that every single girl seems to possess an ingrained sense of courage and perseverance; traits that every coach can only hope for. I have also discovered that their newfound pride is unexpectedly contagious. It has spread to the trash-talking Professors who coach us, to the petite princesses on the sidelines who have found some of their own balls to kick and to *les vieux* who talk about which girls are *plus forte que les autres!* So at the risk of sounding terribly cliché, I do believe everyone comes out a winner on this one (and I promise this is not a final attempt to erase the big "L" stamped on my forehead).

My nonchalant attempt to spice up village life inadvertently provided an opportunity for the girls of Mankountan. Seldom do *les femmes* get the chance to put effort into something purely for themselves and even more rarely are they applauded for it (like NEVER). I took for granted the equality I feel when I personally step into a sports arena and it took the radiant spirit of these young women on the football field to show me that they had lacked that freedom.



Photo above left was taken in Maferanya, Teale's training village where girls played on soccer teams. Above, Teale in Conakry.

I think this is a sustainable project that everyone can and should do. Giving the ladies of your village a chance to play football is, among other things, allowing them to express themselves in a world ruled by men. In this privileged realm they have equalized the turf. It's a simple change but I can see it every day at 16:30, just as the sun is beginning to lift its merciless bubble of heat allowing a breeze from the rice plain to whistle through town. With this natural signal the girls of Mankountan are passing their cooking spoons to someone else, relieving their heads of 20 liter yellow *bidons* and relinquishing themselves from the baby tied to their backs; for the next two hours its game time. This may be a small step for the empowerment of Guinean girls but it's a step with a kick. And it turns out these girls *can* kick it too, *avec force*, if you just give them a target.

“Peace Corps lit a fire under us”

School-to-School International Launched Girls Education Project in Guinea

Rebecca Harry, STS International

School-to-School International (STS) is a US-based non-profit organization working in Guinea to improve health and education in elementary schools. The founders, Dr. Mark Lynd and Dr. Jeff Davis, began working in Africa as Peace Corps Volunteers in the 1980s. Mark attributes his passion for development to the Peace Corps, saying, “Peace Corps lit a fire under us, teaching us about how we can help societies improve by helping their kids learn better.”

Since 2002, STS has been working in Guinea to transform education and school health so that every child can succeed in elementary school. In its work in 30 “partner schools” in Coastal Guinea, STS has consistently witnessed girls struggling to complete elementary school; nationwide, less than half of school-aged girls complete their elementary school education and make it to middle school. As a result, STS recently launched its Girls’ Education Project to support girls, their families, and their communities to improve girls’ chances of success in elementary school. The project provides monthly scholarships to families when a daughter consistently attends school, provides community workshops to reinforce the importance of elementary school education for girls, and provides



training to teachers to host after school remedial sessions for at-risk girls.

STS would like to thank Friends of Guinea for donating \$500 to the Girls’ Education Project. To learn more about the project or to get

involved with School-to-School International please visit our website, www.sts-international.org or contact us at info@sts-international.org or 650-728-7138.

New PC Director Aaron Williams

Information from White House Press Release



Most recently a Vice President for International Business Development with RTI International, Aaron Williams has over 25 years of experience in the design and implementation of worldwide assistance programs. As a senior manager at the U.S.

Agency for International Development (USAID), where he attained the rank of Career Minister in the US Senior Foreign Service, and as Executive Vice President at the International Youth Foundation, Mr. Williams established innovative public-private partnerships around the world. As USAID Mission Director in South Africa, Mr. Williams led a billion dollar foreign assistance program during President Nelson Mandela’s administration. In addition to his work in South Africa, he has extensive experience in the strategic design and management of assistance programs in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East; including long-term assignments in Honduras, Haiti, Costa Rica, and Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean islands region. In addition to his tenure with USAID, Mr. Williams served on the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid at USAID. Mr. Williams was awarded the USAID Distinguished Career Service Award and the Presidential Award for Distinguished Service twice. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and he serves on the Advisory Board of the Ron Brown Scholar Program, the Board of Directors of CARE, and the Board of Directors of the National Peace Corps Association. Mr. Williams served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Dominican Republic (1967-70). Upon completing his service, he became the Coordinator of Minority Recruitment and Project Evaluation Officer for the Peace Corps in Chicago (1970-71). Mr. Williams is fluent in Spanish. He is a graduate of Chicago State University, and has an MBA from the University of Wisconsin. His confirmation hearing was held on July 29; Director Williams was confirmed as the 18th director of the PC in early August. He is the first African American Peace Corps Director.

New U.S. Ambassador to Guinea

Ambassador Patricia N. Moller, a member of the Foreign Service since 1987, served as U.S. Ambassador to Burundi from 2006 to 2009. In the course of her career, Ambassador Moller has served in five other overseas locations including in Munich, Germany, Chennai, India, Belgrade, Serbia, Yerevan, Armenia, and Tbilisi, Georgia. From 1991 - 1996 in Washington DC, she served first as a Watch Officer, then as Staff Aid to the Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research, and later as Vietnam Desk Officer for bilateral negotiations to reestablish diplomatic ties between the two countries. From 1996 to 1999, she was assigned to Belgrade, Serbia, departing when NATO bombing of the country began. From 2000 to 2002, she served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Yerevan, Armenia and from 2002 to 2005 as Deputy Chief of Mission in Tbilisi, Georgia. Ambassador Moller has three times received the Department’s Superior Honor Award and three times been granted a Senior Foreign Service Performance Award. Ambassador Moller has a BA from the University of Tampa.

Le Griot Nous Dit...

On Sunday, July 5, Melissa Oetke (G4, Faranah and Fria, '02-'04) married Andy Webb at Independence Grove Park in Chicago, IL. RPCVs in attendance were Mackenzie (Pfeifer) Dabo (G0, Saramoussaya and Conakry, '00-'04) and Alissa Hartig (G4, Dinguriraye, '02-'04). The couple honeymooned in Greece.



Communications Director

Due to personal reasons, newly elected FOG Communication Director Rosemarie Rose has resigned. Former Communications Director Brian Farenell will retake the duties until a new election is held.

World Map Project

Barbara Jo White, PhD, Dominican Republic '87-'89

I can't believe it's been just over 20 years since I created the World Map Project in the Dominican Republic! I have found some maps made in Guinea by various PCVs and you'll find pictures up on the World Map Project website, which I hope you'll check out and tell other RPCVs about it:

<http://sites.google.com/site/theworldmapproject/>

There are free map-making materials on the website, too.

I also hope you'll check out my twitter site:

www.twitter.com/WorldMapProject



Photos from a World Map Project completed by PCV Wayne Kleck at the elementary school in Falessade, Guinea, in 2004. Wayne completed the project over the summer holiday with the help of some recent high school graduates. Pictured left, the third grade class.



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