

Çava?

The Newsletter of Friends of Guinea

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



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Winds of change in Guinea?

Brian Farenell, FOG Communications Director

Things have changed quickly in Guinea following the infamous massacre and mass rapes of September 28, 2009. Following a wave of international condemnation, the military junta tried to pin the blame for the killings squarely on the shoulder of Aboubacar "Toumba" Diakité, aide-de-camp to then-head of state Captain Moussa Dadis Camara. In early December, Diakité tried to assassinate Dadis, who was severely wounded and withdrew to Morocco for treatment.

In his absence, defense minister General Sekouba Konaté, the highest-ranking military officer, became interim junta leader. After Dadis' recovery, there was widespread resistance to his return to Guinea. Much to his chagrin, Dadis was flown from Morocco not back to Guinea but to Burkina Faso, whose leader Blaise Compaoré, had been mediating in the Guinean crisis. There was much tension between Dadis and his clique, seen as wanting to cling to power at any cost, and Konaté, perceived as more moderate. Eventually, negotiations led to Dadis handing over de facto power to Konaté and agreeing to a civilian-led transitional government.

Konaté, who has expressed his desire to return power to a civilian president, named long time political opposition leader Jean-Marie Doré as the country's new prime minister. A prominent union leader, Rabiattou Serah Diallo, was also named to head a national transitional council.

In mid-February, Prime Minister Doré named his national unity government, which comprised 28 civilian ministers and 6 from the military. Doré has pledged to hold elections within 6 months, and the

first round has been set for June 27 with the run-off on July 27.

President Obama mentions Guinea in State of the Union Address

Below are excerpt from the full text of President Barack Obama's State of the Union Address, as transcribed by the White House on January 27, 2010.

"As we have for over 60 years, America takes these actions [in aiding foreign development] because our destiny is connected to those beyond our shores. But we also do it because it is right. That's why, as we meet here tonight, over 10,000 Americans are working with many nations to help the people of Haiti recover and rebuild. That's why we stand with the girl who yearns to go to school in Afghanistan; why we support the human rights of the women marching through the streets of Iran; **why we advocate for the young man denied a job by corruption in Guinea.** For America must always stand on the side of freedom and human dignity. Always.

Abroad, America's greatest source of strength has always been our ideals. The same is true at home."

Help Mark PC's 49th anniversary

The week of March 1st through 7th marks the annual celebration of Peace Corps week. Plan an event with a local school, community group, or friends to speak about your PC experience and support PC's third goal of cross-cultural understanding for Americans.

Register your event on-line at www.peacecorps.gov under "Returned Volunteers" and "Third Goal" or

email thirdgoal@peacecorps.gov to receive resources for your audience.

Work Continues in Guinea for Haute

Ben Hafele, PCV 1999-2001

In the March 2008 issue of ÇaVa? we heard from Haute (www.hautenet.org), a then new nonprofit that was just starting up in Guinea. Haute is a nonprofit enterprise that empowers entrepreneurs in Guinea to lift themselves and their employees out of poverty by providing them with business knowledge and ideas. Since 2007, Haute has provided management training to 131 small and medium sized business owners in Kankan, Siguiri, N'Zerekore, and Conkary, representing industries as diverse as farming, information technology, and hair braiding. Guinea's entrepreneurs use the knowledge gained in Haute's management training sessions to improve and grow their businesses and create new jobs in Guinea. The first class of 17 entrepreneurs that Haute trained in 2007 has produced on average 1.6 new jobs per entrepreneur. Haute will be following up with its 2008 graduates this year, but if we extrapolate the class of 2007's success rate, it would mean that Haute has created over 200 jobs in Guinea.

Since the article in March 2008, Haute has trained an additional 114 entrepreneurs in Guinea. The recent political situation in Guinea has had no effect on Haute's operations, and the organization plans to continue expanding its impact into the foreseeable future. Haute recently hired a Program Manager for its operations in Guinea and is nearly finished setting up its new office in the Matoto Kondebouyi neighborhood of Conakry.

For more information, please visit the Haute website or send an email to admin@hautenet.org



Empowering entrepreneurs in Africa

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
Email: newsletter@friendsofguinea.org

Who are we?

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

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

OPEN	secretary
Mackenzie Dabo. . . .	newsletter
Brian Clappier	membership
Shad Engkilterra	finances
Donald Parker.	projects
Brian Farenell.	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>



“Planning” a Trip to Guinea

Alex Alper, *Banfele, Kourroussa '06-'07 and Cape Verde '07-'09* (written April/2009)

I am sitting on my bed pouring over the Guinea Chapter in The Rough Guide to West Africa, like it matters. There are notes in the margins, highlights, even comments scrawled in my binder, as though the facts about prices, decent hotels, and good bike rides will make my trip better. I close the book. I've been to Guinea, why am I doing this? Nothing I could possibly do with a guidebook—place it under a wobbly table or memorize it--could affect my trip in any way.

In the Western world, what they tell you is true: bad things happen to good people who don't plan. A thriving community of conniving, unscrupulous evildoers pounce on good people who don't check their tire pressure, don't book hotel reservations in advance, don't buy luggage insurance or those handy, irredeemably tacky money-hiding fanny packs.

In Guinea, no one believes in this adage, not because they are backwards, but because it doesn't hold true there. Plan and spend as you like in Guinea, unaccounted, bizarre things, often of a biblical character, occur that can subvert your plans, big time. Dust storms, floods, pre-Islamic ceremonies, sudden deaths, snakes, strikes, inflation, illnesses, any sort of element from a Magical realism novel, could smite you without warning, humbling you into phrases like “It is in God's hands,” “Man proposes but God disposes,” and “If it happened, it must be for the best.”

Once on the way from my village to Kourrousa, the barge that usually carried us across the river ran out of gas and began slowly to float down the river, thudding against the banks of the Niger as the women screamed and grasped at branches. Twice that same night, muddy roads and a steady downpour caused me to fall under a motorcycle. A few months later, my neighbor was bitten by a snake while milking a cow and promptly died.

Bad things occur with no warning, but the opposite is true too. You can impulsively jump on a notion to travel across the country with no money and no plans and magically, through the goodness of people you meet, and thanks to the absence of unscrupulous evildoers that pounce on hapless adventurers elsewhere, it works out. That same night on the Niger, I slept at a stranger's house many miles short of where I had planned on ending up, and made one of the few Guinean friends with whom I am still in touch. A world without consequences, a world where saying “it's in God's hands” is not a cop-out so much as a statement of fact.

I exaggerate, of course. There is a time when the “It's-in-God's-hands” mentality is a sorry excuse for inaction that perpetuates the awful things that do occur so regularly. Once, very early in my Peace Corps service, traveling by bush taxi to Conakry, our car pattered to a halt as we came upon a bus slanted into a



ditch. Several dead bodies covered with cloths lay beside it. Flies buzzed and landed. The bus's other passengers cried quietly, or sat and stared at the road, waiting for Conakry-bound cars with vacant spots. My car took one of them. It had been a collision, she explained. Among the dead was a woman who was traveling to Conakry to meet her fiancé, who was arriving from France after years abroad. “God didn't will it,” she explained, and I grimaced.

Peter Hessler, a former Peace Corps Volunteer in China and writer of River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze River, posits that this is why volunteers go on to “achieve” little in life. Forced to adjust to regularized chaos, he says, they can no longer see action as tied to results, nor failure as the result of inaction. In this world, struggling to prove a correlation between input and output is too frustrating. So volunteers often give up, sit back, and (ironically) prove the rule, that man is mostly powerless to determine his destiny.

But hope exists and, wonderfully, it is irrational. The people who do manage to change things manage to forgo reason, the reason that tells them their efforts will likely fail. Instead they rely on their convictions, irrational gut-instincts that their efforts could change something. (And while these convictions ARE irrational, the only guaranteed way to fail is never to try). So we have heard of these people: the Steve Jobs, the Bill Gates, the Isaac Newton, the Louis Pasteur, etc.

So when will someone demand or undertake to ensure better roads, better drivers, safety standards for cars and cargo carriage in Guinea? When will there appear journalists, op-ed writers, politicians and NGO's that draw international attention to these awful accidents in a way that foment action, in a way that allows most Guineans to mock those who say “It's in God's hands” for blinding themselves to their own agency? If Peace Corps volunteers themselves, the supposed change-agents, can adopt these attitudes themselves, the magnitude of the challenge is clear. But hope, wonderfully, is irrational, and though I will soon give up on planning this trip, I hope that Guinea will one day become a place where all manners of planning are richly rewarded.

For more of Alex's work, visit her blog at:
alexalper.blogspot.com.

Photo Documentary Project

Richard Sitler, a photojournalist and RPCV, is creating a photo documentary project called "Making Peace with the World" to serve Peace Corps in marking its 50th anniversary accompanied by a photo / essay book. He writes: "The work will give an intimate view of everyday life and service of a cross section of today's Peace Corps volunteers. It will allow the viewer to gain a feeling of ownership of and participation in Peace Corps. It will advance the essential work of Peace Corps by promoting the work of today's volunteers encouraging its viewers to support Peace Corps and possibly to consider serving their country through Peace Corps. In addition, the documentary will provide a focal point for Peace Corps volunteers to share their stories." He is seeking funding for the photo documentary project at any level. Donations can be made and interest in ordering the book (due out in 2011) can be expressed by contacting Richard at RichS85@yahoo.com. Donations are also possible at www.thepoint.com/campaigns/making-peace-with-the-world



The photos are of Sasha Cooper-Morriso from Washington D.C. who serves as a Rural Economic Development volunteer for a women's association called La Asociación de la Mujer Rural (The Rural Women's Association) in Paraguay. In the first photo Cooper-Morrison (in sunglasses) is riding the bus. In the second photo she is talking with members of the association in the organization's kitchen as the women bake cakes. The ovens and other items for cooking were acquired through the help of the Peace Corps volunteer.



Alliance Guinea: Team up for congressional meetings

The Alliance Guinea Congressional Outreach Team

Dear supporters of democracy in Guinea,

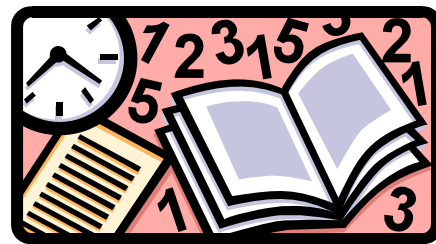
Congressional outreach is off to a fast start, but it's not too late to join up! Americans and Guineans are already teaming up in North Jersey, Washington, D.C., and Minnesota to convince their Congresspersons to commit real, tangible support to the democracy movement in Guinea. If you live in New Jersey, Washington DC, or Minnesota, contact Brian (brian_d_b@yahoo.com) or Mackenzie (mackpfeifer@yahoo.com) ASAP to get connected with the teams there. We also have volunteers looking to partner in other locales across the U.S., so send us an email no matter where you live and we'll get you started.

Obama promised hope for Guinea in his Address last week. Help make sure that America follows through on that promise.



Peace Corps OPSI offers e-newsletter

The Peace Corps Office of Private Sector Initiatives now sends its free newsletters via email. OPSI is in charge of the Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP) that is used to support current PCVs programs. Last year they supported 639 projects in 60 countries. If you would like to receive their bi-monthly e-newsletter, Building Bridges, with information about PCPP projects around the globe, go to www.peacecorps.gov/buildingbridges and enter your email address.



Thank you to Robin Brown, Brian Clappier, Katie Conn, Mackenzie Dabo, Meghan Greeley, James Ham, Rosette Nguyen, Mary Pfeifer, and Jen Swift-Mogran for a successful 2010 calendar sale.

FOG ANNUAL REPORT 2009

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: MACKENZIE DABO

In 2009, four copies of ÇaVa? were printed on time and delivered via email and USPS to all current members. We received positive feedback in all four editions.

MEMBERSHIP OFFICER: BRIAN CLAPPIER

As the Friends of Guinea membership officer, my primary responsibilities involve recruiting and retaining members for the organization. Currently, we have 65 members, as opposed to last year, when we had approximately 110 members. This drop in numbers must be addressed through new and thorough recruitment efforts. Although the recent discontinuation of the Peace Corps program in Guinea will be an obstacle for Friends of Guinea and the recruitment of Members, it can also be framed as an underlying motivation to keep the organization hard at work. We are continuing to fund projects, raise money, and recruit members, despite the Peace Corps program's hiatus, and we've made this clear to our members.

There are several methods we use to recruit and retain members. First, the primary means of recruiting and retaining members is through the use of email. This year we sent out over 600 renewal emails, 65 confirmation emails, and approximately 25 emails to members regarding participation in projects.

Second, we used announcements regarding membership drives in the quarterly newsletter (article in Spring '09 newsletter) and renewal messages inserted in complementary newsletters to lapsed members (Winter Issue).

Third, we used social networking sites such as Facebook and Peace Corps Connect. Over the past year, we've found that email solicitations are becoming less and less effective in retaining and recruiting members. In response, we have

Fourth, we've brought together current FOG members who reach out to their friends and RPCV acquaintances, personally asking them to join or renew their membership. This has been the most effective means of recruitment, and we currently have a team of 4 members working to reach out personally to former members.

Although all four of these methods of recruitment will be continued in the next year, I expect that we will focus most on the fourth as a means of recruitment. Our volunteers are the most persuasive voice we have to convince others to join FOG.

PROJECTS OFFICER: DONALD PARKER

In 2009 Friends of Guinea no funds were requested for projects. This was due to the fact that Peace Corps

Guinea was evacuated. Friends of Guinea is presently working with Haute: Empowering Entrepreneurs in Guinea towards funding business management seminars for small business owners.

For fundraising, several members of the group sold RPCV of Wisconsin calendars as a fundraiser and earned almost \$2000 for operating expenses and project funds.

Membership officer Brian Clappier hosted Peace Corps Guinea-FOG parties and hopes to raise money through 5k and marathon sponsorship this coming year.

COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER: BRIAN FARENELL

Communications' main activities in 2009 were related to the blog and Twitter. The blog (69 posts in the year) became an important tool of communication keeping members updated about the rapidly changing political situation in Guinea as well as news related to PC Guinea, before its withdrawal from the country.

Brian Farenell started a Twitter feed (www.twitter.com/friendsofguinea) which dramatically increased the amount of news that could be shared with members. He posted over 200 Tweets in the less than 3 months of 2009 it was active and the feed has already gained nearly 100 followers.

Brian developed a statement, in French and English, on behalf of the FOG board concerning the killings of Sept. 28, 2009 and submitted to Jeune Afrique and Foreign Policy magazines.

Brian formed links and coordinated advocacy with the new group Alliance Guinea regarding justice for the 9/28/09 killings and, more broadly, democracy in Guinea.

The Guinea Parent Support listserv (Meghan Greeley) started a new listserv group with the July '09 departure with approximately 40 members, including family members and friends of the group. This listserv was very active around the time of their departure and throughout their training period, with members exchanging any information on their loved ones they had. All of the listservs with members in country became extremely active during the time when the volunteers were evacuated to Mali. Members exchanged any information they had, as contact from volunteers during this time was easier for some than others. Since the evacuation of volunteers, the listservs have been dormant.

FINANCES OFFICER: SHAD ENKILTERRA

FOG had total revenue of \$4,907.10 in 2010. Operating costs were under \$400 for the year, and \$5920 total expenses were logged. The closing balance in FOG's account is \$7349.



FOG Officer Elections - Help Guinea in its time of need!

It's an exciting time for FOG, with Alliance Guinea's (www.allianceguinea.org) work to support Guinea in its difficult time of transition, and Peace Corps's recent evacuation from Guinea. FOG is more important than ever, as many NGO's have pulled out of Guinea and the country is in desperate need. Help us do this important and relevant work.

Officer positions are for one year, starting March 15. Be prepared to spend about 3-5 hours a month in each position, or more if you decide to get involved at a deeper level. See detailed descriptions of officer jobs at <http://www.friendsofguinea.org/aboutfog/officerduties.shtml>.

Interested? Email Stephanie at info@friendsofguinea.org.

Positions desperately needing candidates:

SECRETARY. *Help keep the organization running smoothly and act as the point contact person.* In particular, set up quarterly phone meetings among officers, facilitate communication among officers and keep track of organizational commitments.

COMMUNICATIONS. *Direct FOG's communications with the outside world.* In particular, maintain the FOG blog, craft messages about FOG's position on relevant issues when appropriate, and connect with other organizations.

PROJECTS. *Directly impact the welfare of Guineans.* Seek out collaborations with organizations in country, oversee fundraising projects, and research potential project opportunities in country or in the US.

Positions that already have at least one candidate:

FINANCES. *Keep our books clean and tidy.* Communicate monthly with membership to process new memberships, communicate with NPCA about reciprocal memberships, and make sure we have the money to do what we want to do each year.

MEMBERSHIP. *Keep the spirit of FOG alive.* Process new memberships, recruit new members, and send information on memberships to the newsletter folks.

Want to help out but don't want to take on a position? Let us know; we can always use a helping hand!

Thank you to those officers and members at large continuing on: Mackenzie Dabo (newsletter), Meghan Greeley (parents listserv), Urska Manners (listserv), Karen Star and Jessamyn Miller (webmaster).



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Visit us at: <http://friendsofguinea.org>