

# Çava?



## The Newsletter of Friends of Guinea

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

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### Guineans Vote in Historic Presidential Election

by Brian Farenell, FOG Communications Director

On Sunday November 7, Guineans voted in the long-delayed but historic presidential runoff election between former Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo and long time opposition leader Professor Alpha Condé. Voting proceeded in calm, despite a campaign fraught with tension and clashes. Conduct of the poll was widely praised, including by the United States, African Union, European Union and Carter Center. Those entities also called upon both candidates to respect the final outcome.

No results were available at the time of the writing of this article but according to Guinean law, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) is supposed to release results within 72 hours of the close of polls. However reports suggested that this might actually take up to five days. In an attempt to assuage fears of fraud, the CENI said it would start publishing results as soon as they came in. Numerous media reports indicated that turnout was high throughout the country.

FOG's sister organization Alliance Guinea has been involved with election monitoring and collecting reports of voting irregularities.

For regular updates on the vote counting and aftermath, follow FOG's Twitter feed: [www.twitter.com/friendsofguinea](http://www.twitter.com/friendsofguinea)

### PromoGuinée Aids Scholars in Guinea

by Saikou Thiam

PromoGuinée, a non-governmental organization, has offered scholarship awards to six new high school students in Guinea for the school year 2010-2011. The students will be attending Sainte Marie high school, one of the best private schools in the country. Each of the sponsored students receives a full scholarship that covers the school tuition and fees, all the supplies and uniforms. PromoGuinée has been giving scholarships to kids from poor backgrounds since 2006. Five have graduated from high school and are currently in college in Guinea or Morocco. Today, nine students are in the scholarship program: six freshmen (Mariame TRAORE, Mohamed Mabinty CAMARA, Clément Cécé SAGNO, Aboubacar Sidiki FOFANA, Lipo Lipé KOLIE, Mamadou Alpha BAH) and three seniors (Thierno Madjou BAH, Mamady Fatoumata CONDE, Issa Foulah BALDE).

For more information about PromoGuinée, visit our website at [www.promoguinee.org](http://www.promoguinee.org). Each donation, via the website, of \$10 or more will receive a free "I Love Guinea" t-shirt.



Above: This year's PromoGuinée Scholarship winners wearing the "I Love Guinea" t-shirts. .



## The Pulaku Project: Benin RPCV to embark on Fulani documentary endeavor

by Christoph Herby, RPCV Benin ('08-'10)

Hello Friends of Guinea! I'm a PCV in Benin, about to COS and start a documentary project that will take me across West Africa to explore the changing dynamics of Fulani culture. Travelling by motorcycle with a close Fulani friend and staying in Fulani camps across West Africa, we'll be sharing these stories through photo, audio, and video vignettes on our website: [www.pulaku.com](http://www.pulaku.com)

The word "*pulaku*" is the Fulah word for the pride, stoicism, and identity of the Fulani people.

As you well know, the Fulani are a fascinating culture. The most widespread ethnic group in Africa, they are the world's largest transhumant population: 27 million individuals living in 19 countries. And yet, they are minorities in every country but Guinea. With pastureland disappearing through development and desertification, Fulani culture is rapidly changing. Furthermore, nomadic families are increasingly settling down to become farmers and assimilating with other cultures.



When I first got to my village two years ago, my buddy Guida taught me to speak Fulah and we became fast friends. We especially enjoyed visiting Fulani camps all over the region, drinking tea on straw mats, shooting the breeze, and taking pictures. I became totally intrigued by Fulani culture. They're a fascinating people: quiet yet flamboyant, witty while aloof, beautiful but humble. And they've got an incredible knack for style. Throughout West Africa, the Fulani display an incredible variety of customs, but they are linked by a strong sense of self and a firm adhesion to tradition.

While the Fulani form a plurality of the population in Guinea, they are minorities in every other West African country. Much like the "Gypsy" Roma culture in Europe, the Fulani often find themselves at the fringes

of mainstream society, a people without a country. They remain outsiders, partly by choice, partly by discrimination.



The Pulaku Documentary Project will give voice to a population facing a diminishing frontier for survival. There currently exists very little multimedia documentation of Fulani culture on the web, and virtually none of it is in English.

We invite you to support the project by ordering a printed image on the website. Upon completion of the project supporters will receive their choice of photo, framed in a handcrafted ebony frame. We counting on your support to fund the project, but more importantly we want to reach an audience interested in the Fulani and West African culture.

Also, we are eager to connect with you to establish contacts in Guinea. We'll be crossing through Guinea in March 2011, and we are eager to meet interesting people along the way. If you have friends in Guinea who could host us or share their stories, please contact us through the website. Thanks for your support, and please follow along next year as we traverse West Africa.

[www.pulaku.com](http://www.pulaku.com)



## Peace Corps Re-Opens in Guinea (?)

Things have been changing quickly in Guinea over the course of the past month, and some of the Guinea volunteers hoping to reopen the program are still waiting in Dubreka for the election results before going to their sites. Others have chosen to leave Guinea since the wait has been extraordinarily long and nothing is guaranteed. The fate of the PCVs will be determined by current situation in Guinea, but a new group of future PCVs has already received their invitation to Guinea starting in December. The below letter was written a month ago by one of the PCVs who was then waiting in Dubreka for the elections.

October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010

Dear *Friends of Guinea*:

Greetings, from Dubreka! I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Guinea just prior to the 2009 evacuation, and I'm lucky enough to be back in Guinea today helping to re-open the program. I'm happy to share some news of the re-opening process with *Friends of Guinea*.

Peace Corps / Guinea is welcoming back volunteers in small groups at first. Right now we are a total of 14 volunteers strong. We are a mix of re-instated volunteers and Peace Corps Response volunteers, all of whom are staying for a time shorter than the regular two-year tour. We hope to be joined by another small group of Peace Corps Response volunteers in October, and then by a full stage of 40 or so regular volunteers in December of this year, who should help put the program back into the normal swing of things.

The volunteers who were not in Guinea prior to the evacuation are currently undergoing a mini pre-service training here in Dubreka, and we former Guinea volunteers are helping to run the training. A big, official swear-in and re-opening party is set to occur at the Peace Corps office in Conakry on October 13<sup>th</sup>, after which we will all be heading to our sites, *in'shallah*.

I say *in'shallah*, of course, because all of these plans rest on the assumption of continued peace in Guinea. With the final round of presidential elections still having no set date, Guinea is at a critical and fragile point in its history. The US Embassy continues to inform us that the political situation in Guinea is extremely tense, and we are currently awaiting official clearance from the Embassy before we are allowed to go to our sites. Despite the uncertainty surrounding elections, the Guinea that we interact with remains remarkably calm. We feel none of the political tension here in Dubreka. My fellow re-instated volunteers and I are particularly anxious to get to our sites, but for the moment we have to sit tight.

So we have been enjoying the *Cascades de la Soumba*, and getting to know the small town of Dubreka quite well. The humidity of the *base côte* is as stifling as ever, and we are graced with occasional rainstorms that leave a rainbow stretching between the two green mountains that we see from our training compound.

Also, the dance club in downtown Dubreka has a bubble-generating machine. So life is good.

But while we wait in Dubreka, the fate of Guinea really does stand on the edge of a knife. Your hopes and well wishes for Guinea are appreciated during this historic time for this beautiful country.

Cheers,

Phil Rodenbough

[www.philgoestoguinea.blogspot.com](http://www.philgoestoguinea.blogspot.com)

## Holiday Wishes

By Diane M. Carlson, Senior Editor, General Mills Magazines, RPCV Parent and FOG GPS volunteer. Originally published in the Betty Crocker Holiday Baking Magazine (now on sale).

One of my most memorable Christmas celebrations was one my family and I spent in Guinea, West Africa. We were visiting my daughter, Erin, who was working as a Peace Corps volunteer. Part of the preparations for the trip (along with getting a visa, vaccination for yellow fever, malaria pills and a head lamp) included baking dozens of Christmas cookies and candies for Erin and the other volunteers. The most frequent advice I received from other parents who had traveled to Guinea was BRING FOOD!

In her remote village, there was no chocolate or butter or even ovens to make homemade cookies. So I ended up with one entire suitcase filled with homemade cookies and candy. I literally spent every night for two weeks baking, and then freezing: cardamom and almond-flavored Swedish rusts, Triple Chocolate Fudge, Peanut Butter Blossoms and Spritz, plus loaves of banana bread and all-American chocolate chip cookies—this was tops on Erin's list of foods she missed most!

The food was an immediate reminder of home for volunteers whose daily diet consisted of "tou" (a cassava dumpling the village women cooked in a big iron pot over an open fire), and the occasional peanut sauce.

We celebrated the holidays that year in a different part of the world, without running water or electricity, sleeping in a thatched hut, but still sharing traditional foods from home with family and new friends. And for me, that's what Christmas is all about.

May your holiday be rich with family, friends and food!



Diane's daughter was a PCV in Diamona, outside Kankan, from January 2005 to March 2007



Photo credit: Christoph Herby, RCPV Benin (see page 2 for article).

## FOG Earns Commission on Your Amazon.com Purchases!

Happy Holidays! As you start gearing up to flex your weary pocketbook, take a few extra seconds to let some of those hard-earned pennies go towards FOG and projects in Guinea. Use the Amazon link at <http://www.friendsofguinea.org> (on the left hand side of the page towards the bottom) to make your purchases from Amazon, and up to 5% of your purchase price will go to FOG! If we all take a few moments to click, we can fund all our organizational expenses for the year, leaving our funds to be used for the things we really care about -- helping Guinea, especially in this time of great need.

**ÇaVa? Is the quarterly newsletter of Friends of Guinea and seeks to maintain contact and community among members as well as inform them of official activities of the organization. We welcome submissions!**

FOG is run by a small group of volunteers. Consider joining our ranks! Email us ...@friendsofguinea.org

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Website: <http://friendsofguinea.org>

*Friends of Guinea is a non-profit organization made up of former 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.*

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